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# Graphic design firm takes green approach to work

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When it comes to eco-friendly values, Dion Zuess not only talks the talk, she walks the walk.

The 43-year-old graphic designer powers her home-based design firm using wind and other less taxing forms of energy.

Her company, ecoLingo: earth friendly graphic design, provides graphic design and visual communication services. Zuess uses recycled paper and soy-based inks, among other resources, for the business.

ecoLingo is one of a growing number of graphic design firms taking an environmentally conscious approach to the craft. It is also one of about 40 businesses in Arizona that is listed in the National Green Pages.

The directory of "green" businesses is screened and approved by Co-op America, a Washington, D.C.-based organization that represents firms dedicated to social responsibility, sustainability and the environment.

For clients, especially other "green" businesses, working with ecoLingo ensures they stay in line with their own pro-environment stance.

"We're trying to make our company as sustainable as possible - we want to reduce our environmental footprint wherever we can," said Mick Dalrymple, co-owner of a.k.a. Green, a Scottsdale business that sells green home products. "If we're using an environmental graphic designer, the chance that a hypocritical message gets out there is much less."

Zuess has a long history as a graphic designer. She worked as one for 10 years before starting her own firm in 2002.

She initially started the business as a part-time project and has only recently focused on it as a full-time venture.

Already, Zuess has garnered recognition from her industry peers.

*Graphic Design USA*, a monthly business magazine, named ecoLingo a 2006 American Graphic Design Award winner out of more than 10,000 applicants nationwide.

The firm won for its Earth Day seed packet, a promotional item that Zuess designed for customers and colleagues.

The Arizona chapter of the American Institute of Graphic Arts, commonly known as AIGA, is partnering with ecoLingo to put on a two-day seminar in June about ways that firms can incorporate green practices into their operations.

In Arizona, Zuess is "definitely a pioneer" when it comes to graphic design firms adopting environmentally friendly practices, said Tamara Pavlock, president of the Arizona chapter of AIGA.

Few firms in AIGA's local membership have chosen to go entirely green, but many have started to creep in that direction, Pavlock said.

"What's becoming more common is people looking for more soy-based inks and recycled paper," she said.

Zuess said that she always has been passionate about preserving the environment and mitigating humans' impact on it.

She attended Humboldt State University in Northern California, in redwood forest country where she witnessed first-hand a cleared forest.

The scene reminded her of "one of the worst devastation movies that you've seen," Zuess said. "It's eerily silent. It's really profound to see that kind of devastation."

In running her business, Zuess said she tries to sidestep many of the wasteful practices that are commonplace in the graphic design profession.

For example, she attempts to use as little paper as possible, opting to send proofs using PDFs instead.

She also avoids using bleached paper products.

"The bleaching process . . . is one of the most toxic and polluting," Zuess said.

ecoLingo has clients in and out of the state, both companies and non-profit organizations, according to Zuess.

She said all have the environment in mind.

"At the present time, I only work with businesses that have similar values regarding sustainability or social responsibility," she said.

Dalrymple of a.k.a. Green turned to ecoLingo to design an Earth Day Awareness Passport, which a.k/a. and other businesses used for a scavenger hunt aimed at educating consumers about the environment.

Finding a graphic design firm that offers all environmentally friendly service had been difficult, Dalrymple said.

"We have worked with a combination (of firms) because it's hard to find everything that you need and have it be green also," he said, noting that he anticipates Zuess' approach will be commonplace in the coming years.

"I think she's on the forefront of what's going to end up being normal business practices," he said.

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