

It's Not Easy Being Green

An Editorial

As the song goes, so does business. Kermit the Frog had it right when he sang those words, but it has a different application for today's organizations. Today's businesses are faced with unusual challenges from unlikely sources and must respond, in some cases, without direct guidance under the law. It does not matter if you run a business-to-consumer or business-to-business type of organization; end users are demanding that you consider the environment in your operations. Organizations are left to decipher what this means, what challenges they face and how they will accomplish the mission. Most importantly, there are no true legalities for many initiatives, no regulations to mark compliance¹. The green world is being driven by consumer demand.

Consumer demand supports a sense of responsibility to take the right steps, not just for the moment, but also for the future. This is a time in history where the words "do the right thing" are more than words. They are a strong force, compelling a call to action. Consumers are paying attention to products that are environmentally friendly, and these are the products being purchased. It is a win-win situation, but it is not simple.

Where does an organization begin, how will the steps to go green fit into the business plan and how will this be managed? These are tough questions with impact on many areas of a business, so it is best to begin with known regulations, the type that have already developed compliance requirements and are supported by legislation or authorized agencies. For example, The US Consumer Product Safety Commission is a government organization with 21 positions listed in its organizational chart. These 21 positions are filled with people in areas of general counsel, public affairs, congressional relations, international affairs, equal opportunity and minority enterprises at the top of the list, followed by Hazard Identification and Reduction and Compliance and Field Operations positions.

"The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission is charged with protecting the public from unreasonable risks of serious injury or death from thousands of types of consumer products under the agency's jurisdiction." ² The Consumer Product Safety Improvement Act (CPSIA) is a product of The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission and you can learn more about this by visiting <http://www.cpsc.gov/about/cpsia/cpsia.html>.

Already you can begin to see the complexity of the situation. The steps required to comply are likely going to involve many departments within a company and so the process grows. There are also changes that can be made to demonstrate your commitment to a greener world without requiring compliance. Adapting such activities as installing recycling containers, sending electronic invoices, recycling paperboard and cardboard materials, controlling power/utility use during downtime, adjusting processes and even changing materials, all these activities contribute to a greener environment.

¹ http://www.americanchemistry.com/s_plastics/doc.asp?CID=1102&DID=4644 (voluntary resin identification codes)

² <http://www.cpsc.gov/about/about.html>

Whether by choice or demand, it is time to do the right thing. Begin by taking small measures first, which may just help your bottom-line. Then seek further progress by gaining support and cooperation of all departments to help determine what adjustments can be made to contribute to a greener environment. There is no better time to start than now because sooner or later you won't have a choice.

By now, you may recognize that this paper is not so much about how to go green, but rather how complex it can become. One important concept to take from the article is that actions you take to go "green" may be a *selling point* for your business. When comparing apples to apples and all things even, a buyer's decision may just rest on the supplier's green initiatives.

Also of significance, is that the youth of our world are growing up in a health conscious world, and that includes many concerns about their environment. Although currently there may not be specific laws, there are regulations and the youth of the future will surely bring about more stringent controls. It would seem to be of great planning benefits to begin now, adopting some of the most basic environmental policies. You wouldn't want to play catch up later, especially in this fast paced world.

Other Resources Contributing To a Greener Environment

Some of the sources below demonstrate a historical presence of environmental concerns while others indicate that the world's youth are being taught early to be aware of the environment, establishing conditions that will become the norm.

Governmental

<http://www.epa.gov/earthday/history.htm>

Private Organizations

<http://gogreeninitiative.org/content/About/>

<http://www.worldwatch.org/node/23>

http://sustainus.org/component/option,com_frontpage/Itemid,194/

<http://www.ourearth.org/history.htm>

<http://www.ewg.org/>