

## MENG BLEND

Freshly brewed blend of executive insights & advice from Marketing Executives Networking Group bloggers...mengonline.com

HOME

**MENG**<sup>SM</sup>  
Marketing Executives Networking Group



BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CAREER ✕ CUSTOMER SERVICE EDISON AWARDS EXECUTIVE/BOARDROOM GEOSOCIAL GROWTH INNOVATION  
INTERNET REGULATIONS INTERNET TRACKING MARKETING ✕ MARKETING HUMOR MESSAGE RESPONSE MULTI-CULTURAL SOCIAL MEDIA ✕

# Why “Save the Planet” Pitches Don’t Work with Mainstream Green Consumers

By Jacquelyn Ottman, on February 7th, 2011

Green has gone mainstream. Every current generation, starting with Baby Boomer Moms and Dads (who are fast becoming grandparents) to Millennials and internet savvy Gen Z’s who grew up with green and are now green. Together, they are turning what used to be a fringe market that appealed to a faction of eco-hippies into a bona fide \$290 billion industry encompassing organic foods and hybrid cars, ecotourism and green home furnishings.

Green marketers looking to target this now burgeoning market take heed: “Saving the Planet” pitches don’t work outside of the “deep green” niche. As described in my newly released book, *The New Rules of Green Marketing: Strategies, Tools, and Inspiration for Sustainable Branding* ([Berrett-Koehler, February 2011](#)), marketers need to appeal to today’s mainstream green consumers by underscoring the primary reasons consumers purchase products in the first place (sometimes referred to as “quiet green”). Doing so helps broaden the appeal of such products beyond the niche of the most committed green consumers and importantly helps “lighter greens” overcome any premium price hurdles that exist. This doesn’t mean ignoring green. Today’s consumers want to know the whole story about products, so communicating primary benefits within the context of the full story that incorporates the environment as a desirable extra — and integrating green within a brand’s already established positioning — can really pay off.

## Promote Added Value to Court Green Consumers

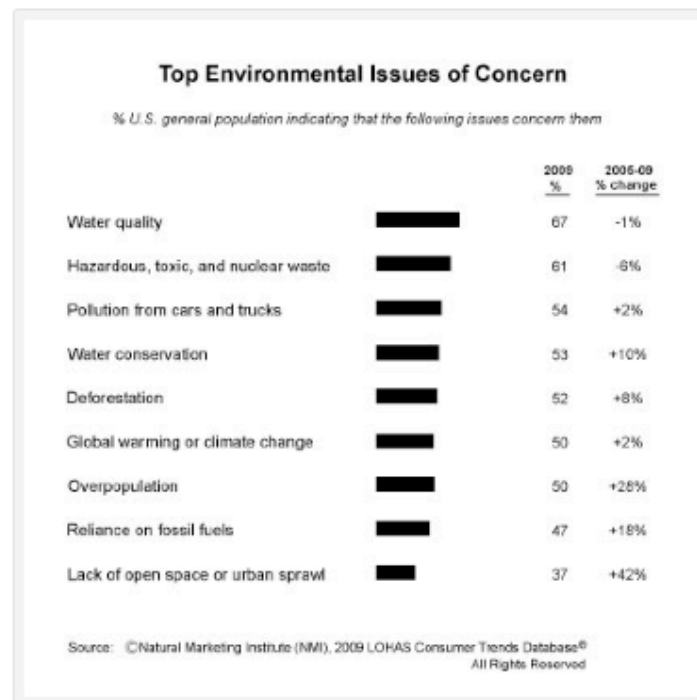
Savvy marketers are winning over today’s green consumers by promoting the *added value* their products provide: better health, superior performance, good taste, cost-effectiveness — and even status. Examples of greener brands that lead with primary benefits are illustrated in the chart below.

## 6 Green Marketers Who Are Finding Success Stressing Primary Benefits

Brand	Benefit: Tagline
Tide Coldwater	Save Money: "Reduce energy and get a deep clean"
AFM Safecoat Paint	Preserve Health: "The only paint that is doctor recommended"
Kenmore HE5t Washer	Save Money: "You pay for the washer. It pays for the dryer"
Forbo linoleum flooring	Quality and Comfort: "Creates better environment"
Modal brand fiber made from Beech tree cellulose	Softness: "Dreamy soft" (Eileen West nightgowns)
Toyota Prius	Status: "The celebrity car of choice"

Source: *The New Rules of Green Marketing* (Berrett-Koehler, February 2011)

Representing a potentially powerful green motivator are pitches geared toward saving personal health. With environmental issues perceived as a threat to health above all else, as illustrated below, the number one reason why consumers buy greener products is not to "save the planet" but to protect their own health. Two outstanding examples include AFM Safecoat paint that asserts, "The only paint that is doctor-recommended" and Seventh Generation dish washing liquid which deftly competes with such venerable brands as Dawn and Joy with print ads that spotlight an adorable youngster and claim, "Because you don't have to choose between safety and spotless dishes."



As cited in *The New Rules of Green Marketing*, Berrett-Koehler, February 2011)

### Toyota Targets Green Consumer Segments

One of the most successful green brands, Toyota Prius, effectively markets to mainstream green consumers one segment at a time. When launching its Prius sedan in 2001, Toyota opted first to target tech-savvy, "early adopters"—not the green-leaning drivers one might expect. Eschewing the now clichéd images of

planets, babies and daisies, introductory ads spotlighted a beauty shot of their shiny new hybrid sedan paused at a stoplight and illustrated by the provocative headline, “Ever heard the sound a stoplight makes?” to dramatize the car’s quiet ride and absence of idling combustion engine. Putting primary benefits first, the body copy explained the revolutionary technology while environmental benefits appeared at the top right corner of the ad – in mouse print – in the form of compelling statistics about the car’s fuel economy and emissions. To establish its green *bona fides* and get a buzz going among influential greens, a supplemental campaign, “Genius,” spotlighted the car’s lighter environmental impact and activist group endorsements.

During the summer of 2008, when gas prices spiked, a new campaign was launched, highlighting the car’s fuel efficiency — and bringing the price conscious “lighter greens” on board. Thanks to a successful public relations campaign, including stunts like celebrities rolling up to the Academy Awards in a Prius, its distinctive silhouette makes the Prius a rolling billboard of an owner’s environmental values and forward thinking.

### **Three Strategies for Marketing Green to Mainstream Consumers**

1. To extend the appeal of sustainable products beyond the “deep green” niche, focus messages on primary benefits in the context of a full story that incorporates the environment as a desirable *extra* benefit.
2. Demonstrate how consumers can protect their health, save money, or keep their home and community safe and clean. Show busy consumers how some environmentally inclined behaviors can save time and effort.
3. Enhance the equity of existing brands by integrating environmental and social benefits within your brand’s already established market positioning — and you’ve got the stuff for a meaningful sale to today’s mainstream green consumers.