

Green Marketing

The topic of green marketing is more than the core concept for this year's Marketing Research Events. It is also a hot topic any advisor may want to discuss with members as a true marketing phenomenon. Business ethics questions abound within this important business trend.

This year's marketing research topic places your members right in the heart of positive social change. Members will find ways a business can meet its customers' needs through environmentally responsible activities and products.

Your members represent the generation probably most attuned to the message and mission of green initiatives. They've seen *An Inconvenient Truth*, and their education has included more environmental awareness than any other generation's.

The goal: People should go about their activities without harming the planet. **Environmental impact** is the central concept.

Over the past decade, and even before that, a desire to live in harmony with the earth and its resources has grown the green market. As understanding of possible negative effects of humans living on the planet builds, this 2008 marketing research topic channels all of those idealistic notions into the world of the marketplace. Members will face the realities of marketing green as they encourage businesses to adopt green alternatives while meeting a need and making a profit.

Here are two exercises that can help sell this topic to your students:

Planet Green

The Sept./Oct. issue of *Dimensions* mentioned the Planet Green Game. This interactive teaching game is lots of fun and really does increase awareness of our impact on the Earth. Try it yourself!

The Lorax

Dr. Seuss's *The Lorax* was recommended by Julie Kandik, director of DECA Images, as a great beginning point for a discussion of the basic ethical problem of businesses exploiting and spoiling their "nest." In the classroom, Julie loved to assign short essays to students on specific topics. For *The Lorax*, you can ask members to consider a basic concept, such as renewable resources, as they read or watch the story then write a three-paragraph essay.

TIP: Google *The Lorax* to access a 25-minute video.

Identify the target market

The motives of businesses will be slightly different for specific industries. Some fall naturally and easily into an awareness of the green ideal (true believers) while others will respond either because government regulations require them to change their practices (legislation) or because their competitors are making inroads into the green market (competition). But all businesses "going

green" will have to gauge the growing target market of environmentally conscious customers and fashion products and procedures that will appeal to them and meet their needs. This is one way your members' research will help the business.

Your members will be able to find a lot of material to help them identify and survey the target market for green initiatives. This part of the project will probably be the most fun. (See the article on page 8.)

Talking the talk WHILE walking the walk

The green marketing topic raises an ethical issue: Is it right to simply change the message without making real improvements? For example, if you change a logo or use environmentally friendly words in order to mask careless or dangerous activities, are you doing green marketing? It is important to guide your members so that their projects deal with actual changes rather than just perceptions.

That said, terminology appropriate to the topic can help as your members put together their research. At marketinggreen.wordpress.com, an article by Andrea Southcott ("Green Marketing") suggests 10 terms that signal green. Southcott's article, based on research from the Yankelovich Group, advises businesses not to use the positive terminology to whitewash ("greenwash") their activities. [This is an excellent, short article that can guide you as you prepare to lead your members.]

Southcott's article suggests that businesses can use the terminology to help them imagine ways to make actual improvements in their practices. In other words, these terms (and others) may help your members develop suggestions for the businesses they are partnering with for their research. Here is Southcott's list:

- | | |
|----------------|---------------------|
| 1. The Future | 6. Purity |
| 2. Goodness | 7. Care |
| 3. Simplicity | 8. Trust |
| 4. Legacy | 9. Sustainability |
| 5. Inheritance | 10. Fresh and Clean |

ACTIVITY: Brainstorm with your members to come up with other words and phrases that can guide their work. Make a bulletin board on which you post word images that relate to green marketing—ideas like recycled, nontoxic, natural, biodegradable, energy-saving, organic, reusable, etc. These can be springboards for suggesting actual practices to businesses.

It will probably be easier to explain the importance of green marketing than you imagine. Remember, however, not to get lost in the emotional appeal. Members will have to approach their business partners in a matter-of-fact way in order to get their work done. So choose carefully. Only you know your members and your community.

This year the activity for the Marketing Research Events is

- to develop a green marketing campaign to improve a business or organization's practices in relation to their environmental impact.
- Students will then make recommendations for a green marketing campaign for that business.

The choice of a business will be crucial, since students will want to seek out partners that will understand and welcome their research.

On pages 46, 48 and 50 of your *Roadmap Calendar/Planner*, advisor Kristen Torkelson presents her approach to the Written Events.

Kristen requires that each student read the guidelines of the event a minimum of three times (in class). This process ensures that students know what is involved.

Understanding this year's topic requires also understanding green marketing. Don't think of this as an assignment as much as entering an exciting, unfolding arena of business opportunities.

A professional advises on green marketing research

Major help with this year's Marketing Research Event topic can come your way by enlisting the services of a local marketing professional. We spoke with **Greg Wald**, manager of the Fargo (N.D.) branch of the Odney Advertising Agency. He had interacted with DECA advisors in North Dakota at their state summer training.

Greg began looking at this project from the global perspective, which, of course, is crucial. As he interacted with teachers, however, he narrowed his focus to manageable research and suggestions. In the interest of finding "doable" projects, Greg thinks it can be helpful to look at ways in which ANY business can improve its green practices. "The phenomenon is widespread," says Greg. "Almost every business is adapting somehow."

At this basic level, businesses can respond through using recycled materials and/or offering easier access to recycling to its customers. "A local grocery store in my area offers reusable bags for \$1," comments Greg. Speaking of recycling, Greg also mentioned the business publication called *Fast Company*. "It's young, hip and environmental, and it's published on recycled paper." In this case, the company targets readers who are sympathetic to its approach. Other businesses can do the same. Greg remarks, "You can ask if your changes will draw customers. Can you find a new market and increase overall traffic?"

A potpourri of green suggestions for businesses

Procure and sell products that are natural.

- organic produce
- meat free from growth hormones
- nontoxic cosmetics

Package and promote responsibly.

- Use recycled materials.
- Provide recycling stations for customers.
- Recycle waste.
- Promote multi-use packaging.

Promote responsible transportation.

Set prices that encourage customers to try green products (specials, etc.).

Encourage customers to buy green by donating part of business profits to green causes.

The nitty gritty of the primary research will involve surveying the store's current customer base, but can also be used to identify new target markets for the business. Whichever survey(s) your members conduct, Greg identifies the basics questions:

1. How important is it to the market for the business to provide green products and practices?
2. What are customers willing to pay for green alternatives?

Says Greg, "This is the difference between intentions and the willingness to pay. Cost is the interesting component." Another useful survey question might ask whether the market would be more willing to pay more for a product if they knew that the business would **donate** a percentage to a green cause.

Taking the factor of cost into account, consider whether you should steer members toward businesses that cater to an upscale market with more disposable income. Perhaps this demographic would be more willing to pay more for environmentally conscious products.

ACTIVITY:

Have your members examine the business community's practices to find green approaches. Once they have learned about the topic, they'll find plenty. If they discover an interesting practice or product, perhaps they can recommend it to a similar business.

"The phenomenon is widespread. Almost every business is adapting somehow."

Gregory Wald
Odney Advertising Agency

By the way:

At *fastcompany.com* you can find an article called "How Green Is Walmart?"

Correction to Competitive Event guidelines

On page 137 of this year's *DECA Guide*, a typo appears in the top line.

The "Conclusions" section of the event outline should be numbered as V, not VI.



Advisors receive help to attend the MarkED Conclave

In the photo at the left are some of the new advisors who received assistance to attend the MarkED Conclave last June. Each was awarded a \$600 scholarship for registration, three preconference workshops, the Friday social and help toward hotel, transportation and meal costs. Funds were raised at the ICDC Advisor Auction in Orlando.

Pictured are (Back row from l to r) Michelle Walker, Director of Education, DECA Inc., who administers the program, **Sheila Hudson** (Southeast Whitfield H.S., Ga.) and