Buying Greener Products
Not Greenwash

Avoiding the Seven Sins of Greenwashing

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Link Between Purchasing and the Environment

It’s All Connected to Purchasing
• Number of ads increasing.

• Number of “green” products per store increasing.
Environmental Concerns

• Mass extinctions
• Deforestation & soil erosion
• Air & water pollution
• “Super” bacteria, viruses, and insects
• Dwindling natural resources
• Cancer rates increasing
• Reproductive disorders increasing
• Fisheries collapsing
• Water tables falling
• Climate Change
Warnings
“The major cause of the continued deterioration of the global environment is the unsustainable pattern of production and consumption, particularly in industrialized countries.”

– United Nations Agenda 21 Report
2002 World Summit

Emphasized the need for authorities to “[p]romote public procurement policies that encourage development and diffusion of environmentally sound goods and services.”

- 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg
Two Cups of Coffee a Day

• 34 gallons of coffee a year.
• 18 pounds of coffee beans
• 12 pounds of fertilizer
• A few ounces of highly toxic pesticides
• 43 pounds of coffee pulp
• Clear cutting of forests to grow even more coffee
• Bird species disappearing
• More erosion
• More pesticides
Lifecycle Perspective

1. Product Design
2. Pre-manufacture
3. Manufacture
4. Packaging & Distribution
5. Use/Reuse & Maintenance
6. Waste Management
Remember One Thing

Purchasing Matters!
Responsible Purchasing Primer
The Power of Government Purchasing

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Basic Premise #1

Every single purchase has hidden human health, environmental, and social impacts throughout the entire supply chain.
Basic Premise #2

Government purchasing is the most important force in the entire global economy.

• Government purchasing represents 20 percent of the annual Gross National Product.
• It is very structured.
• It influences others.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Government Purchasing History</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Clothing sizes during the U.S. Civil War</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Small Business Administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Automobile airbags</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Energy-efficient computers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Recycled-content paper</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Responsible Purchasing

Environment

Social

Price, Performance, & Availability
Responsible Purchasing Means:

Buying better products and services from better companies.
Doesn’t it Seem Like Everyone is Claiming to Be Green These Days?
Environmental Claims are Growing

- Eco-safe
- Environmentally friendly
- Earth friendly
- Earth smart
- Environmentally preferable
- Environmentally safe
- Essentially non-toxic
- Practically non-toxic
- Made with non-toxic ingredients
- Degradable
- Biodegradable
- Compostable
- Environmentally safe
- CFC-free
- Ozone friendly
- Recyclable

Original Source: Kirsten Ritche, Gensler
FTC Green Marketing Guidelines

Available at: www.ftc.gov
Canadian Competition Bureau

• Very consistent with FTC Guides, but goes further.

• Co-published with Canadian Standards Association.

• Look for increasing collaboration between the U.S. and Canada.

• Similar guides in UK, Australia, and others.
Seven “Sins” of Greenwashing

- **Sin of Fibbing** – Misleading customers about the actual environmental performance of their products.

- **Sin of No Proof** – Also known as the sin of “just trust us,” some manufacturers are unable to provide proof of their environmental claims.

- **Sin of Irrelevance** – Factually correct, but irrelevant, environmental assessments (e.g., “CFC-free”)

- **Sin of the Hidden Trade-Off** – Focusing on one or two environmental facts, but ignoring other significantly more important environmental concerns.
Seven “Sins” of Greenwashing

- **Sin of Vagueness** – Broad, poorly defined environmental claims (e.g., “100 percent natural”)

- **Sin of Lesser of Two Evils** – A product can be the most environmentally preferable product in its class, but still be an inappropriate choice (e.g., “organic cigarettes”)

- **Worshipping false labels** – A product that through words or images gives the impression of third-party endorsement where no such endorsement actually exists; fake labels, in other words.

The Seven Sins of Greenwashing report, released 4/15/09, is available at <www.sinsofgreenwashing.org>
To Avoid Greenwashing…

The environmental standards most widely recognized by green purchasers:

- **EcoLogo**
  - Founded 1988
  - 100 standards
  - 6,500 certified products
  - [www.ecologo.org](http://www.ecologo.org)

- **Energy Star**
  - Founded 1992
  - 50 standards
  - “Thousands and thousands” of registered products
  - [www.energystar.gov](http://www.energystar.gov)

- **Green Seal**
  - Founded 1989
  - 30 standards
  - 3,650 certified products
  - [www.greenseal.org](http://www.greenseal.org)
EcoLogo Overview

• Founded in 1988 by Environment Canada

• Managed by TerraChoice since 1995

• Developed 100 EcoLogo standards

• Certified more than 7,500 products

• Respected as North America’s largest, most established environmental standard and certification program
Lots of Labels Around

A *partial* list of labels currently being used:

Comparing Eco-Labels

WARNING:
Not All Environmental Claims Are Created Equal

Learn to ask about:

- Type of standard
- Validity of the standard
- Standard setting process
- Verification process
Lifecycle Perspective

1. Product Design
2. Pre-manufacture
3. Manufacture
4. Packaging & Distribution
5. Use/Reuse & Maintenance
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Comparing Eco-Labels

WARNING:
Not All Environmental Claims Are Created Equal

Learn to ask about:

- Type of standard
- Validity of the standard
- Standard setting process
- Verification process
Standard Validity

• Clear and consistent meaning
• Very specific requirements
• Information should be meaningful and verifiable
• Must not conflict with Federal Trade Commission Guides for the Use of Environmental Marketing Claims.
Standard Setting Process

• No conflict of interest
• Lifecycle considerations
• Broad stakeholder participation
• Transparent development process
• Comments publicly available
Verification Process

• Self verification
• Self verification with random audits
• Independent third-party certification
• Independent third-party certification with on-site and random audits
# Beware of “Improved” Criteria

## Existing Label

### Mandatory Attributes

1. **Attribute 1:**
   - Description...
   - Score...

2. **Attribute 2:**
   - Description...
   - Score...

3. **Attribute 3:**
   - Description...
   - Score...

4. **Attribute 4:**
   - Description...
   - Score...

5. **Attribute 5:**
   - Description...
   - Score...

6. **Attribute 6:**
   - Description...
   - Score...

7. **Attribute 7:**
   - Description...
   - Score...

8. **Attribute 8:**
   - Description...
   - Score...

9. **Attribute 9:**
   - Description...
   - Score...

10. **Attribute 10:**
    - Description...
    - Score...

11. **Attribute 11:**
    - Description...
    - Score...

12. **Attribute 12:**
    - Description...
    - Score...

13. **Attribute 13:**
    - Description...
    - Score...

14. **Attribute 14:**
    - Description...
    - Score...

15. **Attribute 15:**
    - Description...
    - Score...

## Improved Label

### Mandatory

1. **Attribute A:**
   - Description...
   - Score...

2. **Attribute B:**
   - Description...
   - Score...

3. **Attribute C:**
   - Description...
   - Score...

4. **Attribute D:**
   - Description...
   - Score...

5. **Attribute E:**
   - Description...
   - Score...

6. **Attribute F:**
   - Description...
   - Score...

7. **Attribute G:**
   - Description...
   - Score...

8. **Attribute H:**
   - Description...
   - Score...

9. **Attribute I:**
    - Description...
    - Score...

### Point System

- **100 points**
- **75 points**
- **50 points**

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Beware of “Improved” Criteria

**EXISTING LABEL**

**MANDATORY ATTRIBUTES**

1. Mandatory 1: mandatory 2
2. Optional 1: optional 2
3. Optional 1: optional 2
4. Optional 1: optional 2
5. Optional 1: optional 2

**“IMPROVED” LABEL**

**MANDATORY**

1. Mandatory 1: mandatory 2
2. Mandatory 1: mandatory 2
3. Mandatory 1: mandatory 2
4. Mandatory 1: mandatory 2
5. Mandatory 1: mandatory 2
6. Mandatory 1: mandatory 2
7. Mandatory 1: mandatory 2

**POINT-SYSTEM**

10. X
20. X
30. X
40. X
50. X
60. X
70. X
80. X
90. X
100. X

• 15 mandatory attributes

• 9 mandatory; 22 additional

• Rating system (3 stars is best)
## Existing Label

**Mandatory Attributes**

1. [Attributes details]
2. [Attributes details]
3. [Attributes details]
4. [Attributes details]
5. [Attributes details]
6. [Attributes details]
7. [Attributes details]
8. [Attributes details]
9. [Attributes details]
10. [Attributes details]
11. [Attributes details]
12. [Attributes details]
13. [Attributes details]
14. [Attributes details]
15. [Attributes details]

## Improved Label

**Mandatory**

1. [Attributes details]
2. [Attributes details]
3. [Attributes details]
4. [Attributes details]
5. [Attributes details]
6. [Attributes details]
7. [Attributes details]
8. [Attributes details]
9. [Attributes details]

**Point System**

- *** = 90+ points
- ** = 75+ points
- * = 50+ points

- 21. [Attributes details]
- 22. [Attributes details]
- 23. [Attributes details]
- 24. [Attributes details]
- 25. [Attributes details]
- 26. [Attributes details]
- 27. [Attributes details]
- 28. [Attributes details]
- 29. [Attributes details]
- 30. [Attributes details]

• 15 mandatory attributes
• 9 mandatory; 22 additional
• Rating system (3 stars is best)
Beware of “Improved” Criteria

**EXISTING LABEL**

**MANDATORY ATTRIBUTES**

1. Mandatory at all levels of eco-certification. 
2. Mandatory at all levels of eco-certification. 
3. Mandatory at all levels of eco-certification. 
4. Mandatory at all levels of eco-certification. 
5. Mandatory at all levels of eco-certification. 
6. Mandatory at all levels of eco-certification. 
7. Mandatory at all levels of eco-certification. 
8. Mandatory at all levels of eco-certification. 
9. Mandatory at all levels of eco-certification. 
10. Mandatory at all levels of eco-certification. 
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12. Mandatory at all levels of eco-certification. 
13. Mandatory at all levels of eco-certification. 
14. Mandatory at all levels of eco-certification. 
15. Mandatory at all levels of eco-certification.

**“IMPROVED” LABEL**

**MANDATORY**

1. Mandatory at all levels of eco-certification. 
2. Mandatory at all levels of eco-certification. 
3. Mandatory at all levels of eco-certification. 
4. Mandatory at all levels of eco-certification. 
5. Mandatory at all levels of eco-certification. 
6. Mandatory at all levels of eco-certification. 
7. Mandatory at all levels of eco-certification. 
8. Mandatory at all levels of eco-certification. 
9. Mandatory at all levels of eco-certification.

**POINT-SYSTEM**

10. Mandatory at all levels of eco-certification. 
11. Mandatory at all levels of eco-certification. 
12. Mandatory at all levels of eco-certification. 
13. Mandatory at all levels of eco-certification. 
14. Mandatory at all levels of eco-certification. 
15. Mandatory at all levels of eco-certification. 
16. Mandatory at all levels of eco-certification. 
17. Mandatory at all levels of eco-certification. 
18. Mandatory at all levels of eco-certification. 
19. Mandatory at all levels of eco-certification. 
20. Mandatory at all levels of eco-certification.

*** = 90+ points  
** = 75+ points  
* = 50+ points

- 15 mandatory attributes
- 9 mandatory; 22 additional
- Rating system (3 stars is best)
Some of the highest ranking products (three stars) under the “improved” system would not meet the minimum requirements of the “weaker” criteria.
Using Eco-Labels

Good News:

Labels make life easier.
Recommended Contract Language

• “Products purchased under this contract must provide demonstrable proof of meeting the ______ standard. The ______ standard is available at <__________>.”

• “Products purchased under this contract must provide demonstrable proof of meeting the Energy Star standard. The Energy Star standard is available at <www.energystar.gov>.”

• “Products purchased under this contract must provide demonstrable proof of meeting the EPEAT standard. The EPEAT standard is available at <www.epeat.net>.”

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Recommended Contract Language

“Products purchased under this contract must be **EcoLogo** certified or provide demonstrable proof of meeting the **EcoLogo** standard and certification requirements. The **EcoLogo** standard and certification requirements are available at <www.ecologo.org>.”
“Products purchased under this contract must be _____ certified or provide demonstrable proof of meeting the _____ standard and certification requirements. The _____ standard and certification requirements are available at <_____>.”
Popular Labels

• Chlorine Free Products Association – <www.chlorinefreeproducts.org>
• EcoLogo (Environmental Choice) – <www.ecologo.org>
• Energy Star – <www.energystar.gov/purchasing>
• EPEAT - <www.epeat.net>
• Forest Stewardship Council – <www.fsc.org>
• Green-e – <www.green-e.org>
• Green Guard – <www.greenguard.org>
• Green Seal – <www.greenseal.org>
• Green Building Council (LEED) – <www.usgbc.org/leed>
• Scientific Certification Systems – <www.scscertified.com>
• TCO – <www.tcodevelopment.com>
• Water Sense – <www.epa.gov/watersense>
If a supplier is making a public claim, ask for public proof.
"Why should I care about future generations? What have they ever done for me?"

— Groucho Marx
Thank You!!
Questions?

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