



Fiona Walsh

Sustainability adds green to bottom line

All companies can cash in on trend

We all know that sustainability is good for the world and for the environment, but as a business owner, how is it good for you? How does it relate to helping your bottom line, to gaining market share, to attracting good customers? It sounds great in theory, and we all want to do good things, but for most business owners the idea of sustainability brings to mind concerns about extra cost and extra work.

On June 14, 2007 the Downtown Vancouver Business Improvement Association hosted guest speaker Ray Anderson, founder and chairman of Interface, the largest modular carpet manufacturer in the world, with sales in more than 100 countries and manufacturing facilities on four continents.

What makes Interface unique is that this multi-billion dollar company

proves that being green is feasible and profitable in today's market. Ray Anderson's mandate is to build sustainability into their business model and to enhance shareholder value. This commitment has led to reduced waste costs, decreased energy costs and solid financial returns. Visit <http://www.interface-sustainability.com/> for more details on the Interface story.

Don't kid yourself. Sustainability is not a fad that is going to fade away. Going green offers business owners the opportunity to increase sales and build customer loyalty. The size and buying power of the green market is growing.

Women in North America currently make 80 percent of the consumer purchasing decisions, as well as 50 percent of the business to business purchasing decisions. The GolinHarris Change 2006 Corporate Citizenship Survey re-

sults showed that women are significantly more likely to purchase products from a company that "is a good corporate citizen."

Forty-six percent of women will try that company's products for the first time; 38 percent of women will increase, start buying or come back to such a company's products.

The key to sales success is giving your customers what they want. Develop green products and programs and you will see their dollars come to you rather than going to the competition.

So now you are thinking: "But we aren't a multi-million dollar company; we don't have the resources to go green." Wrong. There are lots of ways for small companies to go green:

- Use environmentally friendly cars for your fleet or delivery vehicles. Nurse Next Door uses eye-catching pink Smart cars. Everyone notices them. Going green for this company has given them a powerful marketing tool.
- Buy greener office supplies. There are a lot more options available now for paper, packaging and mailing products.
- Buy energy efficient office equipment.
- Donate your used computer equipment to BC Digital Divide, whose

mission is to provide computers to those who otherwise could not afford one. Check them out at www.bcdigitaldivide.org.

- Challenge your employees to find ways to reduce your energy consumption. Track the results and post them on your website, in your newsletter and anywhere else your customers will see it.
- Look at ways to reduce your packaging. Offer a reusable shopping bag instead of plastic. Use this opportunity to create packaging that makes your company stand out and becomes another advertising tool for you.
- Send invoices electronically instead of with paper.

Successful selling requires that you educate your customers on the benefits they get from doing business with you. Toot your own horn. Put it in all your marketing materials, on your website, in your newsletters, on your business cards. Tell the world you are a business that cares and that you are taking action.

Fiona Walsh is one of only three business coaches in North America approved to provide the highly successful and popular Ghost CEO coaching program. An expert in sales and business development, she offers tips for growing your business at www.fjwalsh.com.

A workshop for those dreaming of starting a business



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