

Why Be Green?

By Jack Miller

Since the recession “green” has become secondary to survival. Nevertheless, a lot of companies still want to be greener.

But let me ask my favorite question: Why?

I remember speaking with one company who said they wanted help developing a sustainability strategy. I asked why. They said they wanted to do the right thing. It was part of their culture. But when I asked how much they were willing to spend, they balked. It couldn't cost more.

Be honest with yourself. Why do you want to go green? Customers demand it? Environmental groups demand it? CEO demands it? If your CEO demands it, make sure you understand the strategy. Is it a defensive strategy? Is it to preempt the environmental groups from picketing in your lobby? Or do you want to have a proactive green marketing strategy to differentiate?

If you do have a green marketing strategy, is it a corporate strategy or a product strategy? Some companies' whole corporate brand is about sustainability, while some companies only have a few niche products or brands that are green. Some are happy to have one nice green story, though this can be risky if you get labeled as hypocritical. What's your strategy?

Is your strategy aligned with your customers' needs? If you are reducing your carbon footprint, but your customers only care about recycling, is there a disconnect? Do you really understand what your customers care about? What about your customers' customers? Do you understand how you are perceived? Do you understand how your competitors are perceived?

Some green initiatives save money: less energy, less weight, less material, less packaging all mean cost savings.

Some green initiatives cost money: recycled materials, renewable or bio-based materials, biodegradable and compostable materials may cost more.

Some green initiatives are investments that may save money in the long run: energy savings, renewable energy, green buildings.

Just be sure you have a clear picture of what you are trying to achieve and why, and that your strategy is aligned with your customers' needs.

If you need a better understanding of what your customers need, and what their customers need, email jack.miller@market-intell.com or call 203 925 0326.

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