

A Business Strategy That Is Evergreen

by [Shari Boyer](#), 2 hours ago

The charge of marketing departments has always been to connect to people in an authentic and impactful way. Reaching out to eco-consumers gives brands an opportunity to develop a distinct voice in the environmental landscape. Making that voice a sustainable voice, one that can weather scrutiny, marketing fads and tough economic times, calls for a strategically sound and authentic campaign. The first and most important step to building your environmental presence is finding a cause that matters to your company and your target consumer. Since people are savvier than ever in scrutinizing messages, make sure that the next generation of Millennials -- who are being courted by companies because of their level of environmental awareness and willingness to pay more to buy green -- will agree with your long-term environmental position.



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Shari Boyer is the CEO and Co-Founder of GSG, a marketing company that creates programs that target the active lifestyle, environmentally conscious consumers who visit state parks each year. She is a passionate believer in the power of public-private partnerships to create good for all, and has been working with corporations such as Coca-Cola, Nestle, Toyota, Home Depot, General Mills, Canon and American Express for over 20 years. Reach her [here](#).

What's more, the dramatic shifts in our economy in the past year have pushed people to focus more and more on their local communities and causes. The wagons are circling closer to home and marketing should follow suit.

Here are some considerations when building your brand's environmental presence.

Localize When Possible

Home is where the heart is. Aligning yourself with a cause in your own backyard makes a greater impact and is more likely to stick in someone's mind. For example, planting trees in Colorado where forests are being decimated by the deadly bark beetle is more impactful on the daily lives of your consumers than planting trees in the Amazon. Visualizing the benefit of doing something so far away from home is hard. Localizing a national campaign may involve more sophisticated planning, but brings deeper benefits.

Retail Environment

Community-based values stand out stronger during lean times, and retail brings you into everyone's day-to-day routine. Retail serves as the community-gathering place where you can

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serve up messages for a local cause in a meaningful way, and retailers are intimately tied to the local communities they serve. For example, Stater Bros. Markets and Coca-Cola rallied behind a regional cause and raised funds along with consumers to replant one million trees in Southern California parks that had burned in wildfires through the “Reforest California” campaign last year.

Move People

Challenge people with a call to action rather than a passive, transactional donation. I think Disney’s “Give a Day, Get a Disney Day” campaign is a great example of marketing that invites consumers to take action and be involved as part of the solution. The vast majority of consumers want to be involved, even as most may not know how; Disney’s program makes it easy and rewarding.

360-Degree Program

Synchronize marketing messages with environmental messages. Use all communications channels -- advertising, sponsorship, public relations, social media and point of sale -- to put together a well-rounded program. Odwalla started a “Plant a Tree for Free” program two years ago, almost before social media was the mainstream marketing vehicle it is now, and saw it spread virally at lightning speed. Two years later, the program has become a cornerstone of its marketing plan, touching retail, social, advertising, sponsorships and PR, and is deeply connected to what the brand stands for in consumers’ minds.

Plant a Tree and Nurture It

Whatever you choose -- whether water conservation, reforestation or renewable energy -- stick with it and watch it grow. Developing an authentic environmental program is much like growing a tree: It takes time and needs plenty of water before it bears fruit.