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Choosing the Right Shade of Green Marketing

Green marketing remains a smart investment even in tough economic times. By staying the course you build loyalty with your “dark green” customers -- those eco-savvy buyers actively seeking environmentally responsible companies and products -- while positioning yourself as the authority for your “lighter green” customers when the financial outlook improves.

Choose green business partners. Working with suppliers to reduce energy and other resource use creates value up and down the supply chain. For example, we can show you how to decrease marketing costs and maximize response rates by choosing the most eco-friendly printing processes, papers and inks for each marketing piece. Take credit for these collaborative efforts in your marketing communications.

Assess what your audience knows, needs to know and should know about your green initiatives. Craft a message that is relevant not only to your customers but also to activists, regulators and the media. To be heard above the growing cacophony of green claims, you must show how what you’re doing is unique. Describe how you will help your stakeholders personally or aid other people and communities.

Consumers are wise to “greenwashing.” The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) is releasing its first revisions to the Green Guide in more than a decade to provide guidelines for credible green marketing, and the number of blogs and websites devoted to rating the veracity of a company’s green assertions is growing. Make sure your message is specific and transparent.

Showcase the affordability of your green products. Promoting a sale on items carrying the recycling symbol or organic label can be effective, but marketing your product’s affordability doesn’t necessarily mean price discounting. Show how your comparatively expensive green product can save consumers money in the longer-term through lower energy, healthcare or production costs.

By sustaining the environment, you’re sustaining your business. When your company moves into cost-cutting mode, be prepared to demonstrate how green marketing creates business value. Relate your strategy to lower costs and increased revenue as a result of new markets, new products and deepening customer loyalty.

Studies show that companies perceived to have a true commitment to sustainability outperform their peers financially during an economic slowdown. Consistently uphold your environmental values and you will be in a stronger market position when the economy rebounds.