

By DANIEL LYONS

IT'S SOPHIE VANDEBROEK'S favorite magic trick. Vandebroek, the chief technology officer at Xerox, is standing before a roomful of people at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, holding a pen that shoots out a beam of ultraviolet light. Scrawling with her mini light saber, she draws a large letter X on a piece of paper. Next she pulls out a hair dryer and sets to work heating the paper. As she does, the X disappears. For Xerox, however, this isn't a cinematic trick—it's a new technology they call erasable paper. Someday, Vandebroek says, workers will print out a document they need temporarily, then instead of throwing it in the recycle bin, they'll feed it through a machine with a heating element.

The Paper Chasers

Isn't it ironic: Xerox is hoping it can profit by teaching companies how to reduce their printing.

The newly blank paper will then get loaded back into the printer to use again... and again. Over time, it's a technology that could save millions of dollars in paper costs—and thousands of acres of trees.

It's part of a companywide effort at Xerox to find ways to reduce waste and cut down on the consumption of natural resources—and in a way, it couldn't be more ironic. Xerox, the second-largest company in the printer-copier market (behind HP), seems well aware that the problem they're trying to solve is the very one that they helped create. "We're the company that created information overload," Vandebroek says. For years com-



CREATING TECHNOLOGIES THAT HELP SAVE TREES: Chief technology officer Sophie Vandebroek

puter gurus talked about the paperless office, but since the emergence of the Internet, America's consumption of paper has shot up 40 percent. Now Xerox is trying to create a profitable business by finding ways to help companies make do with fewer printers and copiers, and less paper. It's also trying to apply its expertise to emerging "greentech" industries. "We're looking for radical solutions [by] asking ourselves, 'What does it mean to be radically green?'" Vandebroek says.

In some respects, Xerox has a long history of trying to find ways to reduce, reuse and recycle. It began remanufacturing equipment earlier than competitors, and it

developed earth-friendly technologies like the first machines that automatically did double-sided printing. "Before it was categorized as green, we thought of it as just being efficient," says Xerox president Ursula Burns. But the commitment ratcheted up in 2003, when Xerox set an "energy challenge" to cut its greenhouse-gas emissions by 10 percent by 2012. In fact, Xerox overachieved, cutting 18 percent by 2006, and now has raised its goal, aiming to cut 25 percent by 2012.

Around the same time, Xerox customers began realizing a greener approach could help them win new business. Professional print shops, which represent 28 percent of

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