

What's This "Green" Idea All About, and How Can It Work for My Company?

To a feed manufacturer, green may not seem like a desirable color. "Green" suggests one of two mental pictures: either "not yet ripe," and therefore unusable for feed manufacturing, or "way too ripe," as in moldy and ruined. Fortunately, today's "green ethic" is a positive new look at an old color.

The "green" movement encompasses efforts to use resources in an environmentally sound way, minimizing energy consumption and all forms of waste. Many of the steps that make a business more "green" can also save money, such as switching to a more efficient heating and cooling system or beefing up insulation of buildings. Can "green" steps also be used to boost your marketing efforts, employee attitudes, and even sales figures? Think about these ideas:

- **Marketing.** A company in Lancashire, United Kingdom is moving forward by taking a step back in time. In April of 2009, Thwaites Brewery parked some of its trucks and began making local deliveries using a cart pulled by four huge Shire geldings. The horses drew a lot of attention while making their rounds. As working horses that also show, the team will be getting more exposure at a number of national and local outings. *Which option provides more marketing bang for your buck: a dusty delivery vehicle, or a team of gleaming black horses with snow-white socks? Even if you don't go with horse-drawn deliveries, think about ways to combine "green" and marketing when you replace vehicles in your fleet. How about new hybrid cars and trucks with your company's logo and a "green" message?*
- **More marketing.** A company in California has just introduced what it claims to be the first "green feed" for horses. According to O.H. Kruse, its new feed is ecologically sound because it uses local ingredients, minimizing transportation; contains optimum supplement levels to reduce environmental contamination from nutrient-rich manure; and keeps grain content to a minimum, avoiding competition with ingredients used in human food production. In addition, the feed bag is made of recyclable materials. *Most of these procedures aren't anything new, but using similar facts for promoting your product may be a novel concept. Can you publicize the same type of "green" technology to show consumers that you are aware of ecological considerations? No big changes are needed; just let a sign, poster, or newsletter tell your clients about what you are already doing.*
- **Employee attitude.** Research on employee morale and productivity has shown that employees who work from home tend to be up to 45% more productive than those who come into an office every day. *Compared to some other businesses, feed mills probably have fewer staff members who could stay at home, simply because there are a lot of tasks that require hands-on attention. However, there may still be someone who*

could do his or her job from a remote location, if only for a few days a week. Brainstorm about the idea; ask employees for their suggestions on how this could work for your company.

- **More employee attitude.** Even if everyone still drives to the mill or sales room every day, you may be able to make some changes to decrease the number of minutes each car is on the road, minimizing vehicle emissions. *Think about starting or expanding flexible work hours so that employees can drive to and from work during times when the roads are not as busy. Less traffic means faster trips. Also think about some sort of incentive to encourage carpooling, using public transportation, riding a bicycle or moped (up to 100 miles per gallon of fuel!), or walking to work. Employees who spend less for gasoline should be more satisfied with their spendable income, and those who can fit other chores around office time may take fewer days off work to handle personal or family responsibilities.*
- **Sales.** These suggestions—increased marketing efforts and enhanced employee satisfaction—may boost sales to some extent. Another idea: encourage each client to acquire another horse! This move is advantageous from a number of angles. First, from a feed mill's standpoint, more horses will eat more feed, and thus product sales will increase. Second, from a "green" standpoint, horseback riding has a very low rate of carbon emissions compared to other forms of transportation. According to figures provided by the Institute for Liberty, a horse ridden for an entire day by a mounted policeman generated about 1.7 pounds of carbon, far less than the carbon signature produced by even a brief ride by car, airplane, bus, train, taxi, or subway. Third, even if an extra horse can't realistically be used for transportation, caring for horses has health benefits for owners. Horse enthusiasts who groom and ride horses, carry hay bales, and clean tack burn calories more enjoyably than they would while running on a treadmill. If horses are kept on an owner's property, not having to drive to the fitness center for an exercise class means less money spent on gasoline. *Owning an extra horse has plenty of benefits for everyone involved! Put up a bulletin board and encourage clients to bring in photos of their new horses in exchange for a discount coupon on the first bag of feed.*

So, does being part of the "green" movement fit into your company's plans in any way? Maybe you have already taken steps to conserve electricity, limit water consumption, recycle used materials, reduce waste of all kinds, use fluorescent lighting, and minimize contamination of ground water. The suggestions above may not be applicable or practical for every business, but they might be a nudge in the right direction for anyone who has not given serious thought to a more responsible way of using resources. Ask for ideas; discuss suggestions; surf the Web for more ways to ride the "green" wave. It just might be good for business!