

Press Release

Paper Bills and Statements; A Real Necessity In A Digital World

Two Sides launches survey into how consumers are reacting to ever increasing pressure to abandon paper bills and 'go digital'

London, 0800 BST Thursday 25th July 2013. In an international survey from Two Sides carried out by research company Toluna, 2,500 consumers were asked their opinion on a variety of billing and statement related issues with a focus on the present supplier pressure to switch to electronic bills and statements; 'e-billing'.

Key Findings

- 60% of consumers state they would not choose a company which did not offer a paper bill.
- 12% of consumers and 20% of 25 – 34 year olds, say they have switched to a new provider when a charge for paper based bills was imposed.
- 8% of consumers and 16% of 25 – 34 year olds, say they have switched providers because paper bills were withdrawn.
- 57% of consumers overall, 66% of 18 – 25 year olds, and 60% of 25 -34 year olds, believe a paper bill option is still quite or very important when choosing a new supplier.
- 93% of consumers say they are unwilling to pay for paper bills.
- 89% of consumers want to be able to switch between paper and e-bills without difficulty and cost
- 42% prefer to receive financial services bills by post only and 37% prefer to receive utility bills by post only. For financial services, post is the preferred option overall.
- 21% of consumers would refuse to switch to electronic bills and statements when asked to do so.
- 69% of consumers say that postal bills offer better record keeping and 65% say they are easier to check. 48% state that postal bills offer more security and 46% say bills and statements printed on paper are easier to read than off a screen.
- 38% of consumers are clearly 'home printers' with 26% printing up to 20% of their bills and 7% printing out between 80% and 100% of their bills.

Print and Paper
have a great
environmental
story to tell



Consumers are suspicious of environmental claims and appear confused by the environmental arguments used in the promotion of e-billing. Statements such as, “Go Green, Go Digital”, “Save Trees, Go Paperless” can do damage to corporate reputations.

- 15% do not believe claims such as “Go Green, Go Digital”, “Save Trees, Go Paperless”. 14% feel misled and 29% question the validity of these sort of claims.
- 49% of consumers believe that companies are switching to e-billing in order to reduce environmental impact but the majority, 87%, agree that cost savings are the main driver.
- 67% have seen statements saying that e-billing is better for the environment and 63% believe e-billing has a lower environmental impact. However 71% understand that print and paper can be a sustainable way to communicate.

Martyn Eustace, Director of Two Sides, comments, “The Survey shows that whilst electronic billing and statements are now becoming a standard billing method, consumers still want hard copy by post, or a combination of post and e-mail, and there are signs of frustration, from a significant section of consumers, with the tactics used to move consumers from post to e-mail. There is also mistrust of the motivation behind the pressure to switch”

The survey reveals for billers a danger of losing customers if consumers are pushed unwillingly to move to e-billing or subjected to cost penalties. A majority of consumers declare they will not choose companies that do not offer paper bills and are unconvinced about misleading environmental claims.

Eustace continues, “E-billing can be convenient however consumers are seeing through the dubious reasons billers give for changing to e-bills, such as ‘better for the environment’, and realise that their bill provider is just seeking to reduce costs. With 38% of consumers, now at their cost, printing all or some of their bills, the term ‘paper free billing’ must be challenged.

Over 33% of UK households do not own a computer and a properly printed and detailed paper bill is a basic necessity to monitor and record regular expenditure. Billing companies clearly need to review their strategies which are leading to the disenchantment of their customers and disenfranchisement of a significant part of the population. Consumer choice appears to have become a casualty of the digital revolution when it comes to billing.”

Over the past Two Years Two Sides has worked with major billing companies to counter misleading ‘Greenwash’. 80% of the marketing messages which tempted consumers to ‘go online’ because it’s ‘better for the environment’ have been withdrawn. There is growing evidence that digital communications have a significant environmental footprint and, responsibly used, paper can be the sustainable way to communicate.

The report is available for Two Sides members.

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About Two Sides

Two Sides is an initiative by companies from the Graphic Communication Value Chain including forestry, pulp, paper, inks and chemicals, pre press, press, finishing, publishing and printing. Membership spans Europe, the United States and Australia. Our common goal is to promote the responsible production and use of print and paper, and dispel common environmental misconceptions by providing users with verifiable information on why print and paper is an attractive, practical and sustainable communications medium. www.twosides.info

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