

# Manufacturing in a Green Marketplace

By Angela Kliever  
Dir. of Marketing  
ACS International, Inc.

**N**ot only do suppliers, manufacturers, and fabricators in the cast polymer and solid surface industries need to find ways of staying afloat in the current economic environment, the demand for making Green products is steadily increasing. In order to *Go Green*, a business must become environmental conscious from the inside out. Let's face it, environmental conservation is not always at the forefront of business owners—or the employees—minds. Besides the risk of being called a “*tree hugger*” or dare I say a “*liberal*” (gasp) by industry peers, there is little risk involved in green manufacturing. If your business is ready to put a preverbal toe into the Green waters, the following addresses some relatively painless ways to begin.

## Starting from the Inside

Okay, if you're still reading you haven't been scared off the environmental path yet. Let's start with the basics, which are creating processes within your company for sustainable manufacturing. Sounds odd, but this step is fundamental. One of the primary steps to becoming environmentally conscious as a company (no matter how small) begins with the company itself. Creating a group mentality of conservation is paramount to the long term goal of green manufacturing. Some easy steps to take include:

- *Recycle solvents.* There's no need to dispose of used solvents. Check out [www.acetone-recycling.com](http://www.acetone-recycling.com) in order to get the most out of acetone, MEK, and methylene chloride.
- Use recycled shop rags. There are numerous sources of recycled rags that are excellent for marble shops. Such sources include [www.ercwipe.com](http://www.ercwipe.com) and [www.papermart.com](http://www.papermart.com).
- *Reduce office waste.* There's a reason it's called electronic mail people! If the information is stored electronically, does it really need to be printed? How much of your office's correspondence is needlessly printed? Tally the business expense of copy/printer paper before making a group decision on reducing waste, then monitor along the way. Set goals and reward employees for achieving these goals.
- *Death to vampire equipment!* Turn off (or better yet,

unplug) equipment when it's not in use. Completely shutting down office equipment can save money and reduce energy use. It is estimated that in our homes, vampire appliances (those that use energy when switched off) cost homeowners \$200 per year and a total of \$3 billion nationwide. (Science Daily, 2002) Imagine what is happening in your business? An easy way to determine what equipment is sucking energy is to take a walk around the building when the lights are low. When you see dim lights glowing, those are your vampires. Unplug them, or connect office equipment to power strips that can be switched off easily.

- *Use less heating and cooling.* Adjust the temperature by two degrees from where it would normally be. If the office is usually heated to 72° F in the winter, back it down to 70° F. The savings will add up while the energy consumption decreases.
- *Change fuel consumption habits.* Encourage carpooling among employees and discourage truck idling at your shop. If a vehicle is sitting for more than 10 seconds, it takes more fuel (at 0 mpg) than restarting the engine.
- *Recycle as much material as possible and use recycled products when able.* Paper is easily reused in a variety of forms. If you print marketing material, make sure the printer is using paper with recycled content.
- *Use environmentally friendly cleaners.* Whether an outside cleaning service cleans your business, or you do, there are a variety of cleaners that are kinder to the environment. What goes down the drain is to a concern of green businesses.
- *Properly dispose of waste.* Let's face it—there is waste when manufacturing cast polymer and solid surface parts. Make sure waste is properly disposed of.

There are many other ways of reducing waste and energy use in your business (and home). To take even the initial steps mean to first change thought processes and habits—neither are easy things to accomplish. Developing a team mentality that supports the environment not only has the benefit of reducing waste and energy consumption, it has the added benefit of saving money. To make this change easier, consider assigning a key company motivator to get the green message working in your organization. Also, consider motivating your employees by giving incentives on waste reduction bench marks.

## Rally Support

Once you've decided to take the initial steps to decrease your businesses energy consumption, the next step is to offer a green product line that contains recycled content to your customers. Start putting pressure on your suppliers and partners to consider green materials—remember that suppliers are there to serve you. This might require your business to consider changing the way things have always been done. Open up to out-of-the-box ideas and innovative ways of doing things. Recycled material is another area that suppliers can help your business in creating an improved environmental stance. Key questions to consider asking your suppliers are:

- What (if any) is the recycled content of the filler?
- What recycling processes do your suppliers have in-house to decrease their waste and how does this get passed on to your business?
- What add-in material is available from your supplier that can increase the recycled content of your end part? There might be something you can use to substitute some of your current filler.
- Are there any recycled products available to you from your suppliers that you may not be aware of? Get ahead of the competition by potentially trying R&D material—you never know until you ask.
- How are your suppliers packaging the material? Some suppliers of raw materials for cast polymer and solid surface supply the material in plastic buckets or paper boxes, while others offer products pre-mixed with gel coat. Check to make sure plastic and paper packaging is recyclable and recycle it.

Remember: Questions asked by manufacturers and suppliers are often what spurs suppliers to enhance their product offerings and meet demand.

## Pay Off's

At some point the question will likely be asked: What's in it for me and how will it really benefit me? Most people do not have the 'greater good' mentality as it's human nature to satisfy our own personal needs first. Here are two reasons your company might want to consider going green:

- Being pro-active on the green front before regulations require, could help the growing—or changing—pains along the way. Along the supply chain, builders are increasingly required to have products with recycled

content in their specs. Do some research in your area and find out what your customers are being asked to use. Making it an easy choice for builders to turn to your company could increase the bottom line.

- Offering a green product line as well as supporting environmental initiatives will enhance your company's marketing platform. Not all consumers place green products in the forefront of their buying priorities, but the numbers are growing. Track your operational changes so you can advertise improvements along the way.

## Green Standards

There are several organizations that offer green ratings to companies—especially those making products placed in indoor environments such as schools and hospitals. Certification isn't free and some are more than others. Here are a few to research and see if any meet your needs.

- **Green Business Certification.** The only for-profit resource on this list, the Green Business Certification looks at the company's practices overall and not just the products being produced. For more information, visit their website at [www.gbcertified.com](http://www.gbcertified.com).

- **Green Seal®.** A non-profit organization, Green Seal is dedicated to safeguarding

the environment and transforming the marketplace by promoting the manufacture, purchase, and use of environmentally responsible products and services. Products that pass Green Seal Certification ensures that a product meets rigorous, science-based environmental leadership standards. This gives manufacturers the assurance to back up their claims and purchasers confidence that certified products are better for human health and the environment. For more information visit [www.greenseal.org](http://www.greenseal.org).

- **LEED Certification.** The Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Green Building Rating System™ encourages and accelerates global adoption of sustainable green building and development practices through the creation and implementation of universally understood and accepted tools and performance criteria. For more information on LEED, visit [www.usgbc.org](http://www.usgbc.org).

- **Green Advantage®.** If you want to delve deeper into environmental building standards and perhaps offer services that are outside your current expertise, check

### Healthy Material's Checklist

- No PVC (polyvinyl chloride, vinyl)
- Low or no VOC (volatile organic compounds)
  - CA 01350 compliant
  - No added formaldehyde
- No phthalates or heavy metals (lead, mercury, cadmium, organotins)
- No HFRs (PBDEs, BFRs & other halogenated flame retardants)
- No PFCs (perfluorocarbons, PFOA, Teflon & other treatments)

Source: Healthy Building Network 2008

out the Green Advantage at [www.greenadvantage.org](http://www.greenadvantage.org). This might be one that you pass on to potential builders that are customers.

- **Healthy Building Network.** This is an all around great source for finding out what is considered healthy in building materials. Often, Green products are associated with high health and safety standards. Visit their website at [www.healthybuilding.net](http://www.healthybuilding.net) for more information.
- Looking for a **green tax write-off?** Support organization's like **Conservation International** and donate in your company's name. This site has an interactive feature where viewers can protect an acre of rain forest. Clicking on different acres, the sponsors name is highlighted. This might be up the aforementioned 'tree hugger' alley, but such donations can be added to the complete environmental package and help off-set unavoidable pollutants that often arise in manufacturing products. Visit [www.conservation.org](http://www.conservation.org) for more information. This site also offers a free carbon footprint calculator.

### **Boast Success!**

It's estimated that consumers seeking green products are around 10 to 50% of those making all consumer (B2C) purchases while B2B (business to business) have a higher percentage (nearly double) of green buys. (Industry News, 2008) With a recycled product line in the product offering mix, a business can enhance and entice a larger audience. As with all marketing tactics, make a plan. If marketing isn't your forte, get outside help. A good marketing mix includes advertising in a variety of ways. Here are a few green **marketing tips** taken from Spectrum Innovation Consultants (Industry News) to consider:

- Don't over sell the green message in all your advertising. Too much of a good thing can turn sour.
- Follow strict ethical guidelines in claims as to the businesses' environmental practices. If the truth is stretched, the bad publicity can be devastating.
- Make green claims credible. State what makes the product green and what the company is doing to reduce energy consumption. This is where a third party certification label can speak volumes.
- Market the added benefits of the product and avoid negative messages.
- Remember as the U.S. market looks more towards locally produced products this aspect of your business should not be over looked. Often, domestically produced products offer higher quality standards than those made abroad as well as higher health and safety regulations for the workers.

Another consideration is to test the waters in the expansion of your market. If you've created an end product and want

to test marketing to a targeted green audience, there are many way to access the environmentally aware crowd. Become familiar with green outlets such as the **Green Build Expo**. This is a trade show associated with the U.S. Green Building Council (LEED) and is geared specifically to green building technology. It features manufacturers from a wide variety of industries with one thing in common...yep, green. This year's show is located in Boston, MA. November 18 – 20, 2008. [www.greenbuildexpo.org](http://www.greenbuildexpo.org)

It seems there are unlimited ways businesses and individuals can reduce consumption or energy as well as pollutants. This article touched on some of the points, but like so many things, it takes the willingness to change.

#### Source list:

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