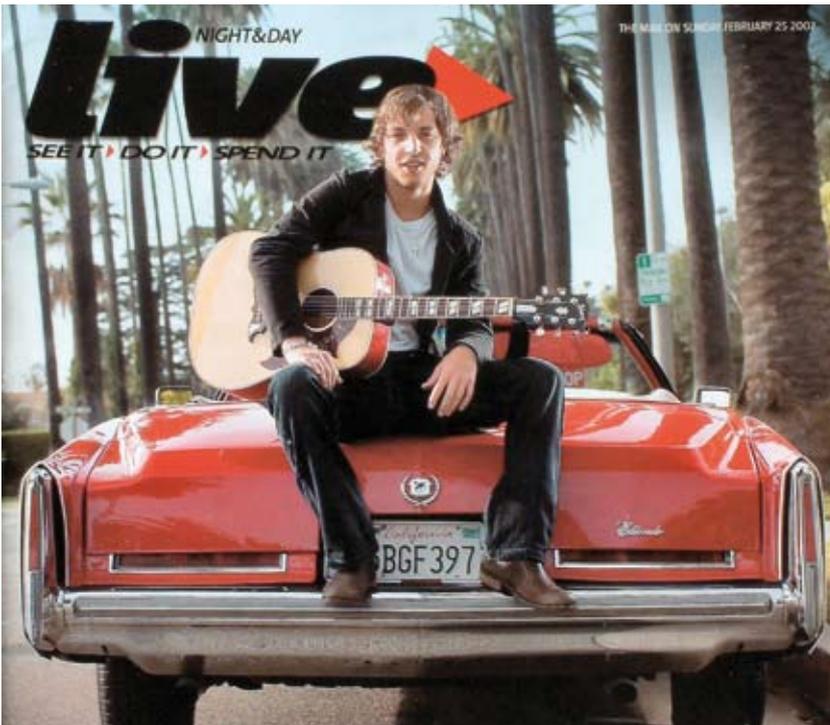


Case Study: Live

Sunday supplement opts for recycled paper



“Running the recycled paper has been no different from running other paper grades”

Live (which used to be called Night & Day) is a good-quality, high-volume colour magazine distributed free with the Mail on Sunday newspaper. It is also sold on a stand-alone basis. Published by Associated Newspapers Ltd, the magazine offers broadly based content typical of weekend newspaper supplements. It includes high-quality, often artistic photographs and a wide range of adverts, which are a crucial funding mechanism for this publication. Each edition of Live has a print run of around 2.6 million.

The inside pages are produced on 52gsm paper with a recycled content of at least 72% recovered fibre. The cover is produced on 100gsm coated wood-free paper made from 100% virgin fibre. Largely due to the length of the print run, a gravure printing process is currently used instead of a heat-set web offset (HSWO) process.

“There have been no problems with paper supply”

Key Facts

- The Mail on Sunday’s colour supplement Live is printed on paper containing at least 72% recovered fibre.
- The paper provided the whiteness, opacity and gloss needed to improve the quality of the final printed product.
- Using recycled paper has not caused any delays in the production schedules of this tight-timescale publication.
- Advertisers were consulted throughout the process of change and welcomed the switch of paper.

Motivation to ‘go recycled’

Associated Newspapers has an extensive track record of using recycled-content paper in its publications. For instance, the London Evening Standard’s weekly supplement ES is printed on 65gsm 100% recycled paper.

Live was originally produced, using an HSWO process, on improved newsprint containing some recovered fibre. Ten years ago, the publishing team decided to explore the scope to upgrade the paper in order to achieve an improvement in quality. Specifically, the aim was to identify a paper offering good gloss, acceptable opacity and good print quality, but at the right price.

At that time, a super-calendered (SC) paper with 100% recycled content was undergoing trials at Associated Newspapers. The Mail on Sunday’s Managing Director saw the results and was sufficiently impressed to authorise the introduction of a 52gsm SC-B Combi paper with at least 72% recycled content for Live’s inside pages.

“The paper we’re using helped us achieve a better-quality publication at a very acceptable price”

Dr Rick Stunt,
Harmsworth Quays Ltd

“The recycled paper performs just like any of the other grades we use”

Tim Evans, Polestar
Sheffield

“On a job like this, the paper has to be totally reliable – and this one definitely delivers”

Tim Evans, Polestar
Sheffield

“Advertisers are happy to pay a slightly higher rate for the space they buy”

Underpinning this decision was the fact that the paper had the right characteristics in terms of quality and was available at an acceptable price. The recycled nature of the paper was not a factor in the decision. Non-recycled SC-A paper grades were also evaluated but were considered too expensive.

The process involved

Before making the switch, the publishing team assessed the properties of the selected paper to ensure it met all key requirements. These included good whiteness, which is particularly important in terms of meeting advertisers’ expectations. With regard to brightness, which was not such a high priority, the selected paper was broadly equivalent to the newsprint it replaced. In accordance with Associated Newspapers’ policy, the non-recycled element of the paper is derived from responsibly managed forests certified in accordance with Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) criteria.

Although the decision to change papers was essentially the responsibility of the Mail on Sunday’s Managing Director, all such changes at Associated Newspapers are subject to a costings approval process. Any switch in paper must deliver a cost benefit, as well as an additional advantage. In the case of Live, the new paper was marginally more expensive than the newsprint it replaced. However, the improvement in quality – and the fact that advertisers were prepared to pay a higher rate to buy space in the magazine – justified the switch. The magazine’s main advertisers were consulted throughout the process of change.

Initial print trials using the selected stock took place over an eight-week period at Polestar Sheffield, the contractor responsible for printing Live. Longer runs then followed in order to assess the paper’s ‘runnability’. Once the final decision to switch to the new stock had been made, old stocks were run down and new supplies were organised over an eight-week period. Associated Newspapers retains responsibility for buying the paper for the magazine and there have been no difficulties with paper supply.

Results and perceptions

In terms of production, the new paper has proved highly reliable – absolutely essential for a weekly magazine produced to a very tight deadline. The stock is run at press speeds of just over 14m per second without any significant problems. There are generally no difficulties with binding the magazine. Very occasionally, a problem has occurred with opening thin sections on the gatherer/stapler, but there is no noticeable difference between recycled and virgin papers in this respect.

In terms of quality, the recycled paper produced satisfactory results, even though at first it was not optimised for HSWO or gravure printing. However, Associated Newspapers worked with the manufacturer to optimise it for HSWO, leading to much better printability and a more stable result. Following a decision to change from HSWO to gravure printing about two years ago, the paper was gravure-optimised, maintaining – or perhaps slightly improving even further – the quality of the printed product. Crucially, advertisers have welcomed the improvement in print quality that the move to recycled paper has delivered. Print quality is continuously monitored by Associated Newspapers’ quality control laboratory, although paper quality remains the responsibility of the paper supplier.

In terms of cost, the switch to recycled stock did involve paying a price premium compared with the previous stock. This was considered acceptable, however, in view of the resulting improvement in quality and the fact that advertising rates could be increased. In Associated Newspapers’ view, the company is paying the market rate for a paper of the appropriate grade.



Conclusions

Making the switch has strengthened the relationship between Live and the advertisers that promote their products in the magazine.

Summary

Associated Newspapers is very pleased with the better quality resulting from the change of papers and has no plans to change stock again.

The printer's experience of recycled papers

Polestar Sheffield produces 1.8 billion magazine sections a year, varying in size from 16 to 96-plus pages. The company's facility employs high levels of automation and includes three 3.8m-wide and two 2.5m-wide presses.

Live is currently the only publication produced by Polestar Sheffield on recycled-content paper. However, the scale of the job means that it constitutes around 14% of the company's total annual output.

The publication is produced on all of Polestar Sheffield's presses from time to time. The common experience across every one of these machines has been that the recycled paper performs every bit as well as any of the other papers used by the company.

For more information contact:

Dr Rick Stunt
Group Paper Director
Harmsworth Quays
Ltd (part of Associated
Newspapers Ltd)
1 Surrey Quays Road
London SE16 7ND
Call: 0207 6347804
E-mail:
Rick.stunt@hqp.co.uk

Tim Evans
Pressroom Manager
Polestar Sheffield
Shepcote Lane
Tinsley
Sheffield S9 1RF
Call: 01142 841700
E-mail: Tim.evans@
polestar-group.com

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Waste & Resources Action Programme

The Old Academy
21 Horse Fair
Banbury, Oxon
OX16 0AH

Tel: 01295 819900
Fax: 01295 819911
E-mail: info@wrap.org.uk

Helpline freephone
0808 1002040

www.wrap.org.uk/manufacturing