

Grocers & consumers embrace environmentally-friendly products.

With more and more people deciding every day that becoming environmentally conscious is a choice that needs to be made, grocers have an opportunity to reach even more potential customers.



Going Green

By James Farr

By offering a larger selection of “green” products, retailers will not only be doing the right thing, they will be doing the smart thing from a financial perspective.

Planet Organic, an eight-store grocery chain with locations from Halifax to Victoria, is a company that takes their environmental responsibility very seriously. Choosing to stock locally grown, certified organic products is a main plank of Planet Organic’s business philosophy. The company’s Web site

explains that, “By choosing local, you’re preserving regional agriculture and supporting pesticide-free growing. Plus, you’re helping to reduce carbon emissions by choosing food that doesn’t require long-distance shipping or excess packaging; something that benefits the world as a whole.”

Scott Bladon, the corporate store management co-ordinator for the company, points out that being environmentally friendly extends to

every part of Planet Organic’s business. Whether it’s opting to stock organic produce or deciding to use recycled toner in all company printers, no program is too big2 or too small for the forward thinkers that run the company.

While Bladon believes that every individual needs to do their part, he also feels strongly that, “Management has to take the next step to protect our environment. This is our responsibility as people running businesses.”



The management and staff in the Planet Organic chain have embraced an environmentally-friendly philosophy.

With that in mind, all company newsletters are printed on 100 per cent recycled paper that is processed chlorine-free. Additionally, Planet Organic encourages customers to sign up to hear about company news online in order to cut down on paper. Communicating by e-mail also allows businesses to save considerable snail mail expenditures.

Several other small, but important programs Planet Organic has in place include purchasing wind energy to power company computers; providing staff with T-shirts made from organic cotton; using recycled shopping carts at all stores; and contracting janitorial supplies and services from Wood Wyant — a firm known for their strong environmental commitment.

The company has also set up an EcoKarma committee made up of employees from across the country. The committee convenes monthly and has been tasked with finding even more environmentally friendly products that can be integrated into Planet Organic's day-to-day business. By involving employees in this pursuit, the company has been successful in building even greater staff loyalty.

Bladon is also very proud of one of Planet Organic's biggest accomplishments — the conversion to biodegradable bags. For far too long retailers have been using low quality plastic bags that end up in landfills after a single use. By using Environmental Products Inc. (EPI)

bio-degradable check stand bags in all locations, Bladon can be certain that, unlike regular plastic bags, Planet Organic's will ultimately break down, leaving no toxic or harmful residue.

Joseph G. Gho, EPI's chairman and CEO, expands on the benefits of using his company's products, "More than 95 per cent of all plastic products end up in landfills, and this solid plastic waste takes up space in our landfills because they will last for a very long time. EPI's technology helps to remediate this problem by reducing the life of plastic products. TDPA incorporated plastic products, when disposed of in a landfill, will degrade and eventually biodegrade, thereby reducing the impact of single use disposable plastics on the landfill and on our environment."



As protecting the environment has become a more important issue to a growing segment of the population Gho has witnessed firsthand a huge shift in the way his company's products are being received.

"When we started about a decade ago, it was quite difficult to convince people to even try our products. But now the market has

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really changed and retailers, supermarkets, manufacturers and end users are willing to listen and are willing to try our technology." He adds that, "When they understand the benefits of our technology and how easy it is to incorporate into their current processes, many have moved immediately to develop their degradable and/or biodegradable plastic products with EPI. I think this trend is going to be more obvious and more popular in the next few years."

Another option for grocers is to encourage the use of reusable bags in their stores. In the past this option has often been deemed cost prohibitive. This is no longer the case thanks to companies like Edmonton-based Pop Packaging.

The upstart company introduced Polyfabric™ reusable bags to the Canadian market in 2003. The strong, colourful, water resistant, breathable and recyclable bags had previously been a hit in both Europe and Asia, and Canada seemed a logical next destination.



EPI chairman and CEO Joseph G. Gho is seeing more and more retailers and consumers embracing environmentally-friendly products.

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