



## INSIGHT

### A Green Light for Marketing

*The onus is on marketers to go green through their actions, not their words, as consumers become more environmentally aware.*

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When marketers see green it's usually the faces of past presidents; however, more marketers are starting to view the color in a different shade. Ecofriendly marketing has gained popularity among companies in the past year, largely propelled by growing concerns surrounding noticeable climate changes and the depleting ozone layer. Companies of all sizes and across all verticals have begun announcing efforts to "go green": Wells Fargo now offers green energy to its cardholders, Home Depot came out with an Eco Options line for consumers, and Microsoft has begun promoting Live Earth concerts and touting energy saving aspects of Vista. Organizations have found great success with ecofriendly campaigns, but many have discovered that once you go green, there is no going back. "Within the United States today we're looking at a shifting political environment," says Emily Riley, an analyst at Jupiter Research. "As the idea of greener living in general continues, manufacturers and marketers will be part of that change and will reap the benefits of better efficiency and lower costs to becoming green." In a survey conducted in 2006, Jupiter found that 34 percent of consumers reported that they prefer to buy products that are environmentally friendly. Although this number does not indicate that this criterion is the highest on their lists, it does speak to a growing awareness.

Marketing, with its constant direct mailings and piles of swag, has come under criticism for wasting of raw materials, and many companies have looked at ways to make their marketing efforts less ecowasteful. According to Stacey Matheson, founder and president of ecofriendly promotional merchandise and apparel supplier EcoBranders, in the past year her industry has experienced a great deal of growth, a momentum she hopes will continue. "I don't foresee companies giving up their marketing materials entirely in the name of being ecofriendly," Matheson says. "But I do see a trend toward the idea that if we're going to use physical materials to market ourselves, we want them to be as ecofriendly as possible."

EcoBranders and similar suppliers offer choices to marketers that wish to make their companies' methods more environmentally responsible and to communicate this effort to customers. Paper and plastic products may be made out of recycled materials, soy, corn plastic, stone, hemp, or organic cotton--all of which are sustainable materials. Smaller steps for marketers going green can include using recycled paper for direct mailings or publishing pamphlets and brochures online rather than in print. "Our customers really appreciate those efforts and want to hear about them," says Meredith Restein, cofounder of Moonrise Jewelry, a jewelry maker whose designs and marketing materials are largely ecofriendly. "They ask a lot of questions."

One of the biggest mistakes a marketer can make with a green effort is for the company's actions not to live up to its promises. Microsoft has long touted its green efforts, but when the company announced in April a promotional plan to run free taxis in London, blogs and webzines immediately attacked the company for promoting private over public transportation. This may have damaged the company's work toward a green image. "There's such a gigantic amount of info online that if the product does not live up to the advertising, there can easily be a backlash for the advertiser," Riley says. However, she adds, this should not deter companies from such efforts. Instead, they should let environmentally conscious efforts and products, rather than buzz, be the top priority. When it comes to green, Riley says, "The product should be able to speak for itself."