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WRONG #: Phone book makers missing sustainability voicemail

\$60M per year to recycle phone books, using 4.7 million trees

By: SWR Staff
2014-08-12

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Sixteen of the largest US publishers of Yellow Pages telephone directories have earned failing or poor grades for lacklustre efforts to be more environmentally responsible, a new report has found.

The non-profit Product Stewardship Institute Inc.'s (PSI) [new sustainability report card](#) shows that despite the phone book industry's improvements over the years, it still has much work to do to reduce its environmental, social, and economic footprint.

"While there are clearly a few leaders in some of the performance categories that we evaluated, and while the industry has taken meaningful steps to reduce its impacts since 2007, overall, publishers' efforts to be more sustainable are highly varied," said Scott Cassel, PSI's CEO and founder. "We hope that, by



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Under Cover

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Building a Recycling Guideline

This August, the Canadian Standards Association (CSA) posted a Notice of Intent to work on the development of a new guideline, SPE-750 — Recycling Process, Audit and Verification Guideline for Ontario. These guidelines will be a warm...

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Simon Zysman and Richard White are somewhat incredulous businessmen.

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shining the spotlight on the best and worst performers, our report card will spur the industry to provide better information to the public and to change their practices in the most critical areas.”

PSI evaluated each publisher in three key performance areas:

- **Acceptance of Consumer Opt-Out**

Requests: What PSI found is that most publishers do not accept opt-out requests from independent sources, which makes it impossible to know the total number of opt-out requests they receive and how many of those requests they are actually honoring.

- **Support for Recycling:** Every year, US taxpayers pay roughly \$60 million to collect, recycle, and manage their unwanted phone books. PSI found no evidence of significant efforts by any directory publishers to reduce the financial burden of municipalities to recycle phone books.
- **Sustainable Production:** The production of phone books uses an estimated 4.7 million trees-or about 14 football fields' worth of forest-annually. What PSI found is that most publishers do not specify the percentage of post-consumer paper used in phone book production, and they do not back up their claims of sustainability practices with third-party verification.

Five of the 17 publishers earned overall grades in the C-range:

- Dallas, Texas-based *Dex Media* (C+);
- Cedar Rapids, Iowa-based *Hibu/Yellowbook* (C);
- Dallas, Texas-based *SuperMedia* (C); and
- Dayton, Ohio-based *YP* (C+).

Only one publisher-the Dayton, Ohio-based *The Berry Company*-earned higher, with a final grade of B-.

Eleven publishers received grades of "Fail/Incomplete," as they ignored PSI's repeated requests for data and because public information about their practices was unavailable. These include *Choice Directory*, *DAC Group*, *Great Lakes Community Directories*, *Haines Publishing*, *LocalEdge*, *Mueller Publishing*, *Sunshine Media*, *SureWest Directories*, *USA Northland Directories*, *User Friendly Media*, and *Valley Yellow Pages*.

Only one publisher-the Houston, Texas-based *Best Media*, which earned an overall grade of C-responded to PSI's request for information.

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