

Speedy Signs: Offering Eco Friendly Options for Your Business and Personal Sign Needs

By Lori Hill



If you've ever been in the Bethesda Green office, you may have noticed the big Bethesda Green sign in the conference room. I've always assumed that *everything* in the Bethesda Green office is eco-friendly, and indeed, that sign is no different. It was created by Dave Taghipour and the team at [Speedy Signs](#) in Wheaton, MD.

You might wonder, "How can a *sign* be eco-friendly?" The materials used to make the sign are one component, but the business practices of the company making the signs also matter. I produced special events for 16 years and signage was one component of just about every event. I became more conscientious about the materials used to make signs when I realized that foam core and foam board are not going to biodegrade and corrugated plastic, a material I once used on a regular basis, will take a very long time to break down in a landfill. So what materials should you use?

According to Taghipour, "In place of acrylic and other plastic materials, one can use 3form materials. Made from eco-resin, their co-polyester sheet material contains a significant amount of both pre- and post-consumer recycled content. Their products range from 25% to 77.5% pre-consumer recycled content, to 100% post-consumer recycled content. Utilizing 3form materials can contribute to LEED points. In place of conventional banner materials, one can use BIOflex™, the first biodegradable vinyl banner material.

"When exposed to conditions in a landfill (darkness, high heat and moisture), BIOflex™ attracts microbes that break down PVC and turn it into dust. One can also use EarthSmart™, a non-PVC banner material that is 100% biodegradable, compostable, and recyclable. In place of foam core, one can use BioBoard™, which contains approximately 63% post-consumer recycled content (cardboard) and is 100% recyclable."



Recently, Bethesda Green had Speedy Signs make bike rack signs made of recycled aluminum and printed using bio-solvent inks. Speedy Signs made these signs out of a plastic sheet containing approximately 30% recycled content, sandwiched between two sheets of recycled aluminum.

Speedy Signs works hard to minimize its footprint in an industry that is full of scraps, vinyl, and waste. They start by purchasing eco-friendly materials when feasible (clients must be receptive and often be willing to pay a small premium), continue with consciously utilizing the materials to slash the amount of waste, and finish with recycling whatever scraps are left at the end. The post-production vinyl scraps that are too small for their machines to use are absolutely perfect for creative use by artists and children, so they always look to give these items a second chance at utility before being so quick to scrap them.

Although they were one of the original 20 companies to obtain Montgomery County Green Business Certification in April 2010, they engaged in green practices long before then. For example, they were among the first businesses in the Wheaton area to join a buying group to purchase wind power. And even though the landlord at their previous location did not offer any recycling program, they have been recycling cardboard and other items by driving to the Derwood transfer station weekly since the company was founded.

Other company green initiatives include:

- Conserving paper by conducting 90%+ of our promotions through the Internet
- Conserving water by using dual flush toilets and utilizing automatic faucets
- Conserving energy by using flat panel monitors on every computer in the store and turning off unused equipment
- Conserving resources and building with reclaimed wood from barns, fences and old structures along with bamboo and cork
- Encouraging employees to carpool or take public transit, offering incentives
- Using natural bio-degradable cleaning materials throughout the business
- Using e-mail, rather than paper, whenever possible for all correspondence
- Using natural lighting instead of artificial lighting throughout showroom
- Telecommute whenever possible, reducing gas usage and emissions
- Providing employees with access to kitchenware, reducing the need for disposable cutlery
- Providing customers with a station of Energy Star information

Taghipour, who also owns [All-Eco Center](#), which sells sustainable building materials, was involved with launching [GreenWheaton](#).

Lori Hill is a sustainable lifestyle consultant and former green event producer. Visit [her blog](#) for more green lifestyle tips.