You're Not Green Enough

Amy Radishofski, Features Editor, Manufacturing.net

By AMY RADISHOFSKI, Features Editor, Manufacturing.net [1]

I’m sorry, you’re not green enough.

Just a few years ago, using that type of reasoning for dissolving a business partnership may have been hard to swallow. However, that’s exactly what Nestle did.

The Swiss food company announced that it was dropping an Indonesian palm oil supplier [2] due to the damage that palm oil plantations are causing in Southeast Asia. The supplier responded quickly -- on their website you can now find a letter to its partners outlining a plan to cutback on environmental damage that will go into effect this summer.

The concept of global warming keeps popping up whether we like it or not, so it may be worthwhile to take a look at your operations. Are you green enough for your suppliers? How about for your customers? It never hurts to do something nice for Mother Nature, but it may hurt your bottom line if you resist the green movement.

It may be hard for some to understand why Washington, D.C., which has seen record-breaking snowfall amounts this past winter, keeps pushing the issue of global warming. But even if you feel global warming is a farce, your customers may not.

The issue of potentially harmful chemicals [3] in plastic products has become a hot topic in Congress and customers can now opt for snack bags that are biodegradable. Automakers like Mitsubishi [4] and Chrysler [5] are ramping up plans for electric vehicles to match forecasts for global demand.

I drive an SUV, but I am intrigued by the idea of a small, affordable electric car. I don’t look at a company’s global footprint before I buy a product I like, but I know people who do. I don’t have a degree in science and I couldn’t tell you what’s going on with global temperatures and weather patterns, but buying green is a growing trend among consumers, and I don’t see the trend disappearing any time soon.

Of course price will always be a concern. Buying green costs more to make and more to buy, but as the economy gains strength, your customers may be willing to

pay a few cents extra to a competitor who makes them feel all warm and fuzzy.

With cap-and-trade initiatives, consumer opinion, and Nestle-style partner backlash working against you, going green -- even just a little -- may not be a bad thing. I'm not saying that Greenpeace and the EPA can't be a little overzealous at times, but if the air around me is a little cleaner, who am I to argue?

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