

# A Sales Script for Sustainability

ANALYSIS

March 2024

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The Emotional Side of a Pressing Issue</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Earth Day Leads to Greenwashing</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Guiding the Conversation with Facts</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Deconstructing the Conversation</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Final Thoughts</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>AUTHOR</b>	<b>5</b>

## FIGURES

## INTRODUCTION

Sustainability. Although everyone acknowledges the importance of protecting our planet, discussing sustainability in business settings can be challenging. The issue is multifaceted and can be difficult to navigate. Sales representatives—especially in industries like print services—may not feel confident in answering detailed questions about their company's environmental practices. They may fear appearing uninformed when bombarded with inquiries about paper sourcing, energy efficiency, or waste reduction. There's also the worry that customers may not care enough about sustainability, so reps may hesitate to bring up the topic that can potentially derail a sale.

But here's the secret most sales reps miss...Sustainability isn't a conversation stopper; it's a conversation starter! Consumers are increasingly environmentally conscious, and businesses that demonstrate a genuine commitment to sustainability can stand out from the competition. Ignoring the topic entirely is like leaving your beach towel unattended—someone else might claim your spot. Print service providers (PSPs) need to be prepared to address this important topic. This article explores the emotional connection to sustainability and offers guidance for businesses to navigate these conversations effectively.

### The Emotional Side of a Pressing Issue

Let's be honest: climate change, resource depletion, and pollution paint a pretty grim picture. So, it's natural to feel a knot when talking about the future of our planet, especially when considering the impact on future generations. Couple that with the personal choices we make every day—from what we buy to how we travel—often leads to gnawing guilt or a sense of helplessness, especially when faced with the seemingly impossible challenge of living an earth-friendly life.

Sustainability throws down the gauntlet, forcing us to confront our values and responsibility to future generations. This can lead to passionate discussions and even disagreements as we grapple with the best course of action.

Understanding these emotional connections is key to having productive conversations about sustainability, especially when navigating the sometimes-murky waters of greenwashing that emerged alongside Earth Day's success.

## Earth Day Leads to Greenwashing

The first Earth Day occurred on April 22, 1970. It materialized with a question mark hanging over it. Designed to bring awareness to industrial pollution and a general disregard for the environment, leaders of the movement were concerned if anyone would care. As the day unfolded, 20 million Americans poured into the streets. From bustling cities to quiet towns, parks became classrooms, streets echoed with chants, and teach-ins sprung up everywhere. It was a day of environmental awakening. The widespread acceptance gave strength to businesses that adopted environmentally friendly practices so much so that some brands took it too far.

“Greenwashing” refers to marketing and advertising practices that make a company or product appear more environmentally friendly than it is. It’s a way of trying to cash in on the growing consumer interest in sustainability without putting in the effort to be sustainable. The term was popularized when big-brand hotels asked their guests to reuse towels to help the environment, but did so in the absence of other responsible, eco-friendly practices. Other examples are found in vague claims or terms like “natural” without explaining what that entails or using selective information highlighting a single eco-friendly practice while ignoring less sustainable. Other greenwashing behavior is seen in misleading imagery or pictures that depict pristine images even if the product or service being featured isn’t environmentally friendly.

## Guiding the Conversation with Facts

For years, the print industry has faced criticism as being wasteful and unfriendly to forests. We’ve also often seen it emphasized in email taglines like “Save Trees, Don’t Print This Message.” However, recent studies reveal a more complex picture: that electronic communications have an environmental impact, too. Focusing on which is “better” isn’t productive for PSPs. The key lies in education. By regularly communicating your commitment to sustainability and the steps you take to reduce your carbon footprint, you can counter the negative narrative. If you’re not talking about it, your silence allows your competitors to control the message.

This is where our Sales Script for Sustainability comes in. Don’t be fooled by the title...it’s not a rigid script, but a flexible guide to raise awareness about your organization’s efforts toward positive environmental and social impact. Before you craft your message, take stock of your company’s sustainability practices. The

following outline will help you share your story and showcase valuable insights for your customers.

### Sales Rep Talking Guide

*Sustainability is a growing concern for many businesses, and printing is no exception. At **[Name your company]**, we understand that and are committed to offering eco-friendly solutions. It's natural to have questions about the environmental impact of print (and packaging). For example, I work with organizations similar to yours who worry about paper sourcing or contributing to the landfill. What concerns do you and your organization have when it comes to print? **[pause, listen, and validate]***

*I'm proud to be a part of the **[name your organization]** team because we take sustainability seriously. For example, some of the ways we address the topic are through:*

- 1. Innovative paper sourcing: we offer a wide range of Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) papers. FSC ensures that trees are harvested responsibly, and that promotes healthy forests.*
- 2. We utilize the latest print technology that is energy efficient and allows you to print only what you need, thereby reducing harmful waste.*
- 3. We also have a robust recycling program that touches every department in our organization.*
- 4. We educate our employees on sustainable practices and operate with an inclusive mindset. Each of our employees has a plan to upskill and train for advancement.*
- 5. **[Name your organization]** encourages volunteering. Each year our employees are provided with paid time off if they wish to volunteer. Moreover, our entire company participates in volunteer programs several times a year.*
- 6. The lessons learned during the pandemic taught us to rethink our supply chain. We source our products responsibly and ensure that our partners are as concerned about sustainability as we are and make sure they follow fair labor practices. We invested in automation to streamline manufacturing and installed intelligent sensors in our facility to ensure that heating, cooling, and electricity are automatically shut off when it isn't necessary.*

*While we know sustainable business practices include never-ending change, we're committed to being a company you're proud to do business with.*

### Deconstructing the Conversation

This guide is your springboard for a meaningful conversation about sustainability. Even if you don't own windmill farms that generate power, there are many valuable

ways to demonstrate your commitment by having a sustainability strategy in place. Talk about it. Arm your team with what your organization stands for regarding sustainability and give them the tools to deliver a compelling message. Honesty is paramount. Avoid greenwashing—inflated eco-friendly claims will backfire. Consumers reward transparency and genuine effort with their trust.

## **Final Thoughts**

Talking about sustainability can feel like unfamiliar territory, but it's a fantastic opportunity to showcase your industry's commitment to progress. After all, PSPs have a long history of innovation, and environmental responsibility is a natural extension of that. Remember, every industry, every product, and every service provider has the potential to embrace sustainable practices. By proactively discussing these options with clients, you position yourself as a forward-thinking partner, one who understands their values and offers solutions that align with quality *and* environmental responsibility.

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**Comments or Questions?**

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