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Update: Yellow Page Publishers Doing Poorly at Recycling, Being Green – PSI

Allan Gerlat Aug 19, 2014

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The largest publishers of Yellow Pages in the United States are doing a poor job of being environmentally responsible, according to a new reported card issued by the Product Stewardship Institute (PSI) Inc.

The Boston-based PSI gave 14 of the largest Yellow Pages telephone directories failing or poor grades, and a 15th a mediocre grade, according to a news release from the group.

(The Product Stewardship updated these numbers from what it had initially released, which identified 16 with failing or poor grades and a 17th with a mediocre grade.)

PSI graded each publisher in three performance areas: acceptance of consumer opt-out requests; support for recycling; and sustainable production.

PSI graded publishers on how easy publishers make it to opt-out; it found that most publishers don't accept opt-out requests from independent sources.

On support for recycling, PSI found no evidence of significant effort to reduce the financial burden of municipalities to recycle phone books.

Finally, most publishers don't specify the percentage of post-consumer paper used in phone book production and don't back up claims with third-party verification.

Five of the publishers earned grades in the C range; only one, Dayton, Ohio-based The Berry Co., earned a higher grade of B-. Eleven publishers received grades of fail/incomplete because they failed to provide information to PSI.

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Only one publisher, Houston-based Best Media, responded to PSI's request for information (Best Media received a grade of C-). For the rest, PSI polled its network of members and partners, asked them to find a copy of their local telephone directory and surveyed them about the publication.

"While there are clearly a few leaders in some of the performance categories that we evaluated, and while the industry has taken meaningful steps to reduce its impacts since 2007, overall, publishers' efforts to be more sustainable are highly varied," said Scott Cassel, PSI CEO and founder. "We hope that, by shining the spotlight on the best and worst performers, our report card will spur the industry to provide better information to the public and to change their practices in the most critical areas."

The report is part of a larger PSI awareness campaign about phone books and junk mail that is geared toward reducing paper waste at the source.

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