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The Low Carbon Agenda

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Green Pitches

This month we're going to look at low carbon marketing - reaping the benefit of all that work you have done to cut your carbon footprint. And if you haven't cut it then stop reading now and go and do it. Greenwash is a cardinal sin in this game and can rebound in spectacular fashion.

I got some feedback that the formatting of last month's newsletter didn't work properly on some e-mail systems. We've tried to eliminate glitches from this one (we think it's a font problem) and will be upgrading our system soon.



All the very best,

Gareth

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Beware The Green Graveyard

Unfortunately too many well-meaning products and services end up in what US green marketing guru Jacquelyn Ottman calls the "Green Graveyard", making the fatal assumption that green or low carbon credentials can overcome mediocre performance, poor design and, frankly, sappy branding. Successful green/low carbon products, look good, perform well and are branded to make clear the benefits of the product to the user rather than the planet.

For example, the highly energy-efficient compact fluorescent light (CFL) bulb was initially branded the 'Earth Light' - its box decorated with mountains and trees. It flopped in spectacular fashion. A redesign of product and branding produced the Marathon, with its card festooned with claims of financial savings through long life and lower energy bills. It flew off the shelves and is fast becoming the standard type of bulb in many peoples eyes.

A Dubious Past, but a Better Future

The problem facing the marketing of green products and services is their past. People still associate 'green' with undrinkable fair trade coffee from the 80s and washing powders that just didn't work. These products and services were developed by well meaning activists who had no qualms in eschewing a modern consumerist lifestyle for their belief in a low-impact society.

Most green products are currently in a niche market, developed and marketed by entrepreneurs who believe in the environmental and business imperatives. Only a few products, such as energy efficient white goods, organic baby food or Body Shops toiletries, have broken through into the mass market.

Recent green market surveys suggest that, as a rule of thumb:

- One third of consumers see 'green' as good;
- One third will follow the crowd, reluctantly or cautiously towards greener purchases;
- One third are anti-green and/or completely oblivious to the green message.

So there is quite a chunk of the market out there that will be receptive to your claims, and more

breakthroughs will be made - you've just got to pitch it right.

Low Carbon Marketing Principles

The perception of many consumers that green/low carbon means shoddy creates a huge hurdle for the entrepreneurs who want to sell to the mass market. If you want to overcome this barrier, then you must market on traditional strengths: quality, price (high or low) or image. Use the environmental benefit of your product as a bonus, not the unique selling point.

In the [Green Marketing Manifesto](#), John Marshall presents the 5Is of green/low carbon marketing and they're a pretty good rule of thumb:

- Intuitive - make it sound normal and easy to use
- Integrative - win, win, win on price, performance & planet
- Innovative
- Inviting - not hair shirt
- Informed - provide information

but not

- Image - no greenwash

Looking back at the CFL example, you can see why the 'Marathon' meets these principles - the new bulb looked more like a traditional bulb (intuitive), the price and long life benefits were pushed to the fore (integrative), the technology is innovative, there is no suggestion of any compromise in performance (inviting) and there was plenty of information on the packing (informed).

Summary

In summary, low carbon marketing should not be soppy, apologetic or weak. It should be proud, clear and confident and back up its claims with facts - the 5Is are a good place to start. There's a huge, and largely untapped, market out there for green and low carbon products for those who get it right. Just make sure you don't end up in the Green Graveyard.

Low Carbon Event

I'll be delivering two workshops at the [Low Carbon Innovation Exchange in London on 11 June](#). One is on Long Term Environmental Strategy, the other on Engaging Your Staff.

Low Carbon News

Barack Obama has brought in [new fuel efficiency requirements](#) for cars and trucks requiring 5% yearly rises in fuel efficiency from 2012 through 2016, but is [struggling to get his climate change bill through Congress](#).

The UK Government is expanding [its Warm Front scheme](#) which tackles fuel poverty. The scheme will be bigger in terms of funding and scope - it will now include low carbon technologies such as solar panels and heat pumps.

The World Business Summit on Climate Change is being held in Copenhagen as part of the run up to the COP15 there meeting in December which will attempt to deliver a post-Kyoto treaty. The [attendance of Shell](#) in particular has caused some controversy as pressure groups have named it as the world's most polluting company.

Tip of the Month

If you are planning an incentive scheme for low carbon behaviour, donating money to an environmental charity rather than directly rewarding employees can deliver the same benefits without causing resentment or game-playing.

The small print:
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