

“GREEN MARKETING” CONCEPTS



HOW TO CASH IN WITH ECOLOGICAL NICHE MARKETING

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Green Marketing Concepts

How To Cash In With Ecological Niche Marketing

Table of Contents

CHAPTER 1 – AN INTRODUCTION TO GREEN

MARKETING CONCEPTSTARGET NOT FOUND!

WHAT EXACTLY IS IT?TARGET NOT FOUND!

DEFINITION TARGET NOT FOUND!

WHERE DID THIS ALL COME FROM? A HISTORY OF ECO-MARKETING TARGET NOT FOUND!

CURRENT STATE OF THE ART TARGET NOT FOUND!

HOTBEDS OF ECO-MARKETING ACTIVITYTARGET NOT FOUND!

RATIONALE.....TARGET NOT FOUND!

REDUCING OPERATIONAL COSTS.... TARGET NOT FOUND!

COMPETING IN GLOBAL MARKETS... TARGET NOT FOUND!

DECREASE LIABILITY..... TARGET NOT FOUND!

EMPLOYEE MORALE TARGET NOT FOUND!

DOING THE RIGHT THING TARGET NOT FOUND!

THE VAST POTENTIAL OF ECO-NICHE MARKETING.....

TARGET NOT FOUND!

WORLDWIDE ECO-MARKETING GAINS IN RECENT YEARS AND FUTURE TRENDS..... TARGET NOT FOUND!

DETERMINING YOUR LIKELY BENEFITTARGET NOT FOUND!

HOW LONG IS LONG ENOUGH TO ESTABLISH YOUR ECOLOGICAL TRACK RECORD?..... TARGET NOT FOUND!

THE PRINCIPLES YOU MUST LIVE BYTARGET NOT FOUND!

*LIARS WILL BE DETECTED – BE HONEST, NO MATTER
WHAT TARGET NOT FOUND!*

*MISLEADING CAMPAIGNS LEAD TO DISAPPOINTMENT
TARGET NOT FOUND!*

SINCERITY IS A MUST TARGET NOT FOUND!

DO YOUR OWN RESEARCH TARGET NOT FOUND!

*ATTACH YOUR "GREEN" LABEL TO SUPERIOR PRODUCTS
ONLY TARGET NOT FOUND!*

CHAPTER 2 – GREENING UP YOUR BUSINESS TARGET NOT FOUND!

DEFINING THE MISSION TARGET NOT FOUND!

TAKE AN HONEST INVENTORY TARGET NOT FOUND!

*MAKE A LIST OF CLEAR AND ATTAINABLE GOALS
TARGET
NOT FOUND!*

*MAKE SURE YOUR EMPLOYEES ARE BEHIND IT
TARGET
NOT FOUND!*

*CREATING A TIMETABLE FOR AGREED UPON CHANGES.....
TARGET NOT FOUND!*

SIMPLE THINGS ANYONE CAN DO TARGET NOT FOUND!

RECYCLING TARGET NOT FOUND!

CAR POOLING AND MASS TRANSIT . TARGET NOT FOUND!

REDUCING PAPER WASTE TARGET NOT FOUND!

BRINGING LUNCH TARGET NOT FOUND!

*CONSERVING OTHER OFFICE PRODUCTS
TARGET NOT
FOUND!*

SAVING ENERGY AT THE DESK TARGET NOT FOUND!

SOME THINGS YOU CAN DO AS A BUSINESS OWNER....

TARGET NOT FOUND!

COMMISSIONING AN ENERGY AUDIT TARGET NOT FOUND!

RENEWABLE POWER COMMITMENT . TARGET NOT FOUND!

SAVING WATER TARGET NOT FOUND!

REWARDING "GREEN" EMPLOYEES .. TARGET NOT FOUND!

ENCOURAGE FLEX-TIME, PART-TIME AND

TELECOMMUTING..... TARGET NOT FOUND!

REDUCE BUSINESS AIR TRAVEL..... TARGET NOT FOUND!

BIO-DIESEL, ELECTRIC, FLEX-FUEL AND HYBRID

VEHICLES TARGET NOT FOUND!

LONG TERM CHANGES AND GOALSTARGET NOT FOUND!

REDUCING RESOURCE CONSUMPTION TARGET NOT FOUND!

MIGRATING TO NON-TOXIC SUBSTANCE TARGET NOT FOUND!

ELIMINATE OR REDUCE HARMFUL EMISSION TARGET NOT FOUND!

MAINTAIN A USEFUL AND PROFESSIONAL WEB PRESENCE TARGET NOT FOUND!

FUNDAMENTAL BUSINESS SHIFTTARGET NOT FOUND!

REFOCUSING YOUR PRODUCT-LINE OR SERVICES INTO THE ENVIRONMENTAL SECTOR TARGET NOT FOUND!

FORGOING TRADITIONAL MARKETING STRATEGIES FOR LOW-IMPACT ALTERNATIVES..... TARGET NOT FOUND!

*GLOBAL OR NATIONAL EMPHASIS VS. LOCAL AND
REGIONAL MARKETING..... TARGET NOT FOUND!*

YOU IN RELATION TO THE COMPETITION
TARGET NOT FOUND!

ASSESSING YOUR COMPETITORS' STANCE
FOUND!

MAKING CLAIMS ABOUT YOU VS. THEM
FOUND!

FOLLOWING A TRAILBLAZER'S EXAMPLE
FOUND!

LEADING THE WAY..... TARGET NOT FOUND!

CHAPTER 3 – MARKETING YOUR BRAND OF GREEN
TARGET NOT FOUND!

IDENTIFYING YOUR AUDIENCE...TARGET NOT FOUND!

THE DEDICATED GREENS..... TARGET NOT FOUND!

THE GENDER GAP TARGET NOT FOUND!

AFFLUENT HOUSEHOLDS..... TARGET NOT FOUND!

SYMPATHETIC MID-INCOME HOUSEHOLD
FOUND!

YOUTH..... TARGET NOT FOUND!

CUSTOMERS YOU'RE SURE TO LOSE NO MATTER WHAT
FOUND!

*MEDIA PROFESSIONALS LIKELY TO REVIEW YOUR
BUSINESS..... TARGET NOT FOUND!*

RE-BRANDING YOUR PRODUCTS OR SERVICES
TARGET NOT FOUND!

*MAINTAINING ECOLOGICAL OPTIMISM AND UPBEAT
SUSTAINABILITY..... TARGET NOT FOUND!*

EASE OF USE..... TARGET NOT FOUND!

SAVING MONEY TARGET NOT FOUND!

QUALITY TARGET NOT FOUND!

LABOR RELATIONS..... TARGET NOT FOUND!

ORGANIC, FAIR TRADE AND OTHER REGULATED TERMS ...

TARGET NOT FOUND!

ULTRA-MODERN, HIP AND TOTALLY COOL
TARGET NOT FOUND!

UNIQUELY LOCAL..... TARGET NOT FOUND!

ARTISAN..... TARGET NOT FOUND!

UPSCALE WITHOUT ALIENATION TARGET NOT FOUND!

MAKE SURE THE FIRST TRY IS AS LOW RISK AS

POSSIBLE TARGET NOT FOUND!

PROVEN UTILITY..... TARGET NOT FOUND!

DON'T GOUGE, EVEN IF YOU CAN.... TARGET NOT FOUND!

FOSTERING LOYALTY IN YOUR CUSTOMER BASE

TARGET NOT FOUND!

PERSONALIZE YOUR SERVICE..... TARGET NOT FOUND!

BE LOCAL..... TARGET NOT FOUND!

CREATING TRUST..... TARGET NOT FOUND!

SERVICE TARGET NOT FOUND!

CONSISTENT MESSAGES..... TARGET NOT FOUND!

TRANSPARENCY..... TARGET NOT FOUND!

HAVING A PLAN FOR REFERRALS TARGET NOT FOUND!

EDUCATIONTARGET NOT FOUND!

SPEAK PLAINLY AND DON'T CONDESCEND
TARGET NOT FOUND!

*EXPLAIN YOUR TECHNICAL BREAKTHROUGH*TARGET
NOT FOUND!

*STRAIGHT INFORMATION ON HEALTH IMPACT*TARGET
NOT FOUND!

EMPHASIZE POSITIVE PROGRESS ... TARGET NOT FOUND!

*GET SOME HIGH PROFILE CLIENTS TO ASSIST*TARGET
NOT FOUND!

REACHING YOUR POTENTIAL CUSTOMERTARGET
NOT FOUND!

*GREEN ROUTES AND SUSTAINABLE TOURISM*TARGET
NOT FOUND!

LOCAL SUSTAINABLE GUIDES..... TARGET NOT FOUND!

SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES..... TARGET NOT FOUND!

OFFICES OF SUSTAINABILITY..... TARGET NOT FOUND!

*VIRAL MARKETING AND ONLINE OPPORTUNITIES*TARGET
NOT FOUND!

*LOCAL MEDIA AND TRADE PUBLICATIONS*TARGET NOT
FOUND!

TRADE SHOWS TARGET NOT FOUND!

CONCLUSION.....TARGET NOT FOUND!

BIBLIOGRAPHYTARGET NOT FOUND!

USEFUL LINKSTARGET NOT FOUND!

CHAPTER 1 – AN INTRODUCTION TO GREEN MARKETING CONCEPTS

Green Marketing Concepts is an opportunity for your business to do the right thing and be rewarded for it. Trends suggest that businesses that don't identify as ecologically friendly or local in the next decade will risk being labeled as low-rent or hopelessly out of date. Real and substantial economic rewards await those who approach ecological and sustainable niches with a sincere concern and good ideas.

WHAT EXACTLY IS IT?

You know what all these words mean by themselves. When put together they spell out a powerful and very 21st century approach to selling products and services. Not only are you selling your wares but also, offering consumers a better deal or better way of doing things that is set apart from the conventional.

Firstly, it helps to know just what people mean when they talk about "greening" up their product. Whether you're a small business owner or a fledgling in the marketing department of a large chain, it helps to have a solid background in what you're trying to accomplish. It is also helpful to see how history has treated such movements and how they responded. Lastly, some places serve as models that you can

draw inspiration and ideas from. When looking at what these places have in common, we find a pattern of innovation that you can emulate.

Definition

Sometimes called "green marketing" or "natural branding," among other things, the whole concept is based upon the notion that being environmentally friendly might be part of the successful marketing strategy of a product, service or anything. Most consumers are savvy enough now to realize they have a "vote" with everything they purchase. Though still a minority, there is a sizeable and ever-growing segment of the population that bases much of their consumption decisions on their perceptions of how a product will affect the environment and themselves.

Environmental niche marketing is also about creating that niche where it may not have existed before. There was no modern \$4 coffee market until Starbucks created it. There were no Organics until farmers who have always practiced sustainable agriculture decided to market their produce as such. No one cared what sort of light bulbs they had when energy was cheap and plentiful – it took the modification of technology made for RVs and space flight to even bring low power consumption products such as compact fluorescent light bulbs to market. In the end, the idea is to let sound environmental practices be your guide to creating a new

audience for your product or service--one that is willing to pay a premium to let you help them do the right thing.

Lastly, it's all about actually backing up any claims you might make as to the environmentally benign nature of your business. In fact, not only do you have to live up to your claims, but you need to market yourself in such a way that people will assume you're being truthful. People who are already looking for "green" products will avoid yours if it smells like a hypocritical rat. This is your chance to practice what you preach. For once, those who play by the rules will be rewarded.

It is perhaps useful to note here that the environment extends beyond plants, animals, air and water. People are part of the environment as well, since we all live in this world – a very large system but closed for all intents and purposes. People who are taken advantage of and suffer dire economic consequences become desperate. Desperate people will resort to any means just to stay alive. Poaching, deforestation and pollution are very often the ultimate consequences of violating human dignity. Therefore, eco-marketing necessarily extends to human rights.

Where Did This All Come From? A History of Eco-Marketing

It could be argued that the movement began with the advent of chemical agriculture in the early 20th century. At that time, all agriculture was "organic" because there was no other way. Almost as soon as "super-phosphates" and ammonium began to be used, there were some who wanted to do things the old way, without purchased inputs and machines. The term was coined in the 1940s, though it wasn't until the "back to the land" movement of the 1970s that there were the first inklings of a "natural foods" market.

The first natural foods stores that sprung up in the 1970s sold not only the then loosely defined organic produce but also, a small supply of "old fashioned" products for the home and yard. For instance, they might sell cleanser but only Bon Ami. Instead of a flea bomb, you might find Borax. There was no national distributing chain of natural or organic products, so they were all local, by default. Such stores tended to be found in large cities or college towns. Just as the last of the small-town general stores that once carried the old-fashioned products were closing down in favor of the supermarkets that sprung up all over the nation in the 1950s, the natural food stores and the first co-ops were opening up.

For nearly 30 years, such stores operated with a small but loyal base of people with allergies, foodies (where else could you find dulse or quinoa in 1976?), hippies, students and other supposedly fringe elements. They saved packaging and money by allowing customers to fill their own containers.

Shoppers were encouraged to save a bag by bringing their own. Many held weekly farmers' markets. While their numbers slowly grew, it was not until the mid-1990s that such stores really began popping up all over the country. By staying in business all those years until it became fashionable to "be green," they proved there was a small but dedicated contingent would be willing to pay a little more and put up with a little inconvenience to shop somewhere they could be confident the products offered were in line with a shared set of ideals.

In the early 1980s, "60 Minutes" ran a feature on the dangers of a then-common agricultural chemical called Alar that was found in great quantity on the all-American apple. By that time, there were very few people not using chemical sprays on their apples, and when demand skyrocketed overnight for chemical-free apples, the orchards were not prepared. In a scenario to be repeated many times throughout the decade, a health scare of one sort or another would have the general populace clamoring to purchase "natural" goods. With far more demand than supply, unscrupulous people looking to cash in on the demand would offer sub-standard goods, or at least, goods that might have been fine for the dedicated user. Either way, the consumers would get a bad impression of natural foods and go back to the supermarket.

In the early 1990s, some large supermarket chains began to offer a few goods in bulk. At first it was just granola and

candy, but the concept caught on quickly because consumers realized they could save money. Unlike some of the recession-era ideas that were tried in the early 80s, such as having people write the price on their canned goods and the once familiar yellow and black generic items, people actually liked bins. At the same time, organic produce, though still accounting for a tiny fraction of even a single percent of the overall market, was garnering enough of a price premium that producers and the USDA took notice. Though it would take nearly 13 years to pass, the committee to explore a national organic standard was created in 1990. The EPA, under President Clinton, began to mark the most efficient examples of otherwise power-hungry devices such as computer monitors and water heaters as being "energy star" compliant with an easily identifiable sticker.

It was around this time in the late 1980s and early 90s that purveyors of other products began to realize there was a market for goods that utilized recycled materials, didn't use chemicals such as bleach or pesticides, didn't take advantage of exchange rates to take advantage of farmers in the tropics, used good old' American ingenuity to create handy devices that allowed you to utilize a non-chemical approach to household tasks, cosmetics and personal care items without fragrance and dyes, cruelty free cosmetics not tested on animals and any number of periodicals and books on the subject. Emphasis on locality, or at least region, would save the cost and fuel of transport, as supply chains in the

supermarkets grew hundreds of miles each year with the consolidation of distribution networks. The Eco-marketplace was born.

Every year since, these markets have grown by leaps and bounds, making strong inroads with several demographics not previously associated with the ecological movement that brought you the first Earth Day. Ecology didn't even exist as a science before the mid-1960s, despite having a great deal in common with the natural science of the eighteenth century. Scientists have now identified several thousand distinct and man-made chemicals that we come in contact with every day and current research is just beginning to discover the impact of these chemicals when they accumulate in the body and interact. The staying power of the movement in tandem with the lifelong "body burden" of chemicals associated with modern convenience has made some people make an effort to change their purchase decisions. Making it easy for them to do so is the key.

That the new localism movement now offers uniquely quality goods with a relationship is revolutionary. Labeling requirements that actually are bound by law to mean something guarantee consumers won't be taken advantage of. And while price premiums have fallen somewhat as some of the conventional players enter the wider "green" marketplace, people are still willing to pay more for what is perceived as a better product.

Current State of the Art

As we progress into the second decade of the 21st century, more products are being reformulated or repackaged as environmentally friendly. Even more than that, young people are starting their businesses with environment and localism in mind. Choosing to make things that are "real," they use fresh ingredients from local farmers and create food and goods from scratch. They are able to differentiate themselves from others by serving unique dishes and creatively recycling objects into art. They use organic produce, not because of its impact on the watershed, but because they think it tastes better. They use recycled goods because they are available. Seasonal dishes are in -- Sysco is out.

Larger companies now realize that to capture new market segment today and tomorrow, they need to deliver a product that is superior in some way to its conventional counterpart instead of relying on the good intentions of others. Suppliers realize they need to make it an easy choice for consumers. They are paying attention to movements in other countries (and not just the European Union) to boycott companies with unfair or unsafe business practices. A sizeable portion of the population will go out of their way to avoid supporting companies that pollute their home countries, no matter where they are.

Indeed, the trend in eco-marketing is to, in many instances, downplay the ecological aspect and accentuate the uniquely

upscale nature of the product or service. Consumers still want to make a personal statement with their purchase decisions. The trend towards diversified product lines has reached a saturation point where instead, people want totally unique and handmade items instead of 18 kinds of taco. At least in the most developed world, what people crave is something real and authentic. Why select a milk chocolate bar from a hundred foil-wrapped Cadbury's offerings when you can get a locally made 80% cocoa bar, wrapped in recycled wax paper and made with exotic distillate water flavorings and fair trade cocoa?

Hotbeds of Eco-Marketing Activity

You might be surprised where some of this activity is taking place. Certainly in the same towns that opened up those first natural foods stores 35 years ago but also, in small towns across the countryside that suffered a steady exodus of farm families and local business. Not only people that live in cosmopolitan European (EU) cities like London and Prague but also, villages in India and the Philippines that do not want to become beholden to foreign creditors. Anywhere people want to create a sense of place, it not only becomes necessary to protect that place from ecological destruction but also, to market what makes that place special to locals and tourists.

In the media blitz to market differing product lines of various products and services as alternatives to the same old Doritos or Cable TV, these advertisers may have been even more

effective than they imagined. People worldwide have responded by foregoing multi-national brands entirely and gone for the real variety of niche-products. It just so happens, these products are very often environmentally conscious, as well. For good or ill, consumers are starting to see them as one and the same.

Some of the most successful eco-niche marketing campaigns are unknown outside the hometowns they originate in. What they seem to have in common is a highly educated populace, be that formal higher education or a well established community continuing educational program. They very often have well-organized social structures and community cohesiveness -- places that hold regular community meetings or street-fairs are good examples.

Communities with a large population of people in their 20s and 30s seem to also be those that have people who grew up in a world where there has always been a science of Ecology. When such folks decide to start up a business, they are looking for a cheap and innovative approach to creating the products and services they think would be cool and currently don't exist.

Places with large relative populations of women and children as well as the now burgeoning populations of retirement-age baby-boomers are also very likely to consider organic and ecologically friendly products for perceived health benefits,

whether they actually exist or not – they're hedging their bets where their own or their family's health is at stake.

RATIONALE

Why should you consider making such a bold leap into what was once a fringe market? There are quite a few sound economic reasons to do so in addition to the ever-growing list of moral reasons. You can save money, look good and be good, all in one fell swoop.

Reducing Operational Costs

At the heart of every move toward sustainability is conservation. Using less energy and fewer materials will save you money in the short and long term. As the price of oil goes up and up over the course of time, the cost of transported goods, yours and the ones you purchase, will go up accordingly. Historically, every time the cost of energy has increased, no matter what the source of energy has been, economies have struggled. It happened in ancient Egypt and it happens today. By using fewer of those resources, you insulate yourself against rising costs and put yourself in a position to become the low-price option when the operational costs of your competitors go up more sharply than yours.

Competing in Global Markets

If you do choose to ship your products to other countries, you may find rules and regulations pertaining to manufacturing and distributing are changing. For example, many countries are now forcing the manufacturers of electronic devices to take them back for recycling when consumers are done with them. If you want to do business in the EU, for example, you may need to provide some proof of your environmental stewardship.

It is also useful to note that even if you live somewhere in the United States that does not subscribe to the global nature of environmental health, other places feel differently. Even within the United States, there are plenty of places that require different labeling for products that are deemed perfectly safe by other states. California is a good example. If you market anything with a cord that came from China, it almost certainly contains trace amounts of lead in the cord's insulation. When electrical current is drawn through it, the heat may cause microscopic lead particles to aerosolize. As a result, your product must contain a lead warning label on the cord to be sold in the state. Some states and cities are outlawing products that contain trans-fats or even certain agricultural products such as foie gras or veal.

Your business may also be at risk if you continue to do business with countries and companies that pollute or have poor human rights records. Successful boycotts of South

African products during the Apartheid-era that came to a head in the 1980s are widely regarded as being part of the reason the government finally collapsed.

Decrease Liability

This is especially important for companies that provide services for or manufacture durable goods. Companies proven to value money above the health and well being of their customers can be taken to court and sued under certain circumstances. Cigarette manufacturers are good example. It has been shown in court that as a class they blocked information regarding the deleterious effects of using their products. Whether people should have been able to figure out they were being lied to is not the point – they were found liable and eventually settled for billions of dollars. The lawsuits were unthinkable 40 years earlier, but when the political climate changed, companies still in business were held accountable.

Avoid having to worry about whether people could hurt themselves or suffer some sort of health consequences from your product or service. Conduct your business on the up-and-up from the start and that is one less potential headache you or your successor will have to deal with.

Employee Morale

People like working for companies they can believe in. Your sales people will find it that much easier to sell products they themselves can truthfully endorse without having to choose between their moral principles and a paycheck. The newspaper drives the boy-scouts held in the 1970s and 80s were a good example of people getting excited to recycle. Your company's new "Green Mission" can be something to rally around and get excited about. Considering that over half the people in most recent polls consider environmental issues to be "important" to them, it stands to reason that many of those people would feel good to be part of a business that made it a priority to support causes they personally felt were important.

Doing the Right Thing

At the end of the day, you need to feel good about your business, too. Otherwise, why do it? If there were a way to make more money and be environmentally friendly without a huge amount of bother, most people would do it. By successfully marketing your product or service as environmentally friendly, or even making the changes in your operations public, you can achieve both! For most business owners, it is simply a matter of not having time to educate themselves on how to successfully leap into the green unknown. While there's more involved than changing the color of your label, it probably isn't nearly as hard as you

might think to reinvent your corporate image and focus. Hopefully this short book will help you in your goal to be a profitable *and* sustainable company.

THE VAST POTENTIAL OF ECO-NICHE MARKETING

Companies that have railed against organics and ecologically friendly products in the past have been adopting them with increasing frequency in the last few years. You can be sure this would not have happened if there wasn't money to be made. While other segments of the market have been lagging, Green products have been at least doubling their sales every year and making inroads into those very same supermarkets and "big box retailers" that wouldn't stock their products even 10 years ago.

They say that once you've heard of a trend, it's over, but in this case, there's market share to capture and a vast potential for profit well into the future.

Worldwide Eco-Marketing Gains in Recent Years and Future Trends

The "green" consumer segment won't be going away anytime soon. Unlike short-lived trends that have come and gone throughout the 20th century, this one has been a very long time coming and might be thought of as the backlash against a post-modern ideal that has gone on far longer than it should have. In short, this is more fundamental than mini-

skirts or pet rocks. More than a fashion, this is very clearly tied to a reason that becomes more compelling every day.

While the greatest gains in the green marketplace have thus far been in more developed nations, any population that attains even lower-middle class affluence is likely to consider environment important enough to put their money where their mouth is. In less developed nations with significant portions of the populace living in poverty conditions, the allure of wonton spending and fine things remains strong. That such nations are those predicted to be hardest hit by the impacts of climate change is a tragic irony.

As one of the very few nations that did not sign the Kyoto Protocol, the United States has, in some important ways, fallen behind much of the rest of the industrialized world. EU nations that have seen the most obvious impacts of global climate change, such as Switzerland and Sweden, have been among the first to have a significant proportion of the populace seeking ecologically friendly alternative products and services. By the same token, less developed nations that disproportionately suffer the effects of pollution and flooding as a consequence of deforestation may be the most likely to adopt laws that require companies doing business there to adhere to ecologically sound practices.

For instance, while China currently is making it very easy for polluters to flaunt laws already on their books, international

pressure that cut into their bottom line would certainly change that in a heartbeat. If your business relies upon components from a known polluter, even companies that have no interest in protecting their environments or citizens are interested in preserving their profits. Unless there is someone that could make components for your product in a sustainable manner, you may find yourself in dire straits if a more reputable supplier cannot be found on short notice. On the other hand, those who have a demonstrated green record will be rewarded as forward thinkers in a future marketplace that rewards that sort of thing over stalwart traditionalism.

When operating locally, current trends are towards a more subdued type of eco-marketing that emphasizes sustainability and localism over any one specific element of ecologically friendly operations. Instead of talking about how organic the produce is, you can discuss your relationships with local farmers. In essence, the human element is "in." Your participation in the local "scene" is just as important as where you source your materials. What's important is

For instance, if you hope to open a vegetarian café, you'll want to let everyone know that you intend to use only fresh, organic and seasonal produce from local farmers. Since your likely customers are already a savvy bunch who are likely to be up on such issues, you won't have to worry about explaining to them why this is a good idea. You may want to go out of your way to promote the farms, perhaps by putting

up an art show of agriculturally inspired works by another local artist. It might be just as simple as gearing your menu toward regional cuisine. Serving seasonal items will certainly keep your costs down.

However, if you're opening up a pizza parlor that specializes in staying open late, even if you're using the same produce as the vegetarian café above, you might be wise to make that a secondary issue in your marketing. You certainly don't want to be off-putting to the pepperoni lovers. Should someone ask, you can talk about your commitment to sustainability in all the facets of your organization, instead of just your food suppliers. And, if someone does ask pointed questions about your food suppliers, you have nothing to hide.

In each case, the expectations of your audience are balanced with what sort of ecologically friendly niche you're looking to fill. That seems to be the lesson here – that green marketing is growing up, and it's no longer enough to change your name and packaging. People like butterflies, but don't see what that really has to do with painting the living room. The future of Green Marketing Concepts in a marketplace where people can pinpoint exactly what they need is to make things better and more personal than has been possible for a very long time. Mass produced goods are out – the personal touch is in. Some people call these boutique goods, but as time goes on, it seems the most successful organizations will find a middle ground between Uptown and Wal-Mart. In general, people

want to feel good about the money they spend and will increasingly prefer to give that money to people they think are deserving and will make good purchase choices of their own with it.

Determining Your Likely Benefit

Your likely benefit from adopting an Green Marketing Concepts campaign depends on a great many factors, not the least of which is how much you're willing to put into it. Equally important is what you're trying to sell. If your product is not something people are generally aware there is a problem with, you'll have to educate them about it before creating the need. If that's the case, you'll need to lean more heavily on the (well-researched) niche aspect. When you you're your customer's attention, then you can tell them all about the ecological angle. Your benefit will be in repeat business, whereas those who are seeking ecological alternatives will be your first time customers.

It is also important to note that not all benefit is directly economic. Indirect economic impacts, some of which are not felt for many years, can be thought of as compounding over time, like a savings account. When calculating your economic benefits, you'll need to take intangibles like community goodwill, employee loyalty and good health into account, too.

For instance, let's say you're a dry cleaner. It is well known in the public that dry cleaning chemicals are very hazardous, not just for the environment around wherever the chemicals are discharged, but also for the people who use them. Your busy customers know they need their shirts cleaned and would gladly pay a few extra dollars to have it done in an ecologically sound manner. You've advertised your business in the local "green pages," so they can find you on that basis alone.

Now that you've got them in the store, you could offer premium services that are unique to your operation. For instance, you might offer a service by where you deliver the shirts to them in your ultra-efficient delivery vehicle instead of each customer making a special trip in their SUVs. Perhaps as part of your service, you offer nice, reusable hangars instead of disposable wire ones that you pick up with the dirty shirts, just like old-fashioned milk bottles. Because it's an energy intensive business, you can make the choice to use 100% renewable electricity. You could sign up for an insurance policy that gives you and your employees a break on the premium if they ride their bike or walk to work more than 3 days a week. By not using the toxic chemicals, you're also protecting your own health and that of your employees and neighbors – benefits that are indirectly economic when they don't spend the last years of their shortened lives drawing Medicare for horrible, debilitating lung ailments. Sponsor the little league team and help encourage youth

sports. Stock the snack machine in your waiting area and lunchroom with granola bars and fruit juice instead of candy and pop. Offer your assistance and become active in the neighborhood association.

Now, you won't be trying to sell your services based upon all that information. You may mention that you use non-toxic substances that produce a cleaner and safer shirt. You will certainly want to make sure everyone knows about your premium service. The rest is all word of mouth. They will see your hybrid or bio-diesel delivery truck. Your employees will tell their friends about what a great place they work at. Without placing a single ad, your business grows when people who live nearby say, "I hear good things about that place."

Anything that promotes local cohesion, energy or resource conservation and health, saves money today and tomorrow. By offering a superior product or service that is convenient and has a good feeling attached to it, you're helping others help you to do the right thing. Once these customers that keep coming back for years become your friends and associates, you can tell them why you do these things and maybe they'll be so impressed they implement the changes in their own business and the cycle starts over again. That is the power of localism and distributed networking. You are not trying to convince everyone all at once. Just show people how easy it is and they'll want to know more.

So, what is the overall benefit of such a scenario? As you can see, it's somewhat subjective. It relies upon a commitment from you and your employees, but once the ball is rolling, things become easy. Many of the things you can do to make yourself known in your community require a commitment of time rather than money – how much is your time worth? Is it worth more or less if you're doing something enjoyable, like helping serve hot dogs at the local adult kick-ball game?

It might be useful to talk to other people in your industry, especially if they are currently pursuing marketing along these lines. They may be able to give you an idea of what does and, perhaps more importantly, doesn't have a high return on investment. If you're a pioneer, better yet, but you need to be prepared to take your changes one thing at a time to evaluate what is most effective in your particular sphere.

How Long is Long Enough to Establish Your Ecological Track Record?

Again, it depends not only on what type of product or service you're hoping to market, but also how you plan on going about that. The pressure to demonstrate an ecological commitment differs for a yarn shop and a manufacturer of washing machines. As a general rule of thumb, the longer your product is likely to stick around, the longer your environmental commitment will have to extend for you to be taken seriously.

By the same token, the longer you've been in business without a commitment to ecologically friendly operations, the longer you'll have to do penance in the eyes of your customers. The greater the perceived ecological sin, the longer you'll have to keep up your new commitment before people will seem to respond in a positive manner. This can last for as long as a few years in the case of very large businesses, such as public utilities that may have a certain amount of public scorn to deal with just because they're the only game in town. This seems to hold true unless a new generation has just taken the business over – then all is forgiven as long as you make the generational nature of the transaction known.

Otherwise, if your company is a start-up, your slate is clean. In that case, you simply need to make sure you don't exhibit any contradictions in your packaging. For instance, if your product is billed as saving paper or plastic somehow, distributing it in blister packs seems a bit incongruous. By the same token, a service that claims to help customers save fossil fuels probably shouldn't show up driving a Hummer. Small inconsistencies are forgiven, but large or obvious ones are hypocritical and easily spotted by a discerning public.

THE PRINCIPLES YOU MUST LIVE BY

Reasonable or not, portraying yourself as an ecologically friendly purveyor of niche-market goods or services carries with it the connotation that you do business with an uncommon integrity. In reality, the same values that pervade any other sort of business are found in roughly the same proportions in so-called green or natural businesses. Despite all evidence to the contrary, when the public finds out such a business is slightly less than truthful or even playing fast and loose with the facts, the backlash will be disproportionately harsh. Perhaps it's a consequence of the disappointment people feel – no one likes being a dupe. Or, even more likely, it's the way the "conventional" competition jumps on the pile when the slightest whiff of scandal is detected.

It may not seem fair, but that's the way it is. Protect yourself by choosing to operate with the highest level of integrity from the get-go. If you make it your mission to never disappoint your customers and clients, the odds are pretty good you can spend far less time performing damage control than your competition, freeing up more time to make money. If you're going to go green, do it right.

Liars Will Be Detected – Be Honest, No Matter What

From all the long years of being a fringe movement without widespread support, if there's one thing the "dedicated green" segment of the market has in spades, it's an investigative

network. Sneak a little horse hoof in your supposedly vegan marshmallows and you can be sure it will be found out. If not now, later, and the smack down is going to be hard. Most co-ops, for instance, won't carry foods they can't verify the integrity of. Not known for having a very good sense of humor, these folks do not take kindly to companies that make nutritional yeast on one side of the factory and make animal testing restraints on the other.

While an extreme example, don't think that having the companies under different names will keep you from being found out. Your attempts at subterfuge or dancing around the issue will just make it worse. It is imperative that you approach all your dealings with the utmost in honesty. Even bending the truth a little bit is verboten. Even if the news isn't very good, people can forgive a company that's trying and is willing to admit it – people actually really like to forgive as long as you approach it with the proper humility. Just ask anyone in public relations – today's disaster might make page 6 while yesterday's cover-up will land above the fold.

Misleading Campaigns Lead to Disappointment

Your product or service is already great. Why embellish? Making exaggerated claims as to the effectiveness or quality of your product is tantamount to lying about it. This is a sure-fire way to ensure you don't have repeat sales and in the end, that is the goal of Green Marketing Concepts – establishing a

mutually beneficial relationship where both parties trust each other to be working toward the same goals and ideals.

When products don't perform as billed, you also run the risk of not only, turning consumers off on your product but also, on other "green" products that do exactly what they say. Talk about compounding the bad! Don't be responsible for doing disproportionate harm.

This may require you to do some extensive testing to see just what the limits of your product or service are. You might want to get friends and family involved in the testing process. Prior customers are a good source of information on how a product works, if you ask what they'd like to see in the new and improved version. Be sure and reward good, honest answers from your product testers with some swag, no matter how small. Unless they have a vested interest in your success, they're doing you a big favor.

What you choose to do with that information is your own affair -- consumer report data is golden. You should be on constant lookout to see if people think your product lives up to its billing. In fact, you should be aiming for people to be pleasantly surprised by your product's performance. Finding a good balance of expectations will ensure people have a good feeling when they see your product on the shelf again or are asked for a recommendation.

Sincerity is a Must

You simply must come off as if you mean what you say or claim. The only sure way to make sure you do this is to be forthright in your dealings with customers and the media, whatever form it may take. It isn't good enough to be able to back up your claims, but you must also really feel that you're doing the right thing.

People who are doing what they love are easy to identify. They get really worked up about what they're doing in a way that most of us don't really feel about money, as nice as it may be. It takes ideas to really get people wound up like that. If the notion of going "green" doesn't really appeal to you or you find your employees are dead-set against it, you might not want operate uphill. Instead of infectious optimism, you and your campaign run the risk of appearing tired and weary.

If on the other hand, you're really are committed to making a change in your operations and marketing strategy, you can't help but seem like the real deal. Take a look at some of the more successful products and services in the ecological niche marketplace – they all seem to be concerned with the things you'd expect them to be concerned about. They seem genuine in their desire to help you do the right thing and make it as painless as possible.

Do Your Own Research

One of the first things you do before writing and committing to any plan is the research. In the case of marketing, you want to not only go into it knowing just what you plan to achieve but also, just who your customers are. Moreover, you want to know everything about your potential customers you possibly can. Relying upon stereotype and assumption just isn't good enough, since it's your livelihood that's at stake here.

Being a hot topic in marketing these days, there are a lot of studies that have been done lately regarding who is buying products that currently are on the market, but that only gives you a profile of their customers. It cannot be stressed enough that the research others have done is only the roughest of guides to give you an idea of where to start. This is not the place to cut corners.

If you're already in business, you can talk to your existing customers and find out what they're looking for in a premium offering. If your product or service is looking to entice a demographic that isn't commonly thought of as ecologically friendly, you'll be blazing new trails and will have to find out just what is likely to motivate. It's entirely likely that your customers will consider the ecological nature of your product a side benefit of the quality or convenience your repackaged or reformulated product or service delivers.

If your business is new, you'll be coming at it from the opposite direction. You'll be hoping to find an existing demographic, maybe one that finds a related product or service particularly desirable. You'll be looking to see who is a good fit for what you have to offer and then find out how best to reach them.

Either way, you might want to spend some time talking with potential customers, perhaps giving away samples and asking them what they think about it. Asking questions as you might on a product survey is helpful. Find out what aspect of their lives you can help them with. Large companies employ people to conduct focus groups. If your business is small, you can perform your own small version of this. Be sure to talk to a wide group of people to accurately gauge their responses.

And most importantly, don't overlook demographics that others might dismiss out of hand. After all, untapped potential has the greatest returns. You can focus on a small percentage of a large demographic if you already have wide distribution or try to create a craze within a very small market segment. Either way, the more you find out about them, the better off you and your business will be.

Attach Your "Green" Label to Superior Products Only

As has been noted already, it's not enough to simply be the ecologically sensitive version of a product. You need to deliver something extra for those extra pennies. Otherwise, your

customers will feel like you're trying to take advantage of them. The difference must be somehow demonstrable.

If you're offering a product that will help your customers save money by conserving, the difference has to be great or they won't bother recommending you to their friends. If your food goods taste better because they're better for you, it has to be noticeable. If that means you need to put extra time into the presentation or preparation, so be it. Assume you've only got one chance to really knock their socks off. If your product is better because it's more creative or useful, you need to make sure you stay on top of things and deliver knock your socks off customer service. If your going to market your locality, be sure you're available to interact, and always put your best foot forward, offering the sort of experience only a neighbor can provide.

What you have to offer must be compelling. If the only difference between you and the competition is how someone might feel about your product or something esoteric like that, a window for someone else to nose in on your success will be open. Your niche should be the only one quite like it.

CHAPTER 2 – GREENING UP YOUR BUSINESS

Now that you've decided to go this route after some serious and heartfelt consideration, it's time for action. The first step to finding your ecological niche is making sure you practice what you preach. While you don't have to be 100% done with your changes before you start marketing your new product or service, you will definitely need to have your plan fully laid out. The process of defining the way you're going to do business will help you get your marketing strategy more clearly in focus.

DEFINING THE MISSION

All business operations and probably all personal ones should have a mission statement. It should be straight and to the point. If you're already in business, odds are you have one already. Dust it off and take a good look at it. Does it need to change? How can you most clearly define what you hope to accomplish. Why are you making the change? If you're coming up with a new mission, what can you do with this organization? Are you providing something new or better? How will you gauge whether you're staying on mission? Careful planning at this stage can help everyone stay focused on what's important and not get bogged down in the details.

Take an Honest Inventory

What can you really hope to accomplish in the first year? Do you have any way of really delivering as you hope to? Now is the time to sit down and do some figures. Even if you don't have to approach a bank with a financial plan, you'd better have one. How many organic veggies can you put on each pizza and still make enough profit to keep up with the level of service you've determined is ideal? Get out a scale and a calculator and find out. This is research and development time. Since you're not going to compromise on quality, something else may have to give.

Are you in an industry where your movements are constrained by market or regulatory forces? Will you be constrained by operational capital? Not only should you plan out your best case scenario but you'll also need to figure out what you're going to do if everything goes wrong all at once, too. Don't make all your changes or put all your sales eggs in one basket until you know you can keep things going if your potential customers don't respond right away.

Can you really do this? All the ecologically friendly practices are for naught if your business folds after 6 months of being over-extended. Will the cost savings you receive from conservation efforts be enough to fund an expansion of your product or service line? How quickly can (or should) you implement changes without alienating your existing customers?

Now that you've identified the forces that are acting against your goal, what can your business do to be more ecologically friendly? There's a lot of opportunity (as you'll soon see); much of it can have an impact on your bottom line immediately.

Make a List of Clear and Attainable Goals

The rules for personal goal setting are applicable in a business situation. You need short-term goals that you can attain and cross off your list and some long-term goals to keep you hungry. They should be stated as concisely as possible so there's no ambiguity.

Since this is a business operation, you'll need to establish some clear benchmarks. This may be in terms of cost savings, milestones in your plan or even money earned. Figure out what these will be ahead of time, as you've deciding what green will mean to you.

Make Sure Your Employees Are Behind It

All but the smallest startups will have an employee or two or two thousand. The success of your new initiative will largely depend upon their support and cooperation. Now is a good time to get their input on how your initiative will be received by the workforce. Solicit ideas from them – they might have

given this a great deal of thought already. Spending 40 hours per week on a given task allows most people the opportunity to gain insight into its nuances.

While some of your employees may be 100% behind your eco-plan, others may need convincing. This is an opportunity for education and motivation. If there's one thing people hate it's being forced into doing extra work for the boss' most recent hot idea. Don't force it. Find out what they have in mind. You may discover some fresh ideas you hadn't thought of.

Of course, you're still in charge and have the final say, but this is a good chance to gauge where you stand in the process. Having spent some time outlining exactly why you want to do this, you'll be in a good position to answer any questions they might have.

If you do have employees that are, for some strange reason, vehemently opposed to your plan, find out why. "Just because," isn't a sufficient answer and shoulder shrugging won't do. If they still refuse to cooperate without reason, you will want to make sure they're not in a position to make extra work for everyone else with their bad attitude. On the other hand, if they do have legitimate concerns, now is a great time to address those fears.

Anything you can do at the earliest stages of greening-up your business to get everyone on the same page will be invaluable in making sure the plan goes smoothly.

Creating a Timetable for Agreed Upon Changes

Along with setting goals, you'll want to make sure you keep things moving on pace, too. Once you've gotten a feel for what sort of support you'll have, you can make informed decisions about how quickly you want to jump in to the changes. Make a list of clear milestones and when you'd like to have them in place.

For instance, let's say you want to make sure there's 80% compliance in recycling paper products in your offices after 1 month. If it's just you, that'll be easy. If your organization is much larger, you may need to enlist the help of someone else to keep tabs on your company's progress. It is probably wise to assume that the larger your operation, the longer it will take to make changes. A car can stop on a dime, but a long train takes a mile. Be realistic.

If you're just starting out, you no doubt have all sorts of plans on some type of timetable. If there are things you need to grow to be able to afford, it might be best to build some slack into your plans. Slack doesn't mean indefinitely delayed -- just a bit of a range.

Should you find that you're not making the timetable you've set out for yourself, there's no need to panic or decide that you might as well give it all up. It's just a guide to give the goals you've already outlined some urgency.

SIMPLE THINGS ANYONE CAN DO

Your employees have the power to make a big difference in cost savings measures. While all the big stuff gets routed through your office, they are presented with opportunities to be green every day. Help them by making it easier to "work green" than not. If, on the other hand, your business is still very small, your "employee" is sure to be motivated

Recycling

Everything we use has to grow or be dug up, processed, packaged and transported before we can use it. Recycling ultimately eliminates the need for the first step and avoids filling up holes in the ground with things that can be reused somehow. Most cities and waste disposal services offer free recycling because they don't have to manage nearly as large of a dump or pay fees to use one. Recycling is also a business where people can make good money for the raw materials they recover.

This first step that comes to just about everyone's mind is probably the easiest. Most people are familiar with recycling

cans, bottles, office paper, cardboard, plastic bottles and paperboard (like cereal boxes). Most municipalities provide an easy way for people to recycle such things curbside. After 20 years, most people are familiar with these sorts of recycling as long as there are enough containers around and they're clearly marked. If you're just beginning to recycle in earnest, you might want to take some time to show people how everything is done and why, so they remember.

Some things are tougher to place than others though just as reusable. Some things are hazardous and can't be put in the trashcan (or dumpster). What can you do with plastic bags and packing peanuts? It turns out that just about everything is recyclable even if it isn't picked up at the curbside. Even old computers can be taken and refurbished for use – some places [specialize](#) in that sort of thing. Some of these places will even pick the recycling up for you. It doesn't hurt to ask. One way or another, someone will have to be in charge of coordinating removal, whatever form that may take. Your city may run a central yard for such items, though there are also other private companies that take deliveries. Some items require treatment to be disposed of safely and may have a fee, though most items are free to bring in even to private companies. It is, in fact, less expensive to recycle the average truckload of stuff than to take it to the dump anymore.

A brief list of things you might recycle in this manner includes:

- Old tins of half used paint
- Batteries or whatever sort
- Harmful chemicals (you probably have to pay a small disposal fee since it has to be treated)
- Old computers
- Just about anything that can be refurbished to its original function (though perhaps not the original condition)
- Just about anything that can be transformed into something else on a large, industrial scale (like turning used plastic bottles into textile fibers).

You may not have even thought that some items might be able to be reused. Though the term “junk man” has gone out of fashion for obvious reasons, plenty of companies engage in “up-cycling” or finding creative uses for turning discarded items into useful or decorative things people will happily pay a premium price for. [link to “Trash to Treasure book here].

A very small list might include:

- Clothes
- Books
- Furniture
- Old machines and electronic devices
- Tools
- Any thing that has a large amount of any useful material (old bean bag stuffing becomes new toys, for instance)

- Anything hopelessly unfashionable in some way (they always come around with time or modification)

One approach might be to make one person in any given department the recycling liaison – the person everyone turns to when they want to know if something goes in the trash or elsewhere. You may find in a short amount of time that you're throwing out very little and will pay less for rubbish removal.

Often people just throw things in the trash because they don't want to deal with figuring out where it should go. Try putting a bin out for things that people aren't sure what to do with. If someone walks by and knows where it goes, they can help by moving it to the right bin.

And last but, not least, never underestimate the power of the free bin or social network posting. Bits of scrap wood disappear like magic. Don't put a free pile anywhere dangerous to be standing or parking near. If your business is in a very heavily urban area, try not to keep things out too long, or you may find impromptu homes sprouting up nearby.

Car Pooling and Mass Transit

Getting cars off the road isn't just good for the other people who are still driving. Fewer roads, less carbon in the

atmosphere, less political pressure and warfare with energy-surplus nations, fewer required materials to be dug up and of course, less gas to buy and pollute. You can't deny the impact of everyone driving their own car to work everyday, usually as the only passenger.

If your employees are coming a long way or live very near each other, car-pooling can be very effective and they will likely be motivated to do so when the price of fuel goes up in a significant way. If you have a physical bulletin board somewhere, you could put up a map with labeled pushpins. If you run a computer network, you can do the same thing with the freely available Google Earth – just something to help people facilitate connections.

Some companies offer employees a free pass for mass transit or a discount on one by buying in bulk. Check with your local transit authority to see if they offer any deals.

Some of the benefits of reducing transit costs affect your employees in less tangible ways. You may find that people make friends more readily when they get to spend some time chatting on the way and camaraderie is encouraged. Those who ride the bus might enjoy some down time to listen to headphones, read a book or even work on the laptop and come in relaxed.

Offering flexible hours often makes it much easier to accommodate a variety of ways to get to work. More on this later.

Reducing Paper Waste

If you have any sort of office, you've got some extra paper. Even if you can recycle it, it's still getting expensive as the cost of cutting down and processing trees climbs. Even better: use less of it.

Companies that find themselves shredding a lot of papers can use the well-mixed shreds as packing materials. Paper that has been used on one side only is more likely to be used again if pre-cut into 4 or 6 pieces that can be picked up like a post-it pad. You can make poster tack available for people to use their recycled notes in 3-dimensions.

For those who spend a lot of time reading reports, eliminate paper reports by making greater use of mobile computing equipment. Files can be created by your employees and emailed or dropped into a network folder for you. They can be read on inexpensive palm-devices instead of pricey laptops. As long as you can easily make notes on a document you can take with you, it's a good replacement for paper.

[Freely available programs](#) can eliminate blank last pages and save expensive ink and toner. Good quality monitors,

especially LCD types that use less power anyhow, will cause less eyestrain and make people more likely to read things on the computer.

Keeping a well-maintained website that has customer and employee services on it eliminates a lot of employee materials that end up “recycled” anyhow and the bother of reprinting them when needed and keeps you from having to print nearly as many brochures and flyers.

Bringing Lunch

You might be surprised to know how much waste is produced when people go out for lunch or get take out to eat at their desks. This segment of the waste generated by end uses has grown tremendously in the last decade.

By providing a kitchen, you give employees the chance to have a hot meal and not necessarily leftovers in the microwave, though that’s a good start. If people are able to take advantage of a flexible lunch schedule, they can choose to eat communally and take advantage of fresh-cooked food. Providing filtered water will keep people from buying water and creating plastic waste.

It is also useful to make sure everyone takes a nice long lunch, or at least make sure people don’t eat at their desks.

People are that much more likely to actually sit down to eat somewhere else or in the place you provide.

Conserving Other Office Products

You will never get people to stop taking pens and paperclips. You can, however, cut down on the number of tasks that require them. You might give your employees nice, new refillable pens (all different) for a Christmas present and just see if they manage to lose them as quickly.

Switching to a system that collects digital signatures allows you to eliminate a lot of paper records on your end. You may also want to consider using a scanner instead of a dedicated duplication machine.

Many businesses use a small mountain of paper products every year in the form of utility and bathroom towels. Consider switching to a service that provides fresh “bar towels” and hand towel rolls. For many small operations, that service will be your own washing machine. Such towels are usually far less expensive in the auto section of your local retailer as long as you make sure to only buy the white cotton variety (don’t get the red ones unless you work on cars for a living).

One note about switching to paperless records – be sure you keep good and regular backups, preferably records that are

stored off-site on a regular basis! If there is digital information you can't get by without, treat it as such.

Saving Energy at the Desk

Probably the easiest way to save energy is to turn your monitor off when you're not using it. There are settings on many monitors that will turn them off after a certain period of inactivity. Screen savers are not the same thing. You may also want to check to see that your hard drives are turned off after a period of inactivity. Just keeping them spinning consumes quite a few watts per hour. Unless you're going to be doing virus scans or backups at night, you can also set your computer to turn off in the evening

Small businesses might want to consider investing in laptops instead of full-sized computers. They're portable, Wi-Fi enabled (usually, these days) and always use less power than their desktop counterparts. USB 2.0 connected peripherals make it easy to hook and unhook your computer for mobile work.

Natural lighting can be used instead of lamps wherever possible. Encourage your employees to move their desks around to take advantage of it as they'd like. Make sure people turn out the lights when they're not using them. Replace incandescent light bulbs with compact fluorescent or (when they come down in price) LED bulbs.

SOME THINGS YOU CAN DO AS A BUSINESS OWNER

There are plenty of things you can do as a business owner or as someone who has executive authority to alter spending decisions and the overall direction of an Operation. While your employees might suggest such ideas in meetings, they need you to take action and provide vision. Boldly demonstrating your own commitment will show your employees and customers that you're serious about making a change for the better and are at the helm of a forward thinking company. Those who work for you will feel like they're contributing to a greater whole.

Commissioning an Energy Audit

In an effort to keep you using power, most power companies and quite a few consultation firms will perform an energy audit of your business for little or no money. These experts will be able to identify the sort of changes you can make to reduce your consumption very quickly – it is, after all, what they do. While some of the suggestions they make involve the purchase of expensive equipment, many of the ideas are just slight usage modifications. Aside from the general goal of identifying anywhere energy is being wasted, such as those mentioned in the previous section, other most common areas to analyze include:

- Heating and cooling costs
- Transport costs

- Manufacturing efficiency from a thermodynamic standpoint
- Human efficiency as it pertains to energy usage

Even if you are already aware of the specific suggestions they make and have them in your plan, you'll have a chance to get a good baseline

They won't necessarily be able to give you advice with regards to changing your product or service to reduce point source pollution. Nor will they be qualified to address your move to eliminate the use of questionable chemicals, much less how to implement these changes as part of a marketing strategy. They will, however, be able to give you a feel for whether your changes will be worthwhile ones and maybe make suggestions as to the best way to go about it.

Renewable Power Commitment

In a great many markets you have the option of buying your power from renewable options, be they fish-safe hydroelectric, geothermic, wind-generated or solar power. It might be just as easy and getting online and filling out a form. Such options are competitively priced with conventional coal-fired operations these days and may very well be less expensive in the future. Get in on the ground floor while there are still cost savings to be had.

You don't have to be operating a grain mill to take advantage of waterpower and you don't have to live in the desert to get a good return on solar with new technologies that are coming of age. Businesses that operate in rural areas might be the first to consider generating some of their own electricity, but anyone can take advantage of passive solar heating and cooling. Planting deciduous trees on the south and west side of your building will have a huge effect on summer cooling when they're leafed out and allow the sun in during the winter when you need it. Planning a building that takes advantage of thermal mass and window placement in the design phase can have an enormous effect on the energy bill for the entire life of the structure.

Solar hot water heaters have been around for many years and can work in even quite cloudy environments. This option is probably most useful for providing hot water for employees and customers to use for washing rather than a certified production kitchen. Producing your own electricity is still quite a large investment in panels and batteries, but in remote locations can find small-scale applications very useful such as powering pumps and signs. As new technologies come on line and allow you to sell your power back to the electrical grid, these options will become more feasible for urban and suburban businesses.

Other types of power generation are in the works, such as wave power for coastal communities or the tantalizing goal of

workable fusion, though the latter is still several decades off. Suffice it to say that as the price of energy increases, as it undoubtedly will in the relatively near-term future, the demand for renewable power will increase and stimulate investment in these technologies.

Saving Water

You can do quite a few things to reduce your water and sewer bill as well as decrease the amount of wastewater that needs treatment. Agricultural operations use vast quantities of water for irrigation and are notorious for polluting watersheds with high levels of runoff fertilizers. As a result, many such operations have invested in water collection and treatment facilities on-site.

You don't need to be a farmer to take advantage of water reclamation technologies. For instance, if your building has irrigation you can collect water from the roof and sinks for irrigating the landscaping. Some places have even experimented with eco-roof construction, by where ornamental and food producing plants are grown on a living roof that collects and filters the water that lands on it through a carefully created soil profile.

Some of the easiest changes are in how water is delivered. Install a small spigot on your sinks and a "low-flow" toilet to cut down on the fresh-water that's wasted in regular use.

Rewarding "Green" Employees

Everyone likes to be rewarded for their good work and your employees are no different when it comes to coming up with good ideas and implementing changes. If someone is going a good job, let him or her know. You could even make it a point to offer an award for the person who makes the greatest contribution to your company's ecologically friendly mission.

Encourage Flex-time, Part-time and Telecommuting

Imagine all the fuel and exhaust that would be saved if people didn't have to sit around in rush hour traffic. Rates of carpooling and ride-sharing would undoubtedly go up if people had the freedom to carpool with their friends or partners who do have rigid schedules. What if you had the freedom to wait until the rain let up a bit before having to bike across town? By allowing your employees a bit of flexibility in their work hours, you make it easier for them to conserve time and resources.

Many people consider it a major benefit when their employers allow them to work on their own time. Such arrangements represent a very quickly growing segment of the workforce. Though it still isn't an option for the many people who work customer service or retail, those who work in offices or

creative endeavors will be anxious to work around their lives instead of the other way around.

You benefit from having a happy workforce that comes to work rested and ready to go. Those with children will especially appreciate the time they're allowed to spend with their families. People are much more likely to stay at a job that gives them unique flexibility, reducing the time and money spent on new hires.

While many employers have moved to part time employment to keep production up without having to pay full-time benefits, you don't have to follow this trend. It is becoming common in some professional fields to receive benefits for working 30 hours per week, allowing many parents with school age children to be more fully engaged in the work force and still have the time they need. Many also enjoy having the option of working four 10-hour days and eliminating 20% of their travel time and budget at once.

As a very busy business owner, you will no doubt be anxious to be able to do some of your work at home. It might take a little time for your employees to get used to it, but with a high-speed internet connection and a telephone, just about anyone with a little self-motivation can work from home. The ability to instantly communicate makes this an especially attractive option for rural operations and those involved in marketing or sales. You could start small and give your

employees the option to try it one day a week and see how it goes.

You might even want to farm some small tasks out to freelancers. Often paid by the piece rather than hourly, freelancers have the advantage of being seasoned professionals that are used to coming into a situation, working their magic and then moving on to the next project. Many of them are so used to telecommuting that they don't even own cars!

Reduce Business Air Travel

Not only is flying expensive, but it releases tremendous amounts of CO₂ directly into the atmosphere. People often don't realize that one cross-country trip uses as much fuel as several months of regular driving.

One advantage of staying local or regional is that you don't have to attend conferences and conventions all over the country. While it's nice travel, how much of it is necessary?

For that matter, how much airfreight do you really need? By sticking with domestic, ground shipping options whenever possible you can keep your packages from adding to the problem, also. Choose local suppliers whenever possible and try to minimize the amount of materials your products use that originate in far-flung locales.

Bio-diesel, Electric, Flex-fuel and Hybrid Vehicles

If your business engages in any sort of delivery, this vehicle becomes part of your public face. Make the impression a good one by using the most efficient type of vehicle for the work you do. As a small startup, it may be some time before you're able to afford a company vehicle, but as soon as you can, you will definitely want to consider the next 10 years or so of getting around as well as your company image.

There are many options coming up that are coming down in price everyday as demand for fuel-efficient vehicles skyrockets. While bio-diesel still emits carbon, it does so without the heavy metals, toxic chemicals and can be made anywhere. This also has the advantage of being used with vehicles that are capable of hauling large loads if you need that sort of capacity.

Electric vehicles are ideal for applications where you are delivering lightweight items or just need to transport your self from place to place. Lightweight electric vehicles can be powered by anything that generates electricity, including your renewable options. The US post office has gone one step further and uses Segway scooters in many cities. There are ways to get around without hauling a ton of steel with you.

LONG TERM CHANGES AND GOALS

If you're just now embarking on changing the way you do business or are starting up, you can't do it all overnight. These things are going to take some time. Once you've got your plan all laid out, you'll want to prioritize and determine what items should come first. Keeping on such a sweeping change in operations might seem daunting, but if you keep the eventual goal in mind, each step won't seem very hard at all.

Reducing Resource Consumption

There are always ways to use less energy and stuff. Many of them are outlined above, but your imagination is the only limit to the savings you can enjoy. Keeping your employees and customers aware of the changes you're making and why will keep them from thinking you're just trying to be cheap at their expense. Instead, you'll be able to take that money and invest it back into breaking into new and elite markets for your product or service and making your company a better place to work.

A large part of this will be reducing transport and packaging wherever possible. Because of this, a focus on innovative packaging and local or regional sales make a huge contribution to this overall goal.

Migrating to Non-toxic Substances

Some industries necessarily rely on more toxic substances than others. However, even such companies can find ways to change their product and process a bit and take on a new market niche. For instance, printmakers often use all sorts of toxic substances. However, switching to a different type of press and soy-based inks might allow you to go from printing glossy post cards to stylish, embossed greeting cards that feature the work of local freelance artists. You'll be able to charge more for your product, and when it does finally decompose, it won't leave behind an icky sheen.

Some companies don't currently have the option to adopt a different method because it doesn't exist. You are then faced with choosing between whether you want to try and figure out how to use another substance and get the same result or eliminate that product all together. The latter can be a terrible option if your best selling product is made out of baby seals or some such, but since you're phasing in these changes you have time to find another product or service to take its place, even if that means to transitioning to a smaller business that is more profitable per capita.

Eliminate or Reduce Harmful Emissions

Along with eliminating the use of harmful substances on the way into your facility, you want to do everything in your power to make sure you approve of everything coming out.

Not only will this make you a good neighbor, but also the sort of organization that you can be proud of.

For instance, it might be impossible to eliminate the stench of your paper mill, but by using a significant proportion of post-consumer recycled materials, you can reduce the amount of chemical digesting you need to use for each ream of paper you produce. Maybe you can switch to a type of chemical that can be used repeatedly as long as you make an effort to collect it.

If you're operating a large manufacturing operation, it is like that some agency is already monitoring your output, but small companies often operate without oversight. Don't let that be your blank check to toss marine pollutants into the regular rubbish bin. Make sure you are doing as little harm as possible, even if it's just a little thing – they add up over thousands of businesses into a real problem.

Maintain a Useful and Professional Web Presence

In the early days of the Internet, when manufacturers first began putting sites up for everything from steak sauce to shampoo, there were a great many websites that seemed to just occupy virtual space. To this day, some companies that most need sites don't have them while every little facet of the most recent Coke or Pepsi ad campaign has its own site.

As a business that has a mission that is inherently part educational, you have a great deal of information to convey. It's a lot easier to give someone a card with your web address on it than to explain your company's mission and ecological innovations in any detail. Now that you've become a good corporate citizen, you get to show off any way you can.

Local reviewers and reporters will probably go to the Internet first to learn more about your company. It is always a good idea to make it easy for people to find you. In fact, looking things up online has become so routine for most people that it is very common for that to be the first place many turn to for information about products and services.

That said, don't rush to put just any old website up. Don't pay your 8-year-old nephew a pittance to do it. What might have seemed a frivolous vanity project even just a few years ago has become very serious. You need a site that looks professional and gives the requisite information quickly and easily. You might even want to build it yourself if you are good at that sort of thing, but only if you have the right tools to do the job. Do not, under any circumstances, use a MySpace page or some other free site. It doesn't cost hardly anything to buy a domain and use a host server. You won't look "real," otherwise.

You also don't need to spend a small fortune on a top-notch site until you've made it. If you are a bona-fide success, you

can expect to get someone to build a good site for you for a few thousand dollars – with emphasis on the word “good.”

FUNDAMENTAL BUSINESS SHIFTS

You’ve done it, saved some money, made your employees happy and set yourself on the path to remaking yourself in an environmental niche. Now is the time to take all that preparation and make the fundamental shifts that will set the stage for your marketing

Refocusing Your Product-line or Services into the Environmental Sector

You perhaps wouldn’t have started on this path if you didn’t already have an idea about how you wanted to go about refocusing your business. It might be as simple as changing your marketing campaigns (we’ll talk about that in chapter 3) or as complicated as coming up with entirely new products or services.

If your changes are in the marketing arena, educating your sales force might be the most fundamental shift you’ll need to make. On the other hand, most businesses will benefit from a change in how the products and services are approached. For example, let’s say you’ve been a “conventional” veterinarian for many years. Now that you’ve decided to become an eco-friendly company that gives your customer sustainable

options, you'll want to explore many different avenues. Some things you might change include:

- Offering sustainably-produced, specialty pet food and products
- Natural nutritional counseling
- Cage-free animal boarding
- Physical rehabilitation services and pet massage instead of drugs
- Homeopathic remedies
- Pet wellness counseling
- Changing vaccine suppliers
- Offering non-chemical alternatives to parasite control

From this short list, you can see your options are wide open.

The level of commitment is up to you and the size of the potential market you choose in relation to the size of your business. Your new customers will probably want to see a full-line of alternatives, so you may want to have a majority of your changes in place before you begin the marketing campaign.

It is useful for many businesses making such a transition to seriously consider keeping part of their old product line. Vegetarian only restaurants may have a hard time getting meat eaters to visit, even with their vegetarian friends. On the other hand, if you're selling something that does very

specifically cater to the “hard-core greenies,” [such as a dibble to make seedling pots out of paper](#), they might be offended, or at least pester you about it. You’ll have to decide how focused your audience will be with the changes you’ve chosen and to what extent you’re willing to cater to them at the expense of a wider clientele.

As you transition to the new goods and services, you want to make sure the process is as smooth as possible for yourself and your staff. Keeping everyone informed of your plans and the changes that are ahead will help a lot. Telling them why and having the idea straight in your own head will help a great deal more.

Be sure you have the capital on hand if there are likely to be any added expenses in making the shift. Going out on a limb and expecting the business credit card to handle it can end in heartbreak. You’d better find out for sure by running some numbers before you jump in. It is always best to find a way to make the changes by reinvesting profits into the business or make them in such a way so that you don’t have to spend any extra money at all. If you do need to secure some sort of loan to make this happen, give yourself some time to find one with a decent rate and terms that fit your needs.

For those just starting out, you don’t have to worry about your existing customers or getting rid of old stock. You do, however, have to choose carefully. There are so many options

out there. Not all boutique-type items are ecologically friendly and not all eco-friendly options are fashionable. The gulf between these two extremes is wide, indeed!

Forgoing Traditional Marketing Strategies for Low-impact Alternatives

One great way to save some money is to try novel forms of marketing. This doesn't mean you necessarily want to get rid of the telephone directory ad, but you might very well want to consider it – you'll certainly want change it.

What you definitely want to do is carefully consider the benefit you get from traditional ad-space such as the directory, but also billboards, newspaper, magazine and online banner ads. Each has its own merits that are best suited to certain types of enterprises.

Many of the highest quality purveyors of goods and services rely on little more than word of mouth, but do a very good job of establishing a relationship with their customers in an effort to encourage word of mouth advertising. If you're really that good, this can free up a whole lot of capital to invest in quality materials and time. This is especially useful if your business decides to focus on a local audience. Even companies with a much wider range of focus can benefit by tailoring their campaigns to local markets wherever they have a foothold and a local presence.

Non-traditional types of marketing have been making very serious successes in recent years. Entire books have been written on the subject, but suffice it to say that there are options available to you, other than the obvious, that cost you little if anything to try. By virtue of being new, startups can take advantage of local press to review and hopefully recommend their offerings. It never hurts to find out if there is any media interest in your business as a destination or point of interest of some sort. Writing press releases and

Many businesses are now using [Google ad-words](#) to use the pay-per-click method of advertising. While this has made a real industry of writing key-word content that generates such traffic, you might want to consider how much you're willing to bank on a website that garners traffic. If your business is local, this won't be of much interest to you, since you're not selling things through the mail. However, if you are, this can be invaluable since so many people get their information online. If not, making yourself known to people who are providing web-based recommendations and reviews is very useful to a local business or service. In the online realm, almost anything that gets people to your site is useful. A small investment in content can help you come up in web-searches as long as you have a website you can update with regularity.

Giving interviews can be very useful, but you want to make sure there are links to your company site included in any such write-up. Coming up with something that other people will write about makes it that much easier to get the word out. Holding regular events of some sort are especially useful in getting on the radar of news sites and current events calendars. Don't be averse to dropping your company website anywhere it might be picked up online.

As for low impact marketing, online advertising consumes few resources in comparison to printing up flyers or getting a listing in a printed publication. Many of them now cater to green businesses or are printed in such a way to be more environmentally friendly. If you must print up flyers, do it on recycled paper. If you're going to send out postcards, have them printed with an eco-friendly printer. Consider ways of distributing your materials that don't involve long distance transport and minimize waste.

Global or National Emphasis vs. Local and Regional Marketing

There are a great many reasons for a business to focus on local markets, many of which have to do with the consumption inherent in cross-country transport. Relying upon nationwide or worldwide cheap transport also means that you'll have to make some concessions that keep your product from being unique. Simply not being able to rely upon

the mellow feeling an increasing number of people are having towards the home team can be huge in terms of trying to break out into a new market.

If you already have such shipping channels of your own established, you might as well utilize them, but by the same token, you might want to consider narrowing down your focus to really reach the sort of niche market you're looking to not just occupy but, fill completely. Unless the product you're peddling is so unique that your potential market is only a few thousand people worldwide (such as the total number of people who collect barbed wire or are members of the [Steve Buscemi fan club](#)) anyhow, being the only game in town is where the most efficient use of niche-marketing is.

YOU IN RELATION TO THE COMPETITION

Before you embark on your new marketing campaign, you'll want to check out the competition, if for no other reason than to find out if there is any. By getting a good idea of others' strengths and weaknesses, you'll be able to get a feel for what works and what doesn't. Don't just take their word for it, though getting a feel for what they're campaigns are like can be incredibly useful. You're looking for an angle – a niche that hasn't been filled yet. Let your competitors give you ideas about where to go with this bold new venture of yours.

Assessing Your Competitors' Stance

Is your main competition just as committed to sustainable business practices as you are? Are they currently marketing themselves as such? How can you take advantage of your company's principals to differentiate yourself from them?

Before you enter any market, you need to evaluate your place in it. If there are already 12 companies in your small city that cater to expectant and new mothers who are interested in locally prepared, organic baby-food, is there anything that makes yours different and somehow better than just getting it at the grocery store? Find out! Being the only one in your neighborhood or the only one that makes deliveries might be enough to capitalize on a large enough sector of the market that you can make some inroads to becoming the brand on the supermarket shelf – if that's what you want.

If you have reason to believe that your competition is taking advantage of people by misrepresenting themselves, you can take advantage of that by very carefully letting the truth be known, as long as you're sure it demonstrably the truth. This is one instance where alerting the media might be useful, but only if you're in a position to take care of all the business that might come your way. Local consumer reporters are very often looking for juicy story ideas. Of course, this only works if your "closet" can stand the light of day.

When you did your own market research, you found out what percentage of sales in your sector were made from local companies. As such, you know how widely your competition is scattered. Your analysis of the competition must include all of it. Missing an up and coming trend among your market demographic can be the difference between success and failure if you are in a competitive market.

If you find you're the only game in town, you have the luxury of defining and completely filling the niche you seek and making the best use of your available resources. Some companies will have the advantage of being the only "green" alternative in a segment. This allows you to make a more effective use of marketing what's uniquely ecologically friendly about you. There may be plenty of companies in town that put up gutters, but yours are the only ones made from recycled materials. That's useful and saves you a lot of discussion as to why yours are better.

Making Claims About You vs. Them

If you're not the only game in town, you will find yourself being compared to the competition whether you bring it up or not. If your product is demonstrably better than theirs, demonstrating its superiority is all you need to bring that contrast into focus. It just becomes a matter of getting people to sample your wares.

If the differences are more subtle, then you'll have to be careful not to slander anyone else, lest you start a feud or worse. If the competition does a very good job of filling your niche, you might want to consider what else about your business makes you green or great.

It's not very often outside the "cola-wars" that you even need to mention the competition. If you feel it's necessary, sometimes just giving the merest hint of the other company, such as portraying unnamed competition in their colors is enough to give potential customers a pretty good conscious or subconscious idea just who you're talking about.

Following a Trailblazer's Example

Modern communications allow anyone with a connection and some time to learn how others have made their way in your field. If there's a clear path to success, by all means, follow it. You don't need to re-invent the wheel, as they say. Even if you're the first company in Baltimore to offer bamboo flooring, find out what worked in San Francisco before settling starting out from scratch.

If the leading competition is way ahead in the marketplace and has a hold on the market you're in, be sure there is a reason for someone to buy locally. Otherwise, there will have to be something quite a bit better or different about your product, since the big guys can take advantage of mass

production in ways that you simply can't – you'll never be able to compete on price alone.

Leading the Way

Congratulations. You are one of the very few people to do something entirely new. This doesn't happen very often, but has the advantage of unlimited opportunity as long as it's a good idea.

Some ideas are not good and you'll want to carefully assess them before jumping in, especially if you don't find any examples of anyone else doing this. Just because you think bagpipe door chimes are the Best Idea Ever® doesn't mean anyone else is likely to agree with you. If you've been told that you have odd tastes, double check your ideas with as many willing test subjects you can find, but do so in such a manner that you'll get honest answers.

CHAPTER 3 – MARKETING YOUR BRAND OF GREEN

You've done it – you've made the switch to a more ecologically sound way of doing things. Now it's time to let the world know you're here to help.

IDENTIFYING YOUR AUDIENCE

First, you're going to have to know who to talk to in order to get your message across clearly and efficiently. Knowing who your customers are allows you to make an educated guess as to what is likely to motivate them. You should use this information to tailor every aspect of your marketing to the people you want to impress. While some of your potential new customers are part of large demographic groups, others are not, and may even be the niche you're looking for.

Having identified who your potential audience is, (Braden and Roth 246) you'll want to find a few things out about them. The first step is to consider their demographics. What might you find out about them on a census report? More subjective and speculative are the psychological characteristics that the demographic tends to display. These observations don't apply to any one individual, but to a theoretical average customer, so consider it a general guide.

The Dedicated Greens

Some people call them hippies or the “crunchy folk.” They may be new or old, but they definitely know to tare the washed-out yogurt container before putting mung beans in it. They willingly eat things like vegan barley loaf as comfort food. They seal business deals with hugs. While some people who claim to be arbiters of fashion hold them in contempt, we wouldn’t have much of a green movement today if it weren’t for these stalwartly eco-conscious consumers.

In short, your Traditional Green consumer has been doing this a long while and ecology is in the forefront of their minds much of the time. It is very likely they make their purchasing decisions with thermodynamics in mind, whether they know it as such. They are also perhaps more apt to be self-educated than most.

They also tend to be a rather handy lot, so things that are packaged and processed may not do as well in this segment, however products that allow people do for themselves are well-suited to this demographic. That’s not to say they don’t like gifts or won’t hire a fine crafts-person to do work they can’t, but if you’re open to barter, they probably are, too.

They do not all follow Phish, make soap, go barefoot, worship the sun, drive microbuses, consult their astrological charts or even eat tofu. You may not even be able to spot or smell them in a crowd. However, should you figure out a way to

make healthy, [vegan marshmallows](#), they'll beat a path to your door.

The Gender Gap

While you certainly can't count on women to be kinder and gentler, it would seem they see themselves that way. Women are thought to be at least twice as likely to be interested in making green purchases as their male counterparts. It is thought that this is a result of having children and households to take care of. It may simply be that they like to think of themselves as the sort of people that care. The latter is data that's mighty hard to come by, but they both seem plausible if the statistics are to be believed.

If true, this segment is interested in value and safety as well as convenience. Think about any mother of young children you know, and consider what her priorities are. While ecology is all well and good, of immediate concern are the health and well being of the household and simple ways that allow a purchase decision to be the extent of the commitment. They want to set a good example for the little ones, but not at the expense of their college funds. As such, it's good to do whatever you can to remain as competitively priced as possible for this segment of the market.

It is very likely that the average woman that makes green purchases works outside the home, has a family or household

and holds at least a bachelor's degree. Claims about the safety of a product had better be backed up with some facts, because they'll check. This demographic tends to stick with purchase decisions unless convinced otherwise, but are not beyond responding to interesting and new packaging. They are very likely to also make essential item purchases for their partners.

The same highly wrought products and basic services that the "dedicated green" above might shun have an audience here. These women would love to have time to make soap or bath salts or hummus from scratch – but until something gives, there is just enough time for hummus mix or takeout/deli food. They are likely to give themselves "treats" so gift type items and non-essential services would do well to consider the feminine marketplace.

Affluent Households

Even if ecologically friendly products and services are priced to be affordable these days, there is still a premium associated with such goods. There has been a shift in recent years from quantity to quality, though no shift is needed for this demographic – that's always been their way.

There is quite a range of affluence covered here. The demographic does tend to have at least one household member with an advanced degree.

Quality and novelty motivate their purchases, as does convenience. Their time is precious and they approach physical labor like tourists, if ever. When you have the money to buy many of the consumer goods you want, unique and new things appeal, as does anything that is handmade for them personally. Since the personal touch is one of the trademarks of localism, this market might be very well suited to your business.

Let's say you want to make organic cotton clothing for women. Your dream of bringing bloomers back might not fly in this often socially conservative crowd (all bets are off in Los Angeles). However, if you make a very comfortable and slick looking pair of pants that come in a variety of tasteful and natural dyed colors you'd be on the right track for this audience. Add to that a service by which you go to their location, take measurements, and deliver their handmade pants a week later, and you might have a hit. Get a few of the influential people who others want to have lunch with to wear them, and get ready to do a lot of sewing.

The same service-added approach can work for anything. These folks don't want to buy carrots; they want a personal chef to have their meals made and ready with organic carrots. The merely affluent may very well be moved by environmental appeals, though they probably won't have much time to talk to you to find out more. If very rich, they

may be interested in environmentally conscious causes because it's the fashionable thing to do these days. Appealing to motivations that are more personal is sure to work no matter what is fashionable.

Sympathetic Mid-income Households

While most Americans consider themselves "middle class," one real mark of it might be the willingness to spend a few extra dimes on the eco-friendly alternatives to the products and services they already purchase instead of always getting the cheapest thing on the shelf. Such folks will appreciate the personal touch, as it's what differentiates you from the nearest chain store with cheaply made imported goods. You have quality with a conscience to offer.

However, they're not wealthy and will be on the lookout for value. If there isn't any way to keep your prices down to what is normally charged for such things, be sure and let your customers know why the raw materials cost so much. If your product or service is that good and your reasons make sense, they just might buy as a treat, anyhow. Things that help people save money on utilities are also very popular.

Such households tend to have at least one member with a bachelor's degree. Appeals to health and safety are also very effective for this segment. Often with a child or two in the house, these folks have been feeling taken for granted in the

traditional market place. Moreover, they would like to differentiate themselves from the “lower-middle-class” that typically hangs on to middle class status by going into debt. Let them know you care by tailoring and delivering the service they deserve.

Youth

Those who’ve grown up in a world where there has always been an environmental movement are keenly aware of such issues. While they may not have had enough time to get all the facts or a nuanced view of the world, they are ready to try anything and can be very passionate about what they believe in. Your personal touch and efforts at education can turn this segment of the market into life-long customers.

Often the first time young people really begin making green purchases for themselves is during college. As such, this demographic very often is at least on their way to a bachelor’s degree, often with an impressive debt load as a result. They tend to be childless and will often have plenty of free-time to get involved in community events as long as they’re fun.

Appeals to health and safety are not always very useful with the under-30 crowd, since they are not entirely convinced of their own mortality anyhow. This fickle audience tends to have a bit more disposable income than others. Also, they not

only accept but crave new and innovative things. Not afraid of doing a little work, do it yourself (DIY) and crafty products appeal, as do up-cycled items. Not prone to their own nostalgia yet, this demographic is prone to latching onto your old nostalgia that you've updated.

Customers You're Sure to Lose No Matter What

There are always going to be some who have an aversion to all things even a little green. These people consider the idea of conserving anything to be an affront to their way of life. Such closely held beliefs are, by definition, not based on rational argument – there's little you can do to change it. While you can go out of your way to use emotional appeals to the national security aspects of oil independence and the like, you have to accept you're going to lose some people. It's sad, but wish them well and maybe they'll come back someday when they realize how well you've treated them compared to your competition.

Media Professionals Likely to Review Your Business

There is rarely anything quite as sweet to a business owner as free publicity. You might be surprised how many people are interested in supporting your business by mentioning it in their ads. Every time you do something new with your business, you're an ideal candidate to be profiled.

It is likely that there are journalists that specialize in covering sustainability issues. They may work for the big city daily, your local monthly neighborhood newsletter or anything in between. As such, they are likely already educated on the issues of sustainability. Instead of educating them on why your business is doing worthwhile things; they'll want specific answers as to the exact nature of your commitment.

The interview with journalists who are not specifically sustainability contributors may include a bit more of an educational background, but you might want to have some facts and figures handy – the sort your interviewer can verify later. A good journalist won't just take your word for it, especially if you make unusual claims about the nature of conservation or your contribution to it.

Of course, journalists of all stripes are hurried individuals who don't have all day to go about looking for stories. Learning how to write a press release that will catch someone's interest is fundamental. Don't be shy about sending such releases around -- just be honest. You can expect some bad press if you waste someone's time. They are going to want an angle. Be sure to give them one appropriate to their readership. If you're not sure who reads their publication, just ask. They certainly know.

RE-BRANDING YOUR PRODUCTS OR SERVICES

You've gone to all the work of creating a whole new company with a fresh focus. Your brand should reflect that, too. You already know that even if you don't have a physical product, you still have a brand. Even people are brands if they're in the public view. Whether it would benefit you to actually change the name of your company depends upon how you choose to re-brand. If you're just starting out, your brand image is just as important, but you don't have to worry about changing the letterhead.

You have perhaps a fraction of a second to get a potential customer's attention. Now that you know whom your product is likely to appeal to and where your marketing focus will be best spent, it's time to consider how that translates into the look and feel of what you have to deliver.

Be advised: In the US there are Federal Trade Commission (FTC) statutes that regulate the sort of claims you can make for certain words used in advertising. For instance, something called a reusable container that will break the next time someone attempts to reuse it is not allowed unless everyone knows it could break soon, such as a paper bag. Many more exciting examples are found in the [Useful Links Section](#) below

Maintaining Ecological Optimism and Upbeat Sustainability

If there is one steadfast rule about marketing it is that making people feel bad about something won't make them buy. If you paint a bleak picture of the future, no one is going to want to part with their hard-earned money – they might need it if things will be as bad as you say.

It's easy to be down in the mouth about ecology, sometimes. Trash and concrete and clouds of pollution seem to be everywhere. It can be downright depressing if this is an issue you truly care about, and obviously, you do! But, don't let that creep into your marketing. People want to know what they can do about it. If you choose to make the ecologically friendly nature of your business the main selling point you promote, sell it as an opportunity. Not only are you selling a good product, but you're allowing busy people the chance to do the right thing by spending money they were going to spend anyhow. Your product or service is there to help.

Usually the sustainable angle rests on concrete things you can say about your product. Changing the color of your packaging isn't enough. Saying that your company is sustainable isn't enough. Your customers should be able to tell in a glance exactly what you're doing about it with each and every purchase.

Statements that pertain to the source of materials are the most common. Another might refer to some sort of certification, such as LEED certified architects or “Salmon Safe” wines. If your product’s green nature is obvious, such as with bicycles or building material salvage, you’ll need to have another angle that makes it especially green such as bicycles made especially for commuters or that the salvaged materials are post-consumer waste.

Industries well known for their use of often-toxic chemicals can benefit greatly from offering “natural” alternatives. In the case of some services, such as dentists, there may be certain practices, such as mercury fillings, that people may be seeking alternatives to. Many people are now leery of oven cleaners, carpet shampooers, dry-cleaners and other miracles of the modern age. While there is a built-in market of people who want safer alternatives, you’ll definitely want to make sure your copy makes it known that your product or service is “eco-effective,” too.

If you have a large company, be forewarned: unless your ideal market is among the “true greens,” you might do better to focus your marketing strategy on another aspect of your product to gain greater market share.

Ease of Use

If there's one thing people like, it's to do good deeds that are easy. Often, people avoid good ideas because they seem like too much of a fuss. If your product makes anything – anything at all – easier, by all means, mention it.

Sometimes people regard the toxic fumes and byproducts of your competition's product or service as a mere hassle. While it might seem a health and safety issue to you, don't overlook the convenience of being able to let your pets and kids play on the lawn after an organic landscape maintenance company has tended it. It's a lot easier to use products that don't require you suit up before using it. If your competition imposes such indignities upon people because they're a health hazard, you've got a major marketing point.

Even if you're entering a market where there already is eco-friendly competition, if you've found a way to make your version of the product or service easier or more convenient to use, that could be what sets you apart. Perhaps you're the only place in town that delivers. Maybe your service doesn't require follow-up visits. Maybe you can do in 1 hour what takes the others 3. Anything that removes bother and irritation from people's lives is marketable.

Saving Money

There are quite a few products out there that not only save chemicals or energy, but also save a great deal of money for the purchaser in the long run. Spend a few dollars on ethylene eaters and save several dollars in produce that didn't go bad in your "crisper" drawer. There are tons of products and services that help consumers conserve the all-important resource of money. They tend to fit into a few distinct categories:

- Durable items don't have to be replaced as often
- Efficient items save the cost of energy
- Innovative items find better ways of doing things that replace expenses
- High Quality items may be more concentrated
- Recyclable items have no or low disposal costs
- Safe items save you the pain and lost wages of future illness

Even if the money saving connections are obvious to you, it never hurts to note them on your adverts or packaging. This approach appeals to everyone except some of the very wealthy who like to spend money on "the best."

Quality

Just because your product or service treads lightly upon the Earth doesn't mean anyone will want to buy it if it's inferior.

Quite the opposite! You know that your product was designed to be better than the competition's. Be sure and tell people about it. This will be the focus of many campaigns, since high-quality items and services appeal to a very large audience. For example, it is a major selling point of many so-called "boutique" items. In fact, you might even consider the use of the term a more acceptable marketing euphemism for "boutique," since it seems to connote something too fancy for those on a budget.

Labor Relations

People like supporting businesses that treat their employees well. The most successful companies provide stellar customer service when employees stay in their jobs for a while. Those who feel they're working for people who give a damn about them will be more loyal and feel better about staying on. Just about everyone with a job would like such an employer. Many know that by supporting companies that are good to work for, more people will get to have decent jobs.

Conversely, successful movements to boycott companies that exploit workers (in their home country and abroad) have caused major corporate policy changes where change seemed unlikely. Showing a "team" photo of your grimacing minions won't convince anyone. If you're going to talk about your employees, you need to be talking about what you're doing for them.

Better yet, encourage field trips for your employees to interact with the public in the name of work. You'll be banking on their enthusiasm, but if you've really tried to create a good environment to work in, they'll make a good impression and they'll have a change of pace. (Note: don't force anyone who swears they're bad with the public – they'll be right either way)

It can be a bit abstract to market indirect business practices, so your excellent labor practices should be considered a secondary marketing point, but an essential operational one.

Organic, Fair Trade and Other Regulated Terms

You can't just say your product is organic. In the past, this wasn't a matter of Federal law and caused a great deal of confusion. Since 2003, there have been strict standards in the US that not only define what Organic means but also, just who can certify that you are.

If you're going to make the word Organic part of your advertising, you'll need to contact your certifying agency. If you don't use 100% Organic-certified ingredients, you can't call your product made of them Organic. Fair Trade is another such regulated term. The penalties for misusing such terminology can be severe, so don't mess around with it.

Becoming certified as a producer of raw or manufactured goods is usually a financial investment of a few thousand dollars and can be several years in the process. On the other hand, you open yourself up to a very wide audience and can be found at local stores. You can certainly label your products as *made with organic ingredients* if they are.

As long as something is labeled, you are free to sell it all day long.

Ultra-Modern, Hip and Totally Cool

The sustainability movement is cool right now, but don't let that stop you from being as fashionable as you like. It might be even better to just market your product or service as simply the coolest thing since sliced bread. This is especially true if your market is the youthful crowd and their disposable income. Sure, everyone eats, but not everyone buys beanbag chairs or exotic party dresses in any large quantity.

Technological devices often appeal to men. You'll want to mention the very cool ecologically friendly task your device performs as well as show it looking good in action. If you've developed a teakettle that very efficiently boils only the amount of water you need, show what an excellent and stylish kettle you've put your improvements on.

Use the principles of fashionable marketing to hawk whatever wares or service you have to offer. Have a stylish theme and keep it going through your entire product or service line. Change things up from season to season like high fashion. Get some beautiful people to be seen with your stuff or service. Get the attention of someone whose opinion matters to many in your intended audience. Do something fun and edgy and people will associate you with a good time.

When changing your marketing focus to fashion, the sustainability angle always remains secondary. It's a delayed reaction sort of secondary marketing punch. When they get the product home, read the label, remember being pleasantly surprised and think of you when they shop again.

Uniquely Local

Even if you haven't lived in a town or region for very long, you have a pretty good idea what makes it unique, or you probably wouldn't be there. If you're native, that's just how things are. You might want to study and ponder the subject a bit to make sure you realize just what makes your hometown unique.

Even if your product is "*proudly made in*" wherever you are, what you really want to do is appeal to your neighbors. Once you figure out what segments of the population live in your area, you can decide if local marketing is going to work for

your product, or if you have to cast a wider net. If there are plenty of people nearby who could use what you've got then you just have to reach as many of them as possible.

People who provide services (other than those media related tasks that can be done over the internet) will have to be local in at least some regard. Since this is assumed, you will want to tout your company's commitment to the local area and contribution to the community.

Artisan

You are an artist at what you do. People appreciate someone who does their very best everyday and delivers their creativity to the marketplace. Like the quality that typifies an upscale product or service, by doing so with a unique verve that entertains, you cater to people who pay attention to detail.

By creating the very best example of your craft, you're likely to be using methods that predate mass production. You're guaranteeing the sort of experience that people don't usually have a chance to experience.

Treat your product or service like a work of art. Hold shows. Put some extra time and effort into every aspect of your presentation to make sure it fits the theme of finely wrought craft. You have the liberty of being a little quirky when presenting your product as art.

UPSCALE WITHOUT ALIENATION

You want to get premium prices by appealing beyond altruism. At the same time, you want to do it in such a way as to remain accessible to as wide a segment of your likely markets as possible. It's a real balancing act to create a project that can be upscale without intimidation. Cut your prices too much and your customers may think you've cut corners somewhere. You need to be prepared to deal with a skeptical and cautious clientele while defending your right to charge what you're truly worth.

Make Sure the First Try is as Low Risk as Possible

Most people want to be sure about a product or service before jumping right in. This isn't so much of a problem with low-cost consumer items, but for larger ticket offerings, you want to make sure there's some way for your clients to "test drive" your wares as much as possible so they feel confident in their decision.

Some products lend themselves to smaller "trial sized" versions of their larger counterparts. Of course this doesn't work well with other items or services, but if there's a way to give people a "taste" of what you have to offer, you may find customers choosing to "make a meal out of the appetizers," to your advantage either way. Even if you don't want to

bother making tiny versions of your product all the time, you could hold a monthly sample night where people get to try everything for a single fee, like Disney Land.

In the case of larger ticket items, there may be ways to allow a literal test drive or have an open house where the public can check out the facilities or wares. Trade shows and fairs are a common way of doing this, but if you have a physical location, you could invite the public in for a tour.

It may be reasonable to take a cut in your normal rate for samples of your service. For instance, let's say you're a massage therapist (LMT) that normally charges \$50 per hour. You could bring your chair to a location your likely potential audience is hanging out and give 10-minute massages for \$5. You'll have plenty of takers and can make sure you give your card to each and every one. You won't make a lot of money, but you just got paid to advertise.

There may be a way to market a more affordable entry-level model or service that lacks some features of the original, but none of the quality. The latter part of that is very important. Even if the entry-level product is totally different, it needs to showcase your considerable talents. If your job is to clean carpets, you could offer a special on cleaning throw pillows, just to demonstrate how well your eco-friendly method works, but be sure to make them shine.

For some reason a product that costs \$5 won't appeal as much as letting customers choose five \$1 items. People like being able to sample which is best without making a yearlong commitment out of it. This phenomenon seems to carry across demographics and industries regardless, though is perhaps most powerful among consumables or gifts.

Proven Utility

There are a lot of product and service claims out there. It is to your advantage to be able to demonstrate that you can deliver on any claim you make. This can be accomplished through demonstration. You can show movies and pictures of your product in use on a website. You could showcase your previous work. You could give live demonstrations or samples. Your existing customers might even be willing to let others see the good work you've done for them.

If your product is particularly easy to use, you should be able to demonstrate that with your offering there's no need to sacrifice time or anything else that most people suffer from having too little of in their lives. People can usually tell if something is going to eat an entire day of their lives if they can make heads of tails of the directions in the first read.

Consider Easter egg decoration kits. Most everyone is familiar with the leading brand. Do your eggs ever look like the ones on the package? Would you bother if it weren't an excuse to

spend some time with the kids? Does it take all night? You probably could have figured what you were in for from one look at the stuff that comes in the box. What is it? Why did you just spend money on a few mysterious pills and a piece of wire? Now, let's say you've found a way to easily manufacture and package all-natural Easter egg dyes. It is now your job to not only convince people that you actually can make eggs that look like those on the package but also, that it won't take any longer than the leading brand. Show people that your dyes wash out of the kids' smocks and hands, you don't have to futz around with measuring and pouring acids, the colors come out more evenly and the results are so non-toxic you could eat the shell. Your kit may cost more, but look at the snappy results, and it took no more time or effort than that other brand.

When it comes to demonstrating future cost savings, you can prove your point by giving very detailed written examples of just how those savings will come about. Don't just say, "20% better." What does that mean? Give specifics that are above reproach. It's better to give a smaller energy savings figure and have them find on closer inspection that their savings may be even greater.

When demonstrating higher build quality and durability of your product or service, it may be difficult to do this without naming the competition. Please, do try and avoid the temptation. The last thing you need as you embark on this

bold new venture is to find yourself at the pointy end of a slander lawsuit. You should, however, be able to show just how tough and durable your offering is and let your customers make the comparison themselves. Again, don't just say your outdoor eco-paint will stand the test of time, back that up with an iron-clad guarantee.

If your product makes claims as to health or safety issues, being able to back them up becomes even more important since such claims are a matter of law. If you can't prove something, don't claim you can – period. Instead, you can say what your product doesn't contain with great certainty. If your claims depend upon nutritional analysis, be sure and have that analysis handy--and gathered from a reputable source. Two sources are even better.

Don't Gouge, Even if You Can

So, you've come up with a real winner of an idea. You know it's going to take off like a rocket, or perhaps it already has. Don't start charging as much as the traffic will allow. It is very possible that others will tell you the very opposite, but unless you want to be known as carpetbagger then, I'd advise against it. There's plenty of money to be made without resorting to such tactics.

There's a balance between making a good profit and taking advantage of your market position. While you might clean up

for a little while, pretty soon the word on the street will be, “It isn’t all that.” That sort of buzz doesn’t bode well for your future success. There are companies that design and make products they know will only sell once because they’re crummy. They rely upon fooling people once. Such companies also tend to change their names and offerings on a very regular basis. That’s not what sustainability is about.

FOSTERING LOYALTY IN YOUR CUSTOMER BASE

To truly be a success, you need repeat business. You’ve established your brand, now it’s time to create some brand loyalty. If successful, you’ll not only find yourself quickly becoming a local darling for your good work but, you can also count on that most coveted of all marketing prizes – good word of mouth from your new friends and clients.

Personalize Your Service

There’s something very human about putting a face to a brand. People want to know that there’s a real person behind the name. More than that, they want some sort of meaningful human interaction with their purchase. Even if people don’t realize that’s their motivation, there wouldn’t be a complicated persona called Betty Crocker if there wasn’t an advantage.

While it may seem that this is perhaps more of a motivation for women, men like to know there's someone behind the goods – some clever person they can talk to and get the straight story from. Either way, it is to your advantage to make sure that you or someone close to you in the organization is easily accessible. In some cases, it might be the appearance of accessibility rather than the real deal. If that's the case, you need to make sure that your customer service personal are given latitude to take care of things and that if you need to intervene, they're not afraid to get a' hold of you to do so.

If you *are* the business, then it's easy. Being small, you've probably decided to keep all the profits and market directly for at least a significant portion of your revenue. That means you will be available to your clients to really talk to them not only in dealing with orders and problems but also, to share your ideas and vision with them. If your enthusiasm is infectious, your sales will be, too. Don't be afraid to let people know who you are and why you're doing this.

If your company is large, it then becomes a matter of making regular appearances and taking time keep your customers apprised of your successes and ideas. What was once the domain of the monthly newsletter has become the corporate blog, but the concept is the same, sans paper waste.

Your adventures and inspiring stories are marketable, too. If there's an interesting story behind what you do, be sure and let people in on it. Perhaps it was some sort of epiphany you had about changing the way you do business. Maybe the idea for your new company came to you in a dream. Even if it was either this or prison, it's interesting and let's people know that their purchases are helping a real person help the world.

Be Local

Localism saves the cost and embedded energy of transportation and keeps money circulating in your own neighborhood. Better yet for you, as the neighborhood fill-in-the-blank, you become a member of the community. That ensures your neighbors will think of you first when looking for the product or service you offer because they know you and can stroll down and talk to you like it was the 1950s all over again. Most folks like dealing with the home team when they can.

Big box retailers have no "warm fuzzies" to offer. People are starting to realize that's something they've been missing and are willing to pay a few cents extra for it. It gives your neighbors a reason to go walking to do their marketing. While they're out, they might find another small business in the area that carries something else they can use. Next time they're out getting that something else, they might as well pop in and see if you've got anything on special.

Since you're sourcing your materials from local businesses, the cycle is self-perpetuating. Pretty soon, your business is thriving as part of an interwoven network of fellow business owners, all of whom have a vested interest in caring about your neighborhood's continued prosperity.

Creating Trust

Purchase decisions imply a certain level of trust. With each and every purchase, you're fulfilling a promise to deliver what you say. As a trusted member of the community, you can be counted on to give your customers a fair shake instead of relegating them to phone jail or worse.

It is vitally important that you look upon every customer interaction as a chance to impress, even if it starts out as a complaint. Every time you treat someone well they come away with a good feeling they'll remember when others ask about your company.

The level of trust you'll want to encourage goes up with the cost of the product or service as well as with potential lifetime of your work. For instance, you put more trust in an architect when you go with them to design your house than with a chocolatier you visit once a week. You do rely upon the sweets shop to provide items you can feel good about and taste good, but you'll be living in the product of the architect

for years to come. If the sweets turn out to not be made with fairly traded and organic sugar, you'll be disappointed, but maybe not for the rest of your life. If that house falls down around your ears, you've begun a nightmare that could ruin you.

As such, you'll find companies that peddle high-ticket items spend a lot more time and effort gaining trust with demonstrations of their previous work and keeping in touch with past clients to make sure everything is working out. Any company that seems reluctant to show their previous work will be assumed guilty of some transgression, true or not.

Service

Delivering superior customer service should be the mission of any business, whether they fit an ecological niche or not. However, since you're trying to build a sustainable relationship with your customers based upon trust and mutual respect, you really need to make sure no one ever has a reason to think they've been given the brush off. Even if your business is a trendy nightclub that hopes to make sustainable choices in all it does, you still can't act like the other guys. Remember, sustainable businesses are supposed to be nicer. Prove that stereotype correct.

There are a few basic rules of customer service. Whomever the customer deals with is the company as far as they're concerned. Make sure you pay very special attention to the

consistency and quality of the service personal on the front lines. Should your restaurant make the best food ever, you'll turn off those who've been offended by your rude or standoffish wait staff. You can help by keeping an eye on things and making your customer service staff feel like they're as important as they actually are. By giving them a chance to feel a sense of ownership of their job, the company becomes just a little bit theirs to promote.

Generally, the things people are looking for in service fall into a few categories (Anderson and Zemke 9) that are familiar to all:

- Reliability – customers can count on your business to accurately and dependably provide what is promised implicitly or expressly.
- Responsiveness – your company is always looking to help people have a better purchase experience
- Assurance – when interacting with your company, customers can feel confident in your ability and sincerity
- Empathy – Even if something does go wrong, you feel the customer's pain and let them know you're going to do whatever it takes to make it better.
- Tangibles – When customers enter your business or look at your website, they can tell you pay attention to details.

Keeping these principles in mind will keep your customers coming back because you obviously care.

Consistent Messages

There's something inherently untrustworthy about a story that changes with each telling. When customers ask questions, be sure each and everyone are answered completely and honestly. Don't tell them you don't know the answer – tell them you'll find it out.

Be sure everyone on your sales force is on track and has a good knowledge of the product. If this means having regular in-service days or sending out regular memos, do it. Your employees will appreciate being given the tools to do their job and you have greater control over the message that is accompanying your brand.

If your company's policies change or new research has changed the information you're operating from, let everyone know at once. When giving customers the new information, let them know things have changed and why. This will let your customers know you're innovative, on top of things and keeping an eye out for them.

Transparency

Always, always, always be honest. Along with this, remain as publicly transparent as possible. This sometimes means you could lose face, but that's far better than doing things behind the scenes that people may find out about later. You don't want to be the subject of an investigative report, but if you are, don't give them anything to find that isn't a matter of public record.

This doesn't mean you have to give away any trade secrets such as the recipe for your vegan BBQ sauce, but you should be as up front as possible. When someone asks you what ingredients are in the potatoes, you can tell them without mentioning whether it's a teaspoon or tablespoon of mustard.

If you haven't found a way to green up some aspect of your business, be honest and open about that too. You may be surprised and find that by telling people truthfully that it's something you're still working on, they might have some suggestions that you hadn't considered before. Even if you have heard of them before, be sure to thank them. If you do look into their suggestion, be sure and tell them what you've found next time they stop in.

Having a Plan for Referrals

The good words are going to come rolling in as soon as you begin doing business as you'd planned. It is important to

reward your loyal customers with something that will be of value to them. These people are among your most powerful allies, and should be treated as such.

Whenever someone tells you or your staff they were referred, try and find out who sent them. If you can identify the referee, make it a point to say thank you somehow. Perhaps it will take the form of a discount coupon or some free merchandise. It will feel more personal if you thank them yourself when they come in next.

Be sure you're ready to keep track of these things. If you miss your chance to say, "thank you," it's gone.

EDUCATION

You're already up on the happenings and trends in your business. Taking some extra time to educate your customers on what the nature of your ecological niche product or service can do for them will have great returns. Once they know why they need your service or product, it becomes a matter of providing it at the price and in the manner they'd like.

Just getting people to ask a question is the hardest part. Now that you've got them talking, every moment is a chance to not only sell but also, create a life-long customer. If you're good at teaching or public speaking, you might want to

consider teaching classes on various related topics and perform the “soft sell” that way.

One of the things that are difficult about peddling ecology is that the notions are complex. Not everyone has a degree in science to help them understand. It may take more than a few minutes to explain to someone just what’s wrong with the biscuit mix they’ve been using all these years. Once you take the time, they will not only feel as if you’ve performed a service, but are looking out for their welfare. Once they try your biscuit mix, they’ll realize it tastes better anyhow, and you’ve made another dedicated customer who will then look for other eco-friendly products including yours.

Speak Plainly and Don’t Condescend

When teaching people old enough to make purchasing decisions, especially about a topic you know a great deal about, it’s hard to speak to them in clear language without offending. Either you start out trying to give too much information, or you “dumb it down” too much.

It might be handy to take some time writing down explanations as to why you’re doing things the way you are and then have someone else read them. They can give you some pointers on how to modify your approach until it’s a nice balance between your specialized knowledge and getting your point across. Another handy trick is to have an elderly

relative ask you questions and see if you can get them to understand. If you can make yourself understood without causing frustration, you can explain yourself to anyone.

Explain Your Technical Breakthroughs

Or, at least, describe the breakthroughs that you're utilizing to bring them this awesome idea of yours. Even those that follow the green movement can't keep up with everything new that's coming to fruition these days. It's an exciting time with a great deal of innovation coming forward every day.

Most people will be impressed at the amount of research and thought you've put into your venture. Some will want to know more about it. Be ready to talk shop, with customers of all knowledge levels.

If the breakthrough is your own, and is important enough to be patented, then you've already got information about it written and ready to go. If it's just a great idea, try writing your own summation of the technology involved to make sure you can explain it in a clear manner.

Straight Information on Health Impacts

You may not want to make any specific health benefit claims, but it's always good to have information at hand as to the concerns and impacts that have been proven about the

conventional way of doing things. It can be very helpful to have pamphlets or web pages made up to explain these things. Refer to them liberally and encourage others to check it out.

Always stick with the facts. Don't go out on a limb and repeat things you've heard from less than reliable sources. It does no good to fill your customers' heads with half-truths. If there's any chance someone can besmirch your good name and efforts by calling into question even one of your facts, everything you said will become suspect.

Emphasize Positive Progress

When it comes to having information that people need to make good decisions, it is always best to emphasize not only what doesn't work but also, what you can offer that as a better solution. Just as dire predictions about the state of the Earth don't often encourage people to spend their money, it does no good to talk about the many ways of going to hell in a hand basket without providing an alternative.

Even as you begin and progress on your own journey, you'll make progress in your ecological goals, too. It may be inspiring to your clientele to learn just how you transformed yourself and your company into the force for good that they now find before them. You might even inspire one of your clients to follow your example and take their own idea to the

marketplace. You've followed the example of those who've gone before you. Repay the favor and give whatever time you can spare to mentor others any way you can and gain a staunch ally in the process.

Get Some High Profile Clients to Assist

The same people whose example can be great advertising for you can also assist you in educating others. While you have less control over just what they say, hopefully you've had a chance to have a nice long chat with them and fill them in the background information and issues that caused you to create this product or service in the first place.

Such allies can help you reach even more people, though they likely won't have your in-depth knowledge. Don't be shy in handing out cards. Be sure they know where they can point people who want to know more. Again, a well-designed and useful website can be invaluable in such situations. Your celebrity spokesperson will only have to remember your well-chosen web address (URL) to send them along.

REACHING YOUR POTENTIAL CUSTOMERS

There are many ways to go about marketing products and services to ecological niche markets. The ideas that follow are just a few rough ideas. In the end, you'll want to consult other sources for each one you seriously decide to go with.

Keep a few principles (Braden and Roth 232) in mind when designing your campaign, no matter the venue you choose to deploy it in. By considering one after the other in your planning, you'll ensure successful communication.

- Attention – do something that will get people to look in places where your demographic is likely to look
- Benefit – connecting your product with a positive outcome
- Credibility – backing up your claims with believable facts or a trustworthy spokesperson
- Desire – getting your potential customers to envision themselves actually using the product or service
- Effect – your goal may be a direct sale, as on the Internet, or an indirect one that they'll fulfill when they visit the store next.

Once you've figured out how you'll accomplish one, then you can implement the next.

You've done a lot of research up to this point. You know who your target audience is and what motivates them. You've got your facts in hand and memorized. You know where you stand in relation to your competition. You know how your product or service can benefit people. Now you need to make some decisions regarding this final stage of implementation. What, specifically, do you hope to accomplish with this ad?

What do you want people to remember after encountering your ad? What tone do you want to take?

The exact nature of your adverts and the characteristics of your target audience will have a great impact on how you answer those questions. Once you have those answers in hand, you're more than ready to put your creative talents to work.

Green Routes and Sustainable Tourism

Many people are interested in staying green on the road. Make it easy and participate in eco-friendly tourism and "green guides." There are many web sites and travel guides available that focus on places in any given town that operate sustainably.

This sort of listing is especially useful for vacation spots, restaurants and any type of business that caters to the needs of travelers. Some Organic and sustainable farms and ranches have turned their extra land into Bed and Breakfast Inns or event venues. Those in rural locations can often partner up with other sustainable businesses in the area to create a tourist destination where none existed before.

Such adverts usually take the form of web guides, road maps distributed at places that travelers frequent. It is likely that you'll just be purchasing the ad space rather than building the

campaign from the ground up yourself. However, should you find yourself in charge of such an operation, once you've got your map or guide printed up, you'll need interested people to find it. It might be helpful to contact your state department of transportation to see if they have any suggestions or regulations pertaining to placement at such locations as Interstate rest stops and waysides. Hotel lobbies are also fantastic places to put such materials.

Local Sustainable Guides

Just as the yellow telephone directories are a guide to all businesses in town that wish to spend money on a directory ad, there are now "green pages" specializing in sustainable goods and services.

Just like other guides, these are published once a year and the option of a simple listing, a boxed ad, inclusion under several different headings and full-page color ads in the front or back of the book. Unlike the other guides, they differentiate themselves by printing on local recycled paper with non-toxic inks. They also choose carefully from potential advertisers to make sure they meet defined standards of practice.

They often give background information about topics in relation to sustainable lifestyles (ReDirect 54) and the advertisers that offer such goods and services. Some topics

might include bio-diesel, green buildings, natural childbirth or localism.

Sponsorship Opportunities

As a local purveyor of goods and services and a member of the community, sponsoring a team or event can be a great way to get your name out there.

You can sponsor teams that your employees participate in such as a bowling league or softball league. You can sponsor the teams their children participate in such as little league baseball or the civic organizations.

Events that serve to get people interested in what you do can be a very good way of getting your company some name recognition. For instance, if you're an organic brewer, why not sponsor an organic brew fest? You can sponsor musical acts that appeal to your target demographic.

Some sponsorships require effort on your behalf as well as money. If you're low on advertising capital you might want to consider organizing an event so your company's name has top billing without having to spend anything but your time.

Offices of Sustainability

Whether it's through the USDA or your Neighborhood Association, there are offices of sustainability popping up all over the place, ready with materials and resources for you to take advantage of.

You can even use such organizations to find out about rebates, grants and low-cost loans that will assist you with the marketing or implementation phase of your plan.

Viral Marketing and Online Opportunities

One of the hottest topics in marketing has been the idea of letting others start spreading your word slowly until it grows into an unstoppable monster of publicity. Usually you need some sort of lurid or unusual hook – the sort of thing that a large number of people are likely to send along as an email link. Being mentioned on a page that indexes cool links can give you the sort of bump that can make a very serious business, in the near term, anyhow. Make sure before you start sending your site and your crazy-good idea around that, should you be listed, your server can handle the traffic without going into shock.

Since the Internet is by definition world-wide, advertising here will be of most use to companies that want to ship small and lightweight items or market data and media services. As

discussed earlier, you should do a great deal of research before you throw any money down the pay-per-click hole.

Those who wish to remain local will do best to use the Internet as a tool to disseminate information conveniently, like having a handy file folder with all your information in it that your friends can visit any time.

Either way, any time your company appears in print or online, be sure and mention it on your website. Link to other people's sites and keep an eye out for sites that link to yours.

Reciprocal links are reinforced links – the very sort the Google Monster 'bots like best. Even if your main site is clean and easy to use, you can use a blog template such as Word Press to easily update, manage and categorize any helpful information or pictures you like. As long as you can organize it with categories or tags, your media doesn't have to get in the way of navigation and will still bring people to your site.

Local Media and Trade Publications

There are two general types of local media: that you pay for and that you get free of charge. It could be said that you get control of what is printed for your advertising dollar. As you might expect, you'll have to pay something for most traditional forms of media. As something of a scientific pursuit, advertising does a very good job of charging a lot for the most effective and impressive forms of such adverts.

This most traditional type of marketing can be made unconventional by where and how it appears. Just about every privately owned surface has been treated as a billboard at some point or another. It is a testament to the effectiveness of conventional media such as those plain old billboards that they still exist in a world with advertising tattoos.

Free media often takes the place of articles and reviews of your company or related topics. When you first open up, (or reopen) the local news media may want to run a profile piece, especially if you're doing things a little differently or are particularly stylish about it. Should you do a good job of thrashing the competition and become a city institution, you may get an article about the insert-your-product-here craze. Since you'll be operating totally above the board, there'll be no need to worry about scandal articles.

One way to have a little control over "free" media is to take the time to have an employee, yourself or a hired freelancer to write articles about topics pertaining to your operations. Even submitting general interest articles to newspapers and magazines can be carefully linked back to you in subtle ways, even if not mentioned explicitly.

Press releases are an invaluable tool in getting the attention of the media. Whether you have a dedicated media-relations

employee or are just about ready to tackle the fine art of the press release yourself, creating a good one will be among the most important things you can do for your business. Don't be shy about sending it around. However, be sure it has both useful information and a title to catch a journalist's eye. One without the other is even more useless than a press release with neither.

Trade Shows

If you've never attended one, a trade show is where people with ideas or products get together to showcase their wares to interested consumers and other businesses. They usually have a very specific theme. Vendors often purchase their spaces while featured guests are usually invited by the show promoters to bring more people in. Often there will be raffles, speeches, panel discussions, auctions and other attractions. You will be responsible for every aspect of your booth except maybe a chair or two.

Some trade shows are far more effective than others. Be sure and find out all the information you can about past shows before you plunk down your fee to reserve a booth. The fees can be significant, especially for shows that are geared toward professional attendees hoping to discover and buy small business and their ideas.

If you're looking to sell out, this might be a good way to do it. When marketing to other businesses or just doing some networking, inexpensive show spaces might be worth your while. If you're hoping to continue with local and direct marketing, you might want to look for smaller shows that allow the public in.

Whatever route you decide to take with your carefully constructed advertising, there are a hundred others. Only by very carefully considering the basic premises of advertising and your audience will you have a good idea that is best for your niche in ecological marketing.

CONCLUSION

There are quite a few books on marketing in general, but I've tried to give you a perspective unique to Green Marketing Concepts. Each and every marketing tip or technique in this book has probably had at least one book written about it. This book is intended to be an overview, guide, and good place to start your investigations. It is meant to get you thinking systematically about what to do with your fantastic idea for a new or revamped business.

Anything you see in here should be double-checked. Not because I haven't, but because certain aspects might be different where you are and everyone's business is unique.

Most of all, thank you, on behalf of all life on this planet, for trying your best to do something decent. We need more folks like you.

Good luck.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Anderson, Kristin and Ron Zemke. Delivering Knock Your Socks Off Customer Service. New York: Performance Research Associates, 1991.

Braden, Maria and Richard L. Roth. Getting the Message Across: Writing for the Mass Media. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1997.

ReDirect, Inc. ReDirect Guide: The Portland Metro Area's Healthy and Sustainable Lifestyle Directory. Portland: ReDirect, 2006.

USEFUL LINKS

United States

Trade Organizations

- [Part 260 – Guides for the Use of Environmental Marketing Claims](#)

USDA

- [National Organics Program](#)

Other

- [Better Business Bureau](#)
- [US Business Council for Sustainable Development](#)
- [Fair Trade Certification USA](#)
- [Sustainable Business.com](#)

Selected International Regulations

Australia

- [Office of Sustainability](#)

Canada

- [BC Ministry of Resource Management](#)

United Kingdom

- [Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs](#)

New Zealand

- [Ministry for the Environment](#)

United Nations

- [Division for Sustainable Development](#)
- [United Nations Development Program – Growing Sustainable Business](#)

Internet marketing resources

Private Label Resell Rights Products you can resell as your own <http://www.sourcecodegoldmine.com> & www.PLRights.com

Autoresponser – www.ProfitSponder.com one of the best, and its cheap too!

"How to write and publish your own OUTRAGEOUSLY Profitable eBook in as little as 7 days - even if you can't write, can't type and failed high school English class!" Go to <http://www.jeremyburns.com/a/7dayebook> to get started

Authorize / e-OnlineData –

www.e-onlinedata.com/accuratemarketing

This is our 1st choice recommendation for merchant accounts, this is a very easy place to get approved and in the many systems we have tested are the easiest to work with! **Super Low Rates!!**

1ShoppingCart.com – <http://www.webmarketingmagic.com>:

Instant merchant accounts and real-time payment gateway services. This is a private label of the 1sc system and provides great service!

Now that you are on your way to becoming a Mentor Marketing Expert, don't stop there! The next step is the Holy Grail of Internet Marketing How To Guides... Read on for details!

"Learn how to make a life-changing income of \$100,000 to \$250,000 with your Internet business... even if you're a computer dummy!"

Review: "The Insider Secrets to Marketing Your Business on the Internet" by Corey Rudl

I've just finished reading the brand-new version of Corey Rudl's top-selling Internet marketing system, *"The Insider Secrets To Marketing Your Business On The Internet,"* and frankly, I'm overwhelmed by the huge amount of critical wealth-building information he's managed to pack into these **two hefty binders and 3 CDs!**

But I guess I shouldn't be surprised; after all, when the box containing these materials showed up at my door, it weighed in at **over 10 pounds!**

That's 10 pounds of the most comprehensive **marketing strategies, test results, case studies, tools, and ideas** for generating a life-changing income online (from \$1,000s to over \$1 million) you're ever likely to read!

I'm talking about information like...

- Step-by-step advice for starting your own Internet business **in as little as 48 hours!**
- How to build a top-selling web site... for less than \$100!
- Where to find hot products to sell (in 20 minutes or LESS)!
- 100s of FREE and cheap online tools, resources, and software
- How to get 1,000s of qualified NEW visitors to your web site... for FREE!
- How to **get #1 rankings in the search engines** and get tons of FREE traffic from the "Big Guys" like Google!
- Secrets to writing sales copy that can **increase sales by up to 400% (or MORE)!** And much more!

If you're unsure who Corey is, you should know that he's been a recognized expert in online marketing for a decade now. Not only has he generated **\$40,000,000 in online sales**, his sites also attract **450,000 visitor a week!**

What's *really* great about Corey is that he can show ANYONE how to have a **wildly profitable Internet business** (that takes just a few hours each day to run)...

... ***even if you're an absolute computer dummy!***

And if you *already* have an Internet business, he can help YOU, too. The advanced sections of his system show you how you can **increase your sales by 400%... 700%... even as much as 1,000%!**



I give Corey's system the highest rating possible! Its 1,300+ pages of step-by-step lessons contain the exact SAME tested and proven fast-growth strategies he has personally used to generate over \$40 million in online sales -- *starting on a shoestring budget!*

And it's the SAME SYSTEM that literally **1,000s of his students have used** to drive "truckloads" of cash out of the Internet.

I strongly urge you to check out Corey's wealth-building system as soon as possible! Go to

www.JeremyBurns.com/a/tips for a FREE preview.

Free Bonus

Private Label Rights Tips -

PLR Rights Marketing Tutorial

Package Value \$97.00



Private Label Right's products are hot right now! There is a killing to be made from these ready made turn-key products if you know the insider secrets to making them work. I have worked out a special deal with Jeremy Burns where you can grab a copy of PLR Tips with your purchase of this package as my gift to you! PLRTips.com