

Environmentalism: the new core American value.

Unless you've been living under a rock (which, by the way, is a very environmentally-friendly thing to do!), you may have noticed your target markets have been changing: from people concentrating on material stuff, to humans concerned about the world around them.

True, every prospect still wants to know "what's in it for me?" but there's another element at work now. Your audience(s) now have a raised environmental consciousness. A new sensitivity about how they live and how that affects the world around them. And as part of the awareness, they're also looking for companies they work with to share that same focus.

How can a service-based company "go green"?

If you have a service business and the service itself is green, what can you do? How about making the process by which you offer your services "greener." For example, take a (digital) page from the playbook of Esurance, an online insurance company. They're going green by working with CarbonFund.org to offset 100% of the electricity used in their offices around the country, going (nearly) paperless, purchasing hybrid vehicles for its claims fleet and supporting (and promoting that support of) Seattle-based "EarthCorps.org," a nonprofit that restores parks and green spaces.

Two bottom lines.

If you haven't started already, you'll find your company will be responsible for two bottom lines: one for profit, and one for its contribution to making their corner of the world a little bit better. But keep in mind you can't change the world yourself, so teaming up with other organizations who have the same goals, often makes a world of sense. And ultimately, one bottom line will enhance the other.

How do you market your new "green" focus?

Once your company has taken steps to be more eco-conscious, and the examples above cites just a few ways, how do you go about marketing that fact to your audience? Well, it's never been a good approach to say how wonderful your company is being, whether through traditional, or eco-friendly marketing. No one believes self-made claims of grandeur. But there are ways to go about it that still focuses the attention on your prospects and customers.

Educate. Enlighten. Entertain.

Most smart consumers are already well-aware of the need to be better stewards of our environment, so be focused regarding the benefits to your prospects. It's also critical not to fall in the mode of promoting "features" instead of "benefits." Features are what you put into your product or service, and benefits are what your customers get out of your product or service. There is a huge distinction between the two.

And as you move from "lifestyle" marketing, to "a better life" marketing, show how your company is doing its part. Keep in mind though, we're all members of "The Short Attention Span Society," so find a way to convey your message concisely!

Finally, because no one likes to be lectured, if your message can also entertain, it may give you a distinct advantage over your competitor's marketing. There's a fine line to walk with this approach, but when done well, it makes your message stand above other marketing and advertising.

Good luck on your new efforts to go green. And remember, to keep it manageable: take it one step at a time.