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Office Depot Environmental Steward Case Analysis

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Abstract

This paper will address the case study focused on the environmental stewardship viewpoint and the guiding principles of paper procurement at Office Depot. An analysis of the case will be presented, additional topics addressed, and conclusion with recommendations provided.

Office Depot Case Analysis

Office Depot is a global company headquartered in Boca Raton, Florida. The company initially published its first *Environmental Stewardship Report* in 2004. Since then, the company has been able to extensively positively impact the environment. The course text presents a case study on Office Depot, the analysis of which will be presented, additional topics addressed, and conclusion with recommendations provided.

Office Depot, since program inception in 2004, has outlined ten guiding principles of paper procurement for the company. The ten guiding principles are divided into three core areas: recycling and pollution, responsible forest management and conservation, and issue awareness and market development. Recycling and pollution reduction entails three principles: preference to postconsumer recycled fiber and unbleached paper products developed using advanced processes, develop more products that use recycled product and materials, and “increase the total volume of paper recovered from recycling” (Hawkins, Mothersbaugh, and Best, 2007, pg. 272). Responsible forest management and conservation entails two areas: a focus to responsible forest development and find and utilize products that are from the preferred forest management programs (Hawkins, et al., 2007). Finally, the third core area, issue awareness and market development, contains three primary facets: support the growth of consumer awareness of the value and need for purchasing environmentally sustainable products, develop the markets for such products in an ethical way, and improve tools and communications in relationship to advancing environmental stewardship (Hawkins, et al., 2007).

It is the policy of Office Depot to analyze and address each of these key areas when looking at the procurement of paper products for their manufacturing needs and store shelves. As a result of the implementation, formalization, and application of these ten guiding principles, Office Depot has been able to revolutionize their environmental impact in a very positive way. A review of the Office Depot website and subsequent available materials has shown the truth depth of success that the company has had. Office Depot has additionally devoted a major portion of their website, www.officedepot.com/environment, to their environmental stewardship efforts. An increase and focus in advertising and public relations to brand Office Depot as a green company now and going forward is the next stage for the company's development in the environmentally friendly area.

Office Depot notes in their Corporate Citizenship Report (2008) that their theory is to buy green, be green, sell green and tell green. As such Office Depot has become, through their initiatives, the "first major office products company to launch a dedicated global private brand of environmentally preferable products" (Office Depot, 2008, p. 5). Additionally, the company has saved almost 10% in greenhouse gas emissions and also has estimated sales of environmentally friendly product at 1.3 billion, thereby making a significant difference in the world (Office Depot, 2008). In June of 2009, Office Depot announced the creation and organization of their new environmentally focused website. The newly designed website allows the consumer and researcher to find valuable information on Office Depot's environmental commitment in one organized place (Office Depot relaunches, 2009). The company's environmental policy, metrics and key performance indicators are available on the website. Additionally, Office Depot

has developed a range of environmentally friendly products, from what they coin light green such as pen refills through dark green, which are 100% recycled paper options, all available through Office Depot's Green Book™ (Office Depot relauches, 2009).

Since its 2004 unveiling of the company's *Environmental Stewardship Report*, Office Depot has received the following recognitions: Outstanding Environmental Leadership Award, Top 12 Green-IT Organizations, Responsible Purchaser of the Year, Environmental Partner of the Year, among others (Office Depot relauches, 2009). Additionally, Office Depot recently announced a partnership with New Leaf Paper Company, a sustainable paper product producer. New Leaf Paper will now be providing a wide array of paper products through Office Depot that are made from 100% recycled paper (Office Depot turns, 2009). These awards and the expression of the company's continuous investment in environmentally friendly suppliers shows the depth of the true commitment that Office Depot has to the ten guiding principles of the *Environmental Paper Procurement Policy*. Office Depot has exceeded expectations in the commitment to being an environmentally focused corporate citizen and thereby is a true environmental steward.

While Office Depot has been active in process of going green, this has been a fairly under-advertised component of their business. Therefore, the knowledge by the general consumer of Office Depot's overarching global initiatives has been very limited. As the use of and preference for environmentally friendly product has trended upward, Office Depot realized the need to educate the public on the depth of the company's commitment to the environment. The result of their change in public relations is apparent through the June 2009 unveiling of the newly designed and organized green

website (Office Depot relaunches, 2009). It is recommended that in partnership with the unveiling of the newly updated website that Office Depot develop a branding campaign to clearly place the company as the leading environmental steward within the office supply and paper product industry. In keeping with the objective of being environmentally friendly, it is recommended that the company limit print advertising and instead focus on online media channels, ranging from informational and memorable focused You Tube video spots, advertising on Facebook, LinkedIn and other social media networks, and on online news provider websites. These ads can all, by the click of a button, direct consumers to the newly developed environmental website to both provide additional information and simultaneously reinforce the company's new brand, thereby building a relationship with the potential consumer.

Each year, Office Depot solicits the review and approval of the respected and trusted PricewaterhouseCooper for audit of the company's Corporate Citizenship report (Hawkins, et al., 2007). This decision equates to the decision of schools to seek external academic accreditation, as opposed to creating their own accrediting body. An audit by PricewaterhouseCooper provides the credibility needed to propel Office Depot's green products, services and strategy forward in a publically admired way.

Two examples are provided for advertising and promotions to both increase purchasing environmentally friendly products and simultaneously grow business for Office Depot. The first example includes a photograph that represents a young, happy girl. The text notes that the world today will be her future tomorrow, therefore we need to care for the world today. This advertisement shares ways that the future can be invested in by purchasing environmentally safe products, with a direction to learn more

and become personally involved on the new Office Depot website. The second example provides a photo of hands holding the green earth. The point of this advertisement is that the world is green and fragile and it is our responsibility to manage it well. One way we can help take care of the planet is to partner with and purchase from Office Depot. This advertisement additionally directs consumers to the new environmentally friendly website. Both ideas are tailored to show the value of learning more about Office Depot's environmentally friendly focus, while simultaneously equating the values of Office Depot with green office products in the mind of the consumer.

Through marketing the environmentally friendly applications of Office Depot, the company is participating in the current trend known as Green Marketing (Hawkins, et al., 2007). Hawkins, et al. (2007), define green marketing as the development of "products whose production, use or disposal is less harmful to the environment than the traditional versions of the product" (p. 93). Additionally, Hawkins, et al. (2007), note that green marketing focuses on environmental sustainability, and the ability of a company, such as Office Depot, to provide proof that their actions are sustainable is critical to credibility. Additionally, the marketing initiatives of Office Depot resonate with consumer environment-oriented values, including the admiration and protection of nature. According to Hawkins, et al. (2007), "more than 80 percent of the public are concerned about the environment" (p. 89). Resonating with 80 percent of the public through environmentally-focused advertising and initiatives is a positive and cost-effective method for product sales generation.

In conclusion, Office Depot has a five year record of environmentally friendly and sustainable business actions in relation to purchasing paper products. The company

has quietly been leading the way in the industry, but given the market shift toward green products, the time has come to increase awareness of the company's commitments.

Office Depot has already begun to make appropriate strides through the relaunching of their environmentally focused website in June 2009. Additional online advertising driving consumers to this new website will increase the company brand, resonate with consumers, and build the mutually beneficial relationship with potential consumers so critical for success in today's changing marketing landscape.

Office DEPOT[®]

Taking Care of Business

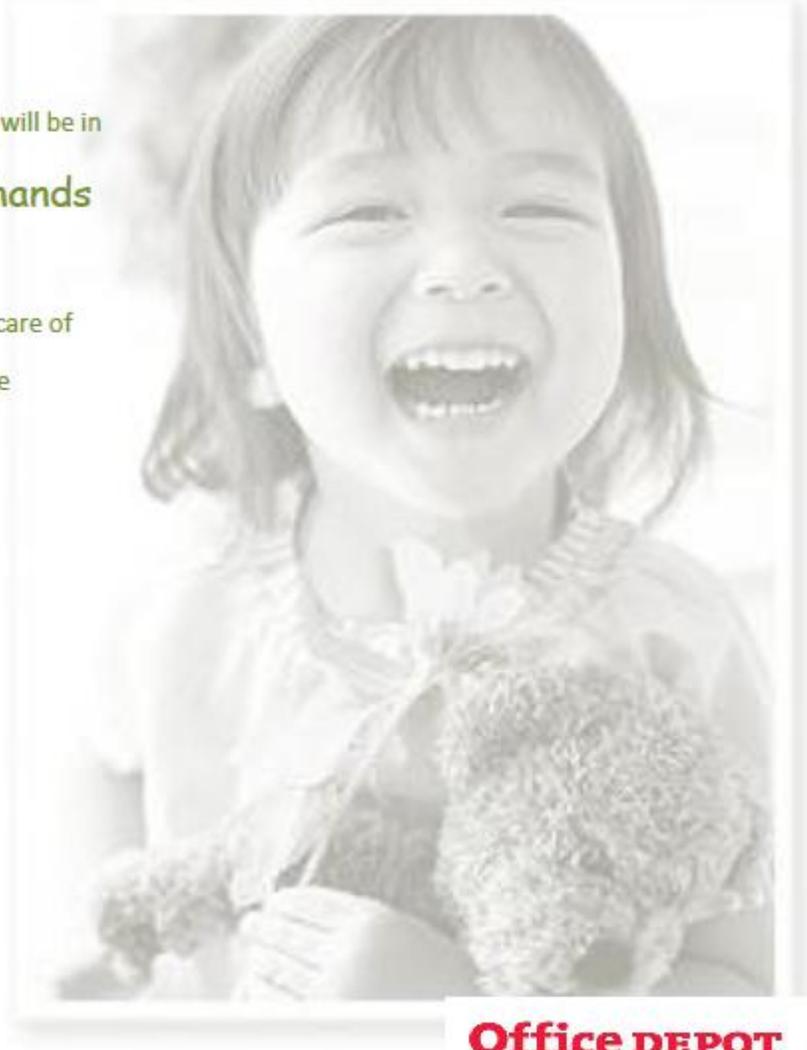
The world is our responsibility. We've committed to maintaining it. Join us, and in doing so you'll be doing your part to make the world a better, greener place. Learn more about our environmental stewardship plan and green product offerings at:

www.OfficeDepot.com/green





Our world will be in
their hands
one day.
Let's take care of
their future
today.



Office DEPOT.
Taking Care of Business

Choose Office Depot for all of your paper product needs. We're committed to the future: beginning yesterday.

www.OfficeDepot.com/green

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