



ECOLOGIC

-the Green Hornet's thoughts on GOP's position in the green movement

Even though 'green' is one of the hottest current topics; there has been little definitive direction that has been established to speak to the movement. At present, the term 'green' is pervasive and can mean just about anything, but mostly 'green' seems to embody the term 'marketing' and the best sales pitch will gain the green edge, which really isn't all that unusual. A few brief observations regarding the current 'green' climate may provide some perspective on how our company operates. When it comes to 'green'.

It's no secret that high concentrations of human activity do tend to adversely affect our surroundings and in many areas we have addressed localized pollutants such as Nitrous Oxides, Sulfur Oxides, CFCs and plain old litter. However, the threat of note is geographically more generalized. What we seem to think we know is that CO2 and other greenhouse gasses are causing the planet (earth) to warm up at this particular moment in time. It's also been recognized that warming is bad because of positive feedback loops that will exacerbate the situation until our congenial home planet (earth) will function like a gigantic convection oven, similar to our sister planet (Venus), and serve us up as so many home fries.

Conventional wisdom has it that we, and our insatiable appetite for energy in the form of CO2-spewing fossil fuel combustion, are complicit, if not solely liable for this conspiracy to toast the earth. It is generally accepted that we need to cut down on our use of energy, especially the fossil fuels, but our solutions seem far-flung and often contradictory. Many terms bandied about and technologies referenced are thus far only hopeful promises and not developed sufficiently to produce practical results. Consequently, no alternate to our current energy source or means to contain CO2 has been fully qualified or largely supported at this point. Also, the recent economic crises seems to have firmly aligned our priorities to tackle the acute financial troubles and defer the chronic impending environmental issues, consequently the big green push has been somewhat tempered.

However, as individuals, we seem to realize that we should try to do something to be environmentally friendly so we continue with the familiar activities of recycling, powering down equipment and lights when not needed, reducing consumption etc. These actions may seem trivial as compared with the scope of the problem and even Dr. James Lovelock, the author of the Gaia theory, thinks that it's probably too late to reverse the current warming trend. But some think that collectively, our individual actions could make a difference. Our company tends to fall into this latter bracket; we think that there is everything to gain by doing something, assuming you can figure out what to do.

Like many office supply companies, we profess to be green; we sell green products and talk the green talk. However, we are committed to put green legs to our claims and do more. But as a mere office supply company, how can we hope to come to grips with a subject that encompasses words like, 'carbon footprint', sustainability, methane clathrates, phytoplankton and Al Gore? Based on much of the publicized rhetoric, we probably stand about as good a chance as any.

Admittedly, we aren't scientists, social or otherwise; we push pens and pencils, literally. But consensus is lacking, even amongst the scientists, with respect to the solutions presented in merging the human desire for a robust economy with environmentalism. So we can put our own spin on 'green' and promote waste stream reduction from an efficiency and cost reduction standpoint. To this end, we are trying to go beyond the green products we sell. We are actively engaging our customers, our suppliers and our community for informational gathering purposes and in hopes of making a positive eco impact as we try to make sense of this 'green' matter. Among other things, we are members of the Environmental Committee at our local Chamber of Commerce, we publish 'green' articles in our company newsletter, we participate in local civic cleanup projects and we go to great lengths to qualify the 'green' products that we sell.

About a year ago, we implemented our next level initiative with something we call the box repo program. As simple as it sounds all we do is pick up our shipping cartons and reuse them. It's pretty convenient in that the boxes fold flat so they don't take up much room at our customers' offices and we aren't making a special trip because we are there with subsequent deliveries anyway. It has been well received by our accounts and we consider the program to be cost neutral because there is a little additional labor involved in handling the boxes and removing old shipping labels etc. Environmentally, this is better than recycling because we are actually extending the life span of the box by two to four hundred percent before it is then recycled.

Internally, we are pursuing avenues to be more efficient with both energy and materials, which ultimately translates into cutting costs; this is really just good business sense anyway. For instance, we have cut down on our use of shrink-wrap to contain pallet loads of product that we ship between warehouses, by using collapsible pallets with sides that contain the load. Our calculations indicate that we save the landfill or incinerator 270,000 square feet of shrink-wrap per year. We also engage in recycling efforts that are at a cost to us and hopefully make environmental sense, but overall these actions should have a net positive economic impact for us.

Many of our customers have green committees and we have met with them in order to hammer out a plan that might address issues related to 'waste stream reduction'. We won't necessarily speak to topics like 'sustainability' in the true sense, but we will work on practical recommendations that serve to conserve resources, like paper, ink, toner and money. One quick suggestion is to not swap out an ink cartridge when the computer complains that an ink cartridge is empty or near empty. If it continues to print, keep using it until it won't print anymore, then replace the cartridge. Some studies show that those 'ink out' or 'low ink' warnings will present themselves even when there is quite a bit of ink remaining, especially with the aftermarket brands. Another tip would be to be very careful of the aftermarket inkjet brands that you purchase, it has been verified that the designs of some of these cartridges have indeed killed printers, which could be considered anti-green.

Granted, there is much about business and human activity in general that is at odds with the green movement and any attempt to reconcile the two may prove futile. However, your current office products supplier should still be working with you to save the planet, I know we would.