

Greenways Painting

A Primer &
Environmental Glossary



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Greenwashing

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A human being is part of the whole, called by us “Universe”, a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feelings as something separated from the rest - a kind of optical delusion of consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest to us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole (of) nature in its beauty. Albert Einstein, 1950

Greenwashing

A Primer & Environmental Glossary



Greenwashing (Wikipedia): greenwashing is a term used to describe the practice of companies disingenuously spinning their products and policies as environmentally friendly, such as presenting cost cuts as a reduction in use of resources. It is a deceptive use of green PR or green marketing.

The term is generally used when significantly more money or time has been spent advertising being green (that is, operating without consideration for the environment), rather than spending resources on environmentally sound practices.

Greenpeace's definition of greenwashing is: the cynical use of environmental themes to whitewash corporate misbehavior (<http://stopgreenwash.org/introduction>).

He is richest who is
content with the least,
for content is the
wealth of nature.
Socrates

Seven Sins of Greenwashing

In December 2007, environmental marketing firm TerraChoice gained national attention releasing the study called “The Six Sins of Greenwashing” which has more recently been updated to the “Seven Sins of Greenwashing”. The Seven Sins of Greenwashing are: lack of proof, vagueness, irrelevance, lesser of two evils, hidden trade-off, outright lying, and worship of false labels. Reviewing these Seven Sins (www.terrachoice.com), in combination with the criteria detailed below, will help you identify greenwashing and we hope, help you choose companies who are genuinely contributing to the improvement of the environment.

Why is Greenwashing a Problem?

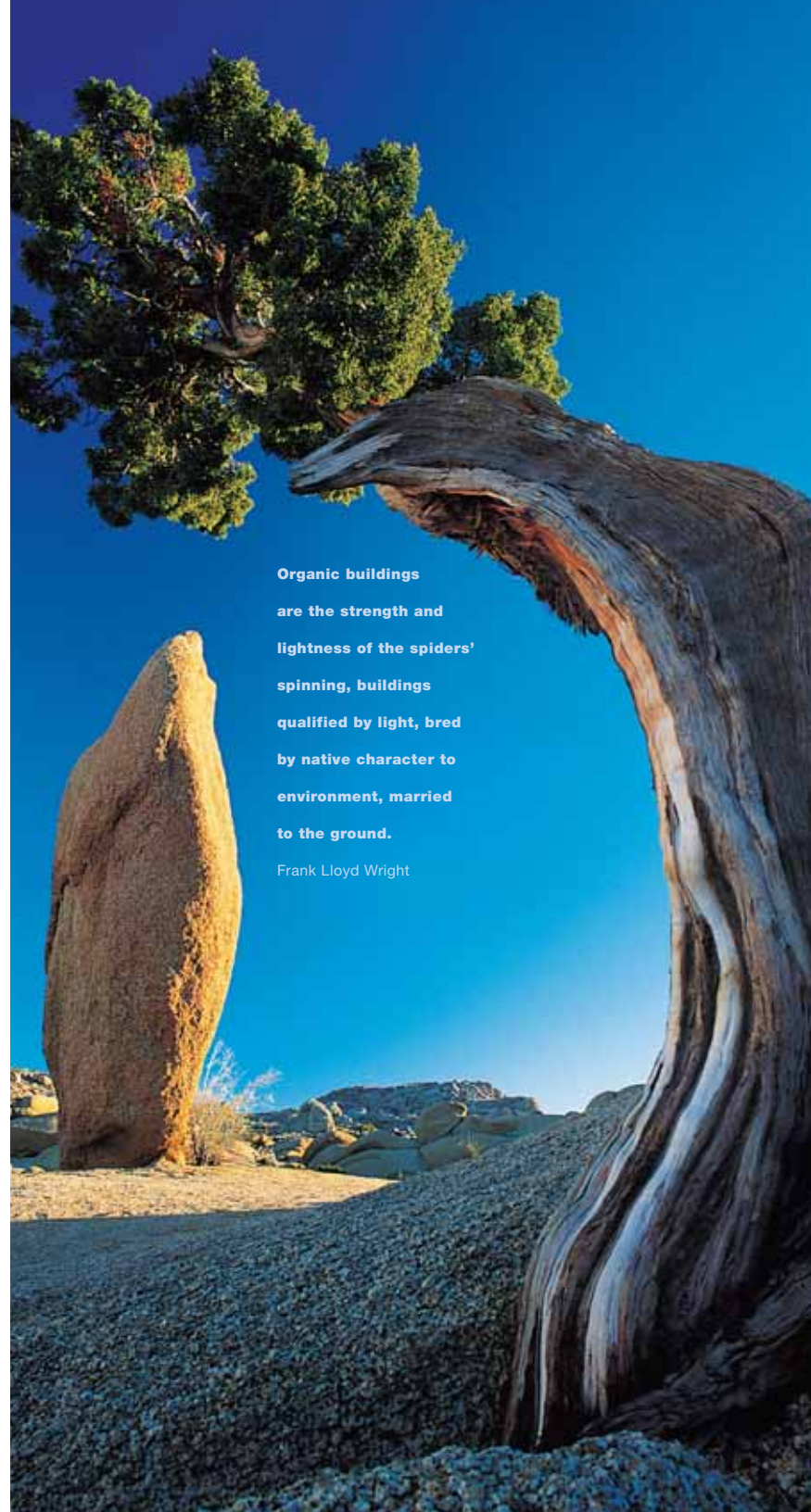
As stated by PSFK (a trends and innovation company), “Greenwashing has a stifling effect. The market becomes distorted if the information provided is not true, transparent and fully encompassing, for it cannot represent consumers’ (clients’) true preferences. With huge budgets and marketing power vast corporations can greenwash their way into dominating sections of the green market without necessarily embracing the values at the heart of the movement. They often overshadow the true green businesses that are struggling to gain a foothold in the marketplace. . . .business is denied to the true greens” (<http://www.psfk.com2007/01/greenwashing.html>)

Guidelines for Identifying Greenwashing

In an effort to help identify greenwashing we have attempted to define some of the parameters one can use to evaluate a company's green efforts and product claims. These criteria have been collected from a number of different sources and experts. We hope this compilation in combination with the attached glossary helps bring some clarity to the greenwashing landscape.



Intention: Examining the intent of a company's actions is helpful in identifying the presence of greenwashing. If a company's efforts embrace transparency, additionality, and endorsements from reputable environmental organization, etc. -- then their intent/their heart is in the right place. If the intent is to mislead clients and customers, you will see an *absence* of published reports, clearly identified benchmarks, and legitimate 3rd party certifications. "More and more companies are realizing that authenticity is the key to effective corporate responsibility" (Ms. Connolly, Communications Director @ Boston Center for Corporate Citizenship).



**Organic buildings
are the strength and
lightness of the spiders'
spinning, buildings
qualified by light, bred
by native character to
environment, married
to the ground.**

Frank Lloyd Wright



Transparency: Transparency in communications is a key indicator of an environmentally responsible company, more important than philanthropy or NGO partnerships, according to Corporate Responsibility and Sustainability Communications, a report by Edelman (a leading PR firm). The report states—communication both positive and negative performance ranked among the most important activities for a socially responsible company to engage in. If you are evaluating a particular firm -- request their Sustainability/Environmental Responsibility Report which should clearly identify their performance in protecting the environment (e.g. Greenhouse gas emissions and trends, recycling programs, etc).



Additionality: A characteristic wherein the revenues received from a purchase of carbon offsets, funds or makes possible the development of renewable energy or a carbon reduction project which would not be possible otherwise. The funding is enabling a project that is going beyond business as usual. Additionality is key to assessing the merits of a company's environmental offsets or activities. If the project is not additional there is no net benefit to the environment.

Consistency: Many companies announce a new environmental program with new fanfare and then quietly cut the funding. Consumers remember the advertisements touting the program, but do not check to see whether or not the company followed through (from www.wisegreek.com/whatisgreenwashing). Check to see if the company followed through on the project and /or is making continued environmental efforts.



Certification: One resource that can help clients combat greenwashing is certification. There are a number of highly reputable programs that certify particular products or services as beneficial to the environment both non-profit and for-profit firms. If a 3rd party certifier is referenced (any claim that is made without 3rd party certification should be viewed with skepticism), you can research the background of the certifying firm and their business practices.

Boundaries: How a company defines the boundaries for an environmental claim is critical in identifying its intentions and commitment. If a company has narrowly defined its boundaries for doing business -- to justify an environmental claim -- how are they approaching the environment for the corporation as a whole. Is there an overall commitment to the environment – e.g. reducing the company's total carbon footprint while making carbon neutral claims for a specific product or a portion of the firm?





Exclusivity: Where a program or third party certifier works only on an exclusive basis. Supporting the environment is not a limited/exclusive opportunity. If a 3rd party certifier offers exclusive programs at an additional cost then the overall creditability of that certifier/program should be questioned.

Carbon Offsets: Carbon offsets are a means to accommodate the fact that for now, there are practical limits to how much each of us can reduce our own energy use. Basically, offsetting involves calculating your carbon footprint and then purchasing metric tons of CO2 equivalent emissions that are displaced, sequestered, or prevented from entering the atmosphere (www.nativeenergy.com). The purchase of offsets helps fund projects and activities that reduce other emissions above and beyond what would have happened anyway (additionality rule).



God has cared for these trees, saved them from drought, disease, avalanches, and a thousand tempests and floods. But he cannot save them from fools.

John Muir

RECS (Renewable energy certificates): For every megawatt of electricity a renewable electricity generator generates, it also generates a one-megawatt hour of renewable energy certificates. (www.nativeenergy.com) A REC is the exclusive legal right to claim that a unit of electricity is renewable, and to claim responsibility for the environmental benefit it provides. As a purchaser of the REC you are paying a premium for that electricity, a premium that reflects the environmental value of that power. The system adds flexibility and efficiency to the renewable energy market. There are “good” and “bad” RECs as stated by Climate Progress, “Good RECS actually make new renewables happen. . . If you take out those RECs the program would collapse”. There are 3rd party certifiers that ensure the integrity of RECs and also that RECS are retired, and cannot be sold to others (e.g. The Center for Resource Solutions).

Greenwashing Examples

We have identified some examples of what we believe to be greenwashing in the marketplace. However, please be aware, that there is no governing body that currently provides clearly defined guidelines for companies to follow. That is why we believe it is important to monitor ourselves and others to ensure that we are doing the right thing. It makes criteria such as intention, transparency, and additionality all that more important.



Corporate Tree Planting schemes – these schemes have faced plenty of criticism with climate scientists arguing that there is no reliable means of calculating how much CO2 trees absorb over their lifetime; environmentalists state such projects distract companies from the more important task of reducing carbon emissions. While many firms providing forestry-based offsets have responded to this criticism by shifting investments towards alternative offsetting projects based on renewable energy, others have defended their continued spending. But now those claims look more dubious than ever and while some offset firms might contest the findings it does further highlight the lack of scientific certainty surrounding the environmental credentials of afforestation initiatives (From Green Business News).

**The superior man
seeks what is right,
the inferior one,
what is profitable.**

Confucius



Summary



Rebranding (Wikipedia): Rebranding is the process by which a product or service developed with one company is marketed or distributed with a different identity with another company. These changes are typically aimed at the repositioning of the brand, usually in an attempt to distance itself from certain negative connotations of the previous branding or to move the brand up market. Some companies are rebranding products as environmentally friendly even though the product is not produced in a green environment (e.g. carbon neutral). If a company is rebranding a product as carbon neutral, despite the product not being produced in a carbon neutral state, then it is committing Greenwashing. The rebranding does not encourage the original manufacturer to pursue carbon neutrality, instead, the original manufacturer is conducting business as usual. The rebranding penalizes a manufacturer that is truly pursuing carbon neutrality.



**When we heal the earth,
we heal ourselves.**

David Orr

How to Stop Greenwashing: Clients can take action when they witness greenwashing by contacting corporations and policymakers to voice concerns, or by drawing attention to misleading claims via blogs, websites, and other outreach. They can also contact the FTC or the Better Business Bureau to register complaints (Greenpeace: How to Stop Greenwashing).



These are some examples of greenwashing but many other instances are not easily identifiable due to the confusing and unregulated landscape of environmental protectionism. However, if a company or project is evaluated based on the checklist of intention, additionality, transparency, certification, etc. then the true environmental cost and value of working with a particular firm can be understood. You can then decide whether or not to protect the environment and work with the “true greens” - legitimately green companies.

For more information, please contact Sandy Alexander at 973-470-8100 or www.sandyinc.com.

Environmental Glossary & Terms

Carbon footprint: The calculation of greenhouse gases produced by a person, organization or activity, in units of carbon dioxide. Includes both direct and indirect emissions.

Conservation: Responsible use of natural resources to preserve and protect the environment. Recycled papers are an excellent example: they conserve trees, water, chemicals, energy and landfill space.

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR): Being responsible to all stakeholders and balancing the "triple bottom line": economic, social and environmental interest.

Environmental calculator: An online assessment tool calculating the environmental attributes and trade-offs of paper purchasing decisions. Looks at post-consumer waste percentages as well as manufacturing processes (e.g. wind-generated electricity and other renewable energy sources).

Environmental footprint: The calculation of natural resources consumed by a person, organization or activity and the earth's ecological capacity to regenerate them.

Forest Stewardship Council (FSC): Created in 1993 in support of responsible forestry practices worldwide. FSC certification means a product has passed through a "chain of custody," where wood fiber is tracked through the supply chain to ensure its integrity.

Global warming: The rise in near surface temperature of the Earth as a result of human-caused increases in greenhouse gases, specifically carbon dioxide.

Green-e: The nation's leading independent certification and verification program for renewable energy and companies that use renewable energy sources such as wind power, solar power, low impact hydropower and biomass.

Green-Seal: An independent nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting the manufacture, purchase and use of environmentally responsible products and services.

Greenwashing: A term used to describe the actions of a company, government or other group advertising positive environmental practices while acting in the opposite way. For example, the U.S. government's "Clear Skies Initiative," which environmentalists claim weakens air pollution laws.

ISO: "International standards for a sustainable world." The ISO 14000 family of standards relates to environmental management and means an organization is working to minimize harmful effects on the environment caused by its activities while striving to continually improve its environmental performance.

Post-consumer waste (PCW): Refers to material recovered after being used and discarded by a consumer. Percentage of PCW is routinely identified in many papers.

Process chlorine free (PCF): Refers to papers that contain post-consumer fiber processed without the use of any additional chlorine or chlorine compounds. (Because PCF paper contains recycled-content fiber, PCF paper production can also reduce water, energy and virgin fiber usage.)

Rainforest Alliance: A global organization working to conserve biodiversity and ensure sustainable livelihoods by transforming land-use practices, business practices and consumer behavior.

Recyclable: Able to be recycled. Applies to paper even if it is coated or otherwise treated.

Recycled: Reused and/or reprocessed.

Smartwood: A Rainforest Alliance program offering independent auditing, certification and promotion of FSC-certified forest products in order to improve forest management by providing economic incentives to businesses that practice responsible forestry.

Stakeholders: May include shareholders, suppliers, customers, partners, regulators, activists, labor unions, employees, community members and government.

Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI): Founded by the American Pulp & Paper Association, this independent program is based on the premise that we can protect our forests while producing the wood and paper products our economy needs.

Sustainability: A characteristic of a process or state that can be maintained at a certain level indefinitely. Used often in reference to how long human ecological systems can be expected to be usefully productive.

Triple bottom line: Refers to environmental and social performance in addition to financial performance; succinctly summed up as "people, planet and profit."

Relevant Resources

www.cleanair-coolplanet.org

Nonprofit dedicated to funding solutions to global warming.

www.environmentaldefense.org

Environmental Defense; home of papercalculator.org.

www.epa.gov/greenpower

A government program designed to offset the environmental impact of conventional electricity use.

www.fscus.org

Forest Stewardship Council, dedicated to sustainable forestry worldwide.

www.nativeenergy.com

Climate solutions, offering services that reduce carbon emissions to fight, global warming.

www.njcleanenergy.com

A statewide program serving as a national model when it comes to promoting energy efficiency.

www.newwindenergy.com

About Community Energy Inc. a wind energy company

www.psfk.com

Trends and innovation company

www.rainforest-alliance.org

Transforming land-use practices around the world.

www.sfi.program.org

Sustainable Forestry Initiative, promoting environmental responsibility and sound business strategies.

www.stopgreenwash.org

Site identifying greenwashing and ways to counter the activity.

www.terrachoice.com

Sins of Greenwashing

www.wikipedia.org

Definition of greenwashing

If you are interested in additional information please request one of the brochures below. Contact your Sandy Alexander Sales Representative or go to our website www.sandyinc.com or call 973-470-8100

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Greenwashing - *Primer & Glossary*

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