

# 10 RULES FOR MARKETING TO THE GREEN CONSUMER

By Tim Costello, CEO, BDX

Green is already big business. In fact, the US Green Building Council predicts that green building will contribute \$550 Billion to the US economy over the next four years. But what how do you effectively communicate your green benefits to consumers? Here are 10 Rules that green marketers should consider.

## Rule #1: Green is not a single market.

When you are defining a green consumer, remember that because green buyers are motivated by a variety of issues: national security, social justice, energy costs, and environmental responsibility to name a few, these potential customers don't meet one specific profile. Today's green buyers are concerned mothers, patriots, conservationists, penny pinchers, self global citizens, etc... You get the picture.

It is important to keep these different perspectives in mind as you create your green marketing messages and tailor your green messages to your audience.

## Rule #2: Consumers Possess Little Real Knowledge of Green

Research has shown that while consumers say the environment is important to them, very few are informed about Green products and resources. For example, one study showed that while 55% said that having a green home was "important" or "very important," when they were then asked to name a green home feature unaided, 42% couldn't.

## Rule #3: Consumers Don't Walk the Walk

In a recent Simple Green/Seventh Generation survey, when asked, "How much, if any, does a company's environmental record and/or practices impact your decision whether or not to buy its products?" 49% said "somewhat" or "very much."

However, when asked the specific follow-up, "Have you ever chosen one product over another based on the environmental record/practices of its manufacturer?" Only 21% said yes. And out of that 21%, only 28% provided a specific product brand example.



*How can you effectively communicate your green benefits to consumers? Here are 10 rules for success.*

## Rule #4: Consumers Have Trusted Sources of Info

It is important to recognize that consumers have resources that they trust and use repeatedly to gather information. The Web rules for trust, use, access and economy.

## Rule #5: Green has low green brand awareness

The majority of people can't name a specific green company when asked. Marketers must create green messages that connect with consumers and are prevalent throughout brand messaging and identity.

## Rule #6: Understand What Your Customers Mean By Green

What factors are influencing consumer decisions? Do they want to save money on energy bills? Are they looking for a healthier home? Do they hope to reduce their impact on the environment? Understanding customer motivation is key to crafting strong messages.

## Rule #7: Don't Undersell Green

Roughly half of all options are not covered during the design center appointments and roughly half of what is said about products is wrong or misleading. Some best practices to help overcome this are to:

- Integrate online content from the manufacturer into the virtual design center. This has resulted in 50% increase in technical option sales.
- Create green option bundles to limit overall choice and avoid confusion.
- Be specific with your claims and advantages.
- Provide guarantees and financing incentives.
- Allow customers to compare green products 24/7 at their convenience.
- Brand your green programs
- Leverage third party certifications

## Rule #8: Green Consumers Want Others To Know What They're Doing

Consumer purchases serve multiple purposes. They have functional uses and serve a symbolic purpose. When consumers purchase a home with green features it says "I'm different." "I make smart choices." "Take Notice." and "There's a new approach and thinking at work here." Brand your green programs and give customers something to talk about.

## Rule #9: Avoid the Information Paradox

Sometimes providing more information may not help people make good decisions. People want to feel in control of their lives and resist the feeling of helplessness. More information may not help them in fact it may have the opposite effect. Keep it simple.

## Rule #10: Green Goes Beyond the Product Offering

Your business must embrace green practices, not just offer green solutions in order to gain consumer trust. Here are some things to consider:

- Develop corporate sustainability policies
- Understand impact of construction activity and materials selection
- Use hybrid vehicles
- Make green lighting and recycling decisions in offices and showrooms
- Use green promotions
- Offset carbon emissions for 10 years
- Track green progress through a company "green" blog

## About BDX

Builders Digital Experience is a one stop shop for digital marketing solutions. In addition to the leading new home listing websites, BDX offers a host of solutions to help builders market the green features of their homes. For more information visit: [www.theBDX.com](http://www.theBDX.com).

