



## *Green Marketing: Keeping Your Messaging Clean and Your Products Eco-friendly*

Everywhere you read, search, listen and watch, green is king. Whether it's saving gas, electricity, paper or the planet – going green can mean greener pastures and thumbs up when it comes to our environment and your company's bottom line. Green is in. Green is good.

However, with the ever-present emphasis on "greenness" also comes the need for how to communicate the enviro message. Does environmental messaging sometimes sound more like a fad than reality? Does your product line include features and benefits that are just waiting to be communicated? Are you forcing green features into your products that may not exist?

Don't be green just to be green. It's more important to be accurate rather than faddish regarding what your product or service offers the environmentally conscientious customer.

Here are some steps to recycle your marketing message so "zero waste" doesn't mean zero understanding. By taking the right steps you can conserve

your energy, the planet's energy and your company's marketing resources.

### **Enviro features and differentiators**

Perhaps your product has green marketing features you never realized. Ask yourself, "Are there features in my products that save energy, natural resources and time?" If so, are you translating those features into your marketing messaging such as your web site, white papers, product packaging descriptions and brochures?

For example, one of my clients sells a greenhouse controller technology that saves their customers water and electricity. Both water and power are resources that everyone likes to save. In this client's marketing and sales sheets, we made sure that phrases such as "decrease water and power usage while increasing your profits," were part of their green marketing speak.

What about your product packaging? Sometimes it's as simple as changing the type of clear clamshell packaging that saves your cost of goods and shipping

fees, thus increasing profits while still helping the environment. Since newer types of clamshell plastic (the clear, plastic cover on many retail products) are easier to recycle, then you can discover added benefits in something as simple as your packaging. Older PVC plastic used in clamshell packing has been attributed to health risks and is not “recycle friendly.” PVC is considered eco-unfriendly.

The alternative to PVC is called PET (Polyethylene Terephthalate). PET is easy to recycle and can be sealed through RF or heat sealing. In short, PET is eco-friendly and flexible. PET plastic has a built in marketing story and speaks to environmental concerns.

In addition, even the type of paper and the design of your packaging can turn an old packaging design into a lighter, stronger, revised design that brings your packaging cost closer to the zero waste goal that many companies, like Wal-Mart, are seeking. Many channel distributors and large retailers are requiring vendor adherence to zero waste packaging. PET plastic is part of that requirement. If you don't comply you don't qualify as a vendor.

### **Reducing printing cost**

Handing a customer sales slicks and product guides is still an effective way to sell product. Business cards and brochures will never go away. Yet, how many of us after returning from a trade show end up trashing the pounds of brochures and paper collected? One solution: use your web site as the repository source for your product literature. The digital text needs no trash can and requires no tree, little electricity

and no paper to read. Printing only occurs if the customer chooses to.

Post your critical marketing and product pieces in PDF format on your resources or product page. If the customer chooses to, they simply download the file for a later read or print. PDF is easily saved in a protected or encrypted format.

Numerous PDF conversion utilities exist so you can convert Word, Excel, and PowerPoint files into a PDF version. The finished file looks clean and can even be saved in standard, medium and higher resolution formats. In standard format, large presentations become smaller for an email attachment. The quality and resolution is more than satisfactory for most prints or reads.

### **Green marketing ethics**

Honesty, as in business and life, is the best policy when it comes to green marketing. If your product or service is not environmentally friendly, then be careful not to stretch your messaging beyond the ozone layer.

State your product benefits in simple and clear terms. Show examples of how your customer and the community benefits. If you have case studies, then by all means use them as testimonials for your eco-friendly product or service. If your product just does not fit into the green marketing category, perhaps there are other ways you are moving toward zero waste or saving natural resources.

If your company remanufactures 600 horse power motors for late-model muscle cars, well, you are out of green marketing luck. But hold on, perhaps your company also has an accessory line

of products and you changed the type of packaging plastic you use on those products. Now that might be a green marketing story to tell.

Your product or service does not have to be a full-bred-hybrid-econo-friendly-ozone-decreasing product to tell a green marketing story. Just by changing, in small ways, how you do business and go to market can make a difference.

For example, Arrowhead Mountain Spring Water Company recently redesigned an “Eco-Shape™ Bottle,” as they call it. It has smaller waste to the bottle design, thus saving 30% of the plastic used for the same bottle size. That’s simple imagination. That’s green marketing and makes a great story.

You may not have a big, jolly green marketing giant of a story, but I’ll bet there are some areas you can audit for efficiency and change. Look for your story. Tell it. And remember, every little bit helps when we change our products and our marketing to greener pastures.

### **Green marketing audits?**

Perhaps your products are about as eco-unfriendly as you can get. That could be an opportunity for a “green marketing audit.” Rethink your raw materials, packaging, and process to see where you can both tell a story and save the planet - - not to mention your wallet!

I have to admit, just the process of writing this article changed some of my brain’s grey cells to green cells. No, not my hair, since I don’t have enough to even dye green!

There really is a marketing story to be told here. If your product or service is already green – or heading in the direction – then great. Evaluate how you are currently telling that story. From a product management and product life-cycle standpoint, the benefits of a green, eco-friendly approach are worth the effort. Not only can you offer a product that serves a need, you can also offer a product that protects our environment.

There are **greener** pastures on the other side of the marketing hill...give me a call and we can make the journey.

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