

WORDS OF WORTH

Summer 2011

From spring to summer heat wave and back to spring--and finally, truly, to summer. Everything has leafed out. Nature is profligate in marketing itself in green. We need to be more cautious in our green marketing, lest we fall into a green marketing trap. This issue can help you avoid some of the common ones.

Of course, there is a great deal more to be said on this topic. For lots more useful information on Green Marketing, pick up Jacquie Ottman's new book, *The New Rules of Green* (<http://www.greenmarketing.com/our-book>).

Steer Clear of Green Marketing Traps



We continue to hear much gnashing of teeth about the evils of greenwashing. It certainly is a problem, both for consumers and for companies whose legitimate sustainability messaging becomes diluted.

There are probably not a lot of marketers who get up in the morning saying "I think I'll do some greenwashing today." While there are undoubtedly some who mislead deliberately (you took the CFCs out? Okay, but those have been illegal for decades), most greenwashers are simply making mistakes at something they never learned in school.

If you're less than savvy about green marketing, it's easy to get burned. Here are some common green marketing traps, and how to avoid them.

1. The exaggerated green claim trap: Exaggerated claims are not only ineffective, some can get you in legal trouble. If your product includes 65% organic ingredients, that's great--but don't call the product as a whole organic. If your product uses less energy than it used to, but the same amount as many competitors, don't market the improvements.

Stay out of the trap: Invest the energy to be meticulously honest in your claims.



2. The green claim that's accurate but insignificant: It's wonderful that many companies are improving the sustainability of their production and distribution systems, but it's not all advertising material. The wrapper of your small item uses 5% less paper? That's great, and it's good for your bottom line--but it doesn't have enough sustainability significance to change the purchasing habits of even committed green customers.

Stay out of the trap: Keep mum about the little things; wait until you have something significant to talk about. Be prepared to back up your claims; any claims made in packaging or advertising should be integrated with explanations and documentation on your website.



3. The green claim that throws unsustainable company products and operations into sharp relief:

Fear of this trap motivates many companies that are making significant progress on sustainability to keep a low profile on their efforts. It's easy for customers to be skeptical about a product line like Chlorox's Greenworks when the rest of the company's product lines are far from sustainable.

Stay out of the trap: Walk carefully on the communications tightrope. Customers do want to hear about your sustainability efforts--and they want recognition of how those efforts fit in the company's big picture. "Hey, it's a start" doesn't cut it anymore. Don't assume that your Corporate Responsibility Report takes care of the big picture communication. Not many consumers are going to plow through it.

4. The green claim that's irrelevant (or not directly relevant) to the buyer: When detergent manufacturers introduced more concentrated detergents, they reduced distribution costs--and the amount of greenhouse gases emitted during transportation. That doesn't mean that "Less transportation energy per wash load" will excite a lot of consumers. They will be more enthused about having fewer bottles to tote and dispose of, or about the price cut made possible by less costly shipping.

Stay out of the trap by: Focusing on green attributes that are important to your customers. Direct health impacts, the ability to save on energy costs and the old-fashioned virtues of convenience and simplicity of use will be relevant to both consumer and business buyers.

5. The "You're certified by whom?" trap: There are literally hundreds of organizations offering some form of green certification for products and services. They differ widely in the breadth and rigor of their certification process.

While recognition of government seals is high (77% of households recognized the EPA Energy Star label in 2009), most consumers won't recognize other seals. Some business customers may recognize established third party certifiers, such as Green Seal.

Unless there is a way for customers to validate the certification program for themselves, using several unrecognized seals will raise the suspicion of greenwashing.

Stay out of the trap by: Thinking about customer recognition before adding certifiers to your packaging or advertising. Give customers the opportunity to learn about your certifiers by providing their website address (or a link to their site, for your online marketing).

News Bytes

On our Desktop

It's all about interactive marketing these days--print projects are few and far between these days. As we've written in prior newsletters, electrons aren't necessarily environmentally superior to print ([See "Print Marketing Materials: Sustainable Choices"](#)).

However, there are marketing advantages to letting people interact, and we're more than happy to work on websites, e-newsletters and email marketing.

Current and recent Jussim Communications projects have included:

- A website for an online training company
- A totally new website for a social service organization
- Website updates, email blasts and press releases for a non-profit organization
- Case studies for a consulting organization
- Online training programs on data security and data center energy efficiency

Several of these, as well as other samples of our work, are available through our website [Portfolio](#).

About Jussim Communications

We're "storytellers for hire" to the B2B and nonprofit sectors. We focus on green business, technology, healthcare and design.

We create powerful marketing copy, rooted in solid positioning of services, products or ideas. Our writing appeals at both the cerebral and emotional levels, because that's how purchase decisions are made. Our background in consulting, marketing and operations lets us quickly grasp your business and market situation.

We can help you by creating:

- Accessible, well-structured web copy
- Exciting marketing communications
- Email or print newsletters that educate your market and build name recognition
- White papers and articles that establish your expertise and creativity
- Effective advocacy materials and grant reports

It all starts when you tell us *your* story. So give us a call at 718-788-3937. The initial consultation is free.

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