



# Times-News

## Running a Green Business Makes Good Business Cents

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ECO NOTES



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In the old days, running a green business, required that the owner wear Birkenstocks, drive a VW van and own at least five Grateful Dead albums. Nowadays it's becoming clearer that running a green business is not only good for the environment, but also makes good business sense.

A number of recent studies have demonstrated that even in a poor economic climate, increasingly consumers are making purchasing decisions based on how serious a business is about environmental stewardship. In a study this year by Miller Zell, 50% of shoppers surveyed were willing to pay a premium for green products. In fact, lower income shoppers were more likely to pay extra for eco-friendly products than higher income consumers. As an increasing number of retailers carry green products, their cost decreases, offering greater incentives to the shopper. A good example of this is Motorola's "Renew" phone which is made of 100% recycled materials and is offered at the same price as their other models.

One of the major concerns shoppers repeatedly indicated in these surveys is the need for more information about the products sold. People were concerned about the impact their purchases had on the environment and their relative advantages vs. traditional products whose destiny is often the nearest landfill. The study made clear that shoppers are beginning to equate good citizenship with good stewardship.

In addition to the product side of green, having a green building envelope might make the difference in whether a business can continue to stay in business. Since many downtown businesses face problems with old, leaky buildings, ECO has partnered with Waste Reduction Partners to offer energy audits to businesses in downtown Hendersonville. A typical main street business spends about \$5000 for utilities and for many a reduction of 10% could be achieved with a small effort and modest expense: changing operating procedures, a little weatherization, and adjustments to heating and cooling or lighting changes. Since every dollar saved in retail is worth three dollars in profit, these businesses will gain a competitive advantage in a difficult market. These changes would also save at least 6000 pounds of CO2 from being released into the environment, something we can all appreciate.

Finally, consumers appreciate businesses that follow a green business model. How is waste handled, are shoppers given plastic bags for every purchase, do distributors come everyday or is a distribution system created that minimizes trucking long distances. Is there a preference for products from local sources rather than around the country and the world?

Some examples of good green businesses practices in our town include:

West First Wood-Fired Pizza incorporates sustainability into every facet of their green business by purchasing local produce, relying on renewable energy through their wood-fired oven to cook, using compostable to-go containers and cutlery from corn-based plastics and using waterless urinals which save 40,000 gallons of water annually. Mast General Store has integrated recycling into their store operation, from containers for employees in their lunch room to recycling bins for customers at each checkout register. All packing material from their deliveries are likewise recycled and the clothing they sell includes recycled and natural cotton fiber.

One of the centerpieces of the Waverly Inn's hospitality has been the support of the local economy in their use of local foods including eggs, blueberries, breads, and grits. Pancake mixes and hot cereal are purchased from family operated mills. The Hendersonville Community Co-op includes among its environmentally-friendly practices 100% organic produce, the co-op deli uses all natural products, recycled paper is used in all printing, all equipment is energy star rated which reduces energy, and 95% of cardboard waste is recycled.

During this holiday season don't forget to buy locally and support the local businesses that have gone out of their way to offer a green Christmas, Chanukah and Kwanzaa to all. Happy holidays!

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