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GOODWORKS

'The New Rules of Green Marketing'

Consultant Jacquelyn A. Ottman Offers Mainstream Strategies in New Book

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To reach consumers with a green marketing strategy, marketers must be able to understand their customers' environmental and social concerns—in addition to their product-related needs, says Jacquelyn A. Ottman.

Ottman, founder of J. Ottman Consulting, specializing in green marketing strategy, is the author of the new book, ["The New Rules of Green Marketing."](#)



Though green is mainstream, there is more to it than reaching out to just one green stream, Ottman says in her just-released book (Berrett-Koehler Publishers, \$21.95). There are precise demographic and psychographic targets to be considered.

"Different segments of consumers tend to interpret 'green' in their own ways," she says. "For some, green means 'recycled,' for others it means 'natural,' and for still others, it might mean 'without animal testing.'"

In her book, she identifies four segments of green consumers:

1. **Resource Conservers** recycle paper, cans and bottles and turn off the lights and water when not in use.
2. **Animal Lovers** are likely to boycott fur and eschew plastic bags out of concern for marine life.
3. **Outdoor Enthusiasts** buy biodegradable soaps and reusable water bottles to minimize the environmental impacts of their camping, hiking and other outdoor activities.
4. **Health Fanatics** pay a premium for organic foods, nontoxic cleaning products and natural pet care.

Ottman stresses the importance of building credibility for the message and cautions marketers to avoid the pitfall of "greenwashing"—a problem area, given that the Federal Trade Commission is not due to update its Green Guides until next year.

"Even then, many terms, 'sustainable' included, will not have been defined," she says.

Ottman offers the successful example of Method, a line of products available at major retailers such as Target and Whole Foods. "One reason why Method has taken off so dramatically since its 1999 introduction is that founders Adam Lowry and Eric Ryan identify with and understand the needs of the 20- and 30-somethings they target. So they are quick to balance all of their needs for product performance, fragrance, design and safety along with environmental soundness," she says.

Still, she says, the term "green" isn't in any danger of overuse, in spite of faddish associations and media hype, because consumers are genuinely concerned about many different types of environmental issues, including those that affect personal health and supplies of natural resources. At the top of the list are such issues as water quality, hazardous waste, pollution from cars and trucks, water conservation and deforestation.

"Consumers directly link these issues to the products they buy," she says. "That's why conserving energy by turning out the lights, conserving water and recycling are among the most frequently cited behaviors that consumers engage in, and why health-conscious consumers will pay significant premiums for organically grown foods and clothing and personal care items."

She says studies show consumers will adopt new behaviors, such as recycling, especially when it is made easy; but they are not willing to give up product performance or pay significant premiums if no other benefits besides "saving the planet" are offered.

"Happily, thanks to advances in technologies over the 20-plus years that green has been moving from the fringe into the mainstream of society, many greener products perform better, and they are now marketed under established brand names, e.g., Tide, Clorox, Toyota, so consumers can be confident of their efficacy," she says. "We have to recognize that services—and new business models—can play a significant role moving forward and, importantly, that consumers have a shared responsibility with manufacturers and retailers in reducing the impacts of their consumption."

"Consumers, in other words, have a responsibility to minimize environmental impacts of products during use—opt to wash clothes in cold water, turn off the air conditioner while not at home and, of course, to recycle and reuse products as best as they can."



Jacquelyn Ottman