



5 Ways to Send a Greener Holiday Greeting

Sending creative, eco-friendly holiday wishes is easier than you think

by Jim Shanman

It's that time again. The year-end holiday season. And if you're like so many business owners, you may be wondering how to say thanks to your clients and vendors in a meaningful, yet memorable way. Money is tighter this year and being "green" is on everyone's mind. Is it possible to send eco-friendly Season's Greetings and do so affordably? It's easier than you think. Here are five suggestions:

1. e-Cards

We all like getting cards. But the blatant waste of resources has caused a lot of people to turn to e-Cards to send holiday wishes. Whether it's a classic, sincere format or a more humorous approach, why not do it electronically? It's affordable, creative and virtually resource-free. In order to stand out in an in-box though, you have to do it better and more creatively than the other guys. There are essentially two options to consider: custom-made or off the rack - online vendors, that is. Off the rack is easy, often free and fast, but they are the same options everyone has, so you lose originality. Plus, since it is coming from a third-party vendor, it may even have banner ads, login issues or worse, end up in your recipients junk bin.

Custom-made is the recommended choice. Original, creative and sincere, the only drawbacks are time and budget. Designed properly, custom e-cards should be part of your regular marketing mix.

2. Give by Giving Back

Of all the earth-friendly practices we enlist, there may be none better than planting a tree. And what better way to do that than doing so in someone's honor? For a small donation, organizations such as [Tree People](#) will plant trees, one at a time or in groves. They will even send a certificate to everyone on your list, notifying them a tree has been planted in their honor. Talk about the gift that keeps on giving.

3. Gift Memberships

Gift memberships to organizations that preserve, protect and educate are ideal ways to enrich lives and celebrate the season. [The Los Angeles County Arboretum and Botanical Garden](#), [The Audubon Society](#) has chapters throughout the U.S., [the Eco Station](#) and [Habitat at Work](#) are just a few of the organizations that are making an effort to improve our planet. Ideal for everyone, especially those with kids, gift memberships enlighten our minds, expose us to myriad causes and ideas and provide activities that are often outdoors.

4. Responsible Holiday Cards

O.k., so you really want to print a holiday card. After all, nothing beats getting something in the mail, right? Fortunately, now it's easier than ever to print responsibly. You can choose certified printers using 100% recycled, post consumer papers and soy inks, both local and [online](#). Another option is to letterpress print on some really cool paper from [Greenfield Paper](#), who makes paper made from recycled junk mail, hemp and recycled paper infused with wildflower seeds. Whatever you choose, make sure it's well-designed and printed and delivered in a timely fashion or your good intentions may go to waste.

You can even enclose a gift card from an eco-friendly store making a nice combination of simple, meaningful and fun. The list is endless, from restaurants to retail stores to services like day spas. Most can even be purchased online. Check these out for some fabulously healthy ideas: [Living Green](#), [M Cafe de Chaya](#) and [The Garden Spa't](#).

5. Give Responsibly

Alright, so you've considered all the above, but you still want to send a gift your clients can hold in their hands and cherish all year. After all, you're hoping to get some advertising mileage out of this too. Fortunately, this too can be do fairly responsibly. For instance, *natural, organic gift baskets*, or a classic book such as "50 Things You Can Do To Save The Earth" make great gifts. Or, more traditionally, *add your logo* to any number of green items, such as mugs, pens, messenger bags, etc.

Obviously, there are many options. Like any marketing effort though, your holiday greeting should be well-planned and unique. It says as much about you and your company as all your other marketing materials, so take advantage. Be creative, be original. Be green.

For over 24 years, Jim Shanman has provided creative, effective design solutions for companies of all sizes in a variety of industries. Working with manufacturers, retailers and non-profit organizations, Jim has created award winning projects that have helped companies improve sales and gain greater market share in their respected industries, and doing so in responsible, eco-friendly ways. Contact Mr. Shanman at jim@asylumdesign.com or (310) 204-4346.

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