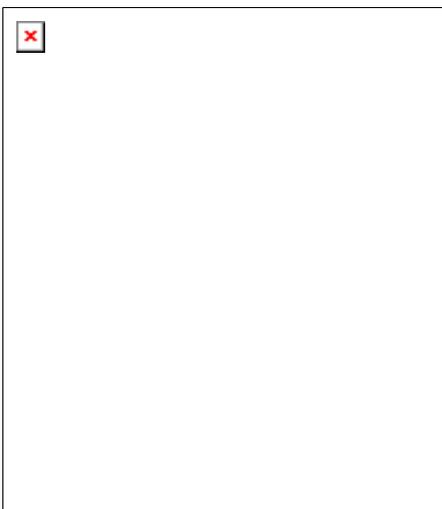


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State Manufacturers Go for the Green



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A wise man said, believe half of what you see and none of what you hear. Since pop culture has cultivated the public's awareness of the "Green Revolution," how true is this statement? MTV aired a documentary on how people should become more eco-friendly. Wal-Mart proclaimed that the world's largest retailer intends to "reduce its waste by 25 percent in the next three years, in large part by using less packaging." Toyota launched a public-relations campaign highlighting its environmentally-friendly automobiles, causing celebrities to forsake their gas-guzzling SUVs like the once-popular Hummer for the greener Prius. Even the former vice president Al Gore won an Academy Award for his documentary on global warming.

So it's little surprise that companies and individuals are becoming more conscious of the impact their actions have on the environment, and asking themselves: Will going green help alleviate some of the damage done to the environment by its careless occupants?

How many Connecticut companies are jumping on the green bandwagon? Becoming greener has really hit the manufacturing industry in particular. Indeed Connecticut leads the way by providing informational programs to assist manufacturers into becoming clean, lean environmentally-friendly machines.

As reported by the Danbury News Times in April, Newtown-based Curtis Packaging Corp. instituted a series of initiatives to change the way it does business. The company began using 100-percent renewable energy and has updated its lighting system and

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manufacturing technology to maximize energy efficiency. It is now the first packaging company in North America to become carbon-neutral.

"The changes we're making now have made us into a better company," said Don Droppo Sr., Curtis' CEO and president, in the article. "Our customers want to do business with a company that's pro-active on the environment."

Explains Judy Wlodarczyk, director of environment and energy for the Connecticut State Technology Extension Program (ConnSTEP), "Companies need an advocate [for becoming green]. The advocate then needs a voice and top management needs to listen to that voice and care enough about the issue to make changes. Companies should want to make necessary changes to become sustainable because it's in their best interest."

However, she adds, "Many [corporate decision-makers] are going against these ideas because they are relying on the old mindset regarding the cost of being green. Even individuals who want to eat more organic foods are under the assumption it costs more, so they shy away from it, but the more you buy these products, the less they end up costing."

Going green is good for business because every dollar not spent on energy or waste disposal is a dollar earned.

On a national level, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has established the Green Suppliers Network (GSN) to help small and mid-sized suppliers stay competitive. GSN experts work with suppliers to identify areas within the company's manufacturing process to reduce the amount of materials used and learn how to use the remaining materials more efficiently.

"Being green is more than using alternative sources of energy - it's a way to optimize the amount of raw materials used and limit the money spend on those materials," explains Wlodarczyk.

Manufacturers that want to adopt green, clean and lean initiatives should:

- ï Broaden their definition of "waste"
- ï Examine their company's purchasing/production to calculate if they are buying or making more than you need
- ï Begin to focus on green opportunities

Going green is good not only for the environment but also your corporate reputation.