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The green sale

Selling environmentally preferable goods and services starts with keen awareness.

Green will no doubt sustain its industry buzzword status this year.

As the industry prepares for another WQA Aquatech USA show, dealers and distributors are sure to see plenty of green marketing as they navigate through the trade show.

And, while you may be inundated with green technology, products are only the tip of the iceberg.

Knowing how to sell these offerings and what type of green aspects of your company to promote will be as important as the technology itself.



It starts with the past

Most every industry is now looking to meet customer needs of wanting to be greener.

Historically, for some industries, selling green was nothing more than a marketing ploy to draw customers in and tell them what they wanted to hear.

These "tested and proven" green products were nothing more than the end result of false, misleading advertising.

Therefore, challenge number one is getting customers to believe that there are real reasons to consider green and be rewarded.

Besides the obvious cost savings of reducing water usage, why else should your customers consider sustainability as a main objective in 2010?

The first and most common reason is that it is the right thing to do.

A critical component of sustainability is reducing our dependence on natural resources, such as energy and water, which have been haphazardly used in past years.

Recent studies and researchers confirm that we must change how we use energy and water, and it starts with smart technology and educated citizens.

There have also been growing pressures — within the industry as well as outside of this industry — to go green.

Some of these pressures come along with incentives that could be rewarding for your customers.

For commercial accounts, for example, certification could be awarded.

Recently, as drought concerns and water shortages mount, the US Green Building Council (USGBC) announced that it will award Leadership in Energy

and Environmental Design (LEED) points for buildings that display water conservation and recycling.



Awareness is spreading

As a society, we are also becoming more conscious of what we are putting in the environment and, in particular, our waterways.

"Ten years ago there was some notice being paid to this issue, but generally there wasn't a lot of regulatory trends that were forcing people to consider it and forcing industry to look at it closely," recalls Paul Turgeon, president/COO of BWA Water Additives. "But, in recent years, there has been a lot of growing public awareness and some government agencies have put stringent requirements on what chemicals can and cannot be used, how [these chemicals] can be discarded and so on."

And, this issue is an international one.

There is growing interest and regulation occurring across the globe and the outcome

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— David Martin

will hopefully result in a sharing of solid, unified business practices to use water smarter and more efficiently.



How to spin green today

The industry, says experts, has been practicing green for a long time now.

The products and systems in the marketplace answer the call to be more sustainable and it is the dealer's responsibility to recognize these green attributes and promote these solutions to customers.

“The very water softener benefits that consumers have always valued — savings on soaps, detergents, wear and tear on textiles, plumbing, water heaters and other appliances — are important green benefits,” says David Martin, president of Lenzi Martin Marketing and contributing editor to *Water Technology*. “One key for dealers is to quantify the savings from going green, as demonstrated in the Battelle Institute study commissioned by the WQA.”

In addition to promoting products and technology that help save customers money as well as preserve natural resources, dealers can also satisfy customer confidence of wanting to partner with a company that talks the talk and walks the walk.

“There is a growing trend to measure our carbon footprint,” says Turgeon. “Leading companies are starting to look at the chain of events that occur when they fill a customer's needs.”

This chain of events, adds Turgeon, includes phone calls, truck deliveries,

warehouse needs, ordering, paper usage and everything that helps make the dealer-customer relationship thrive.

“When [they] look at all of the events that transpire as a result of business activities, leaders in this area are starting to measure it and be aware of how to make improvements,” says Turgeon.

Making green your top priority makes it easier to show customers why it is important.

Water treatment dealers can serve as a benchmark to going green.

“Dealers should embrace recycling in office and warehouse,” urges Martin. “Reduce unnecessary trips and plan routes carefully to save fuel. Make all buildings more energy efficient through insulation, LED electric lights and other energy improvements.”

Green and sustainable initiatives will continue to be an important goal for consumers, dealers and manufacturers in this industry for years to come.

As new products that promote water efficiency, such as rain harvesting and other water-savers that integrate filtration, continue to surface, be sure to become educated and pass this information to customers.

“New technologies will emerge that will erase old environmental objections and spur new sales and marketing opportunities,” concludes Martin. **WT**