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**September 2, 2009**

For additional information, contact:  
Tricia Jaworski  
Morningstar Communications  
913.660.9659  
tjaworski@morningstarcomm.com

Katy Briggs  
Willoughby Design  
816.561.4189 x11  
kbriggs@willoughbydesign.com

## **Going Green is No Temporary Craze—It's an Expectation** *Three steps for building a sustainable brand and company culture*

**KANSAS CITY, Mo.** – From consumer demand to packaging scorecards, going green has evolved from a trendy customer preference to a nationwide criterion, and smart companies are taking note. Whether looking to cut costs during tough economic times or positioning for future success, infusing sustainable thinking and practices into a company's brand identity and culture leads to an enhanced bottom-line and a cleaner environment.

“Being green is no longer simply a consumer demand,” said Zack Shubkagel, vice president brand experience for Willoughby Design, a leader in sustainable design and practices. “It’s a corporate expectation as well. Wal-Mart is working to raise the bar with its sustainability standards and packaging scorecard. The effects of these kinds of programs will be far reaching. Companies must look at how they can innovate business practices both internally and externally to become more efficient and profitable in the long run, while meeting the standards being set by consumers and companies like Wal-Mart.”

Willoughby Design recommends the following steps for creating a more sustainable brand and culture.

### **Start Internally**

When building your brand, you must work from the inside out. Unless your employees fully understand sustainability, first hand, you won't be able to authentically develop solutions for your consumers.

Begin with an energy audit of your facility. The audit measures your current environmental impact and implementing the recommendations you receive could save money in the long run.

Next, identify an individual in your organization to lead the initiative. This individual conducts research on ways to be eco-friendly, develops green practices for the company and holds team members accountable for their actions. With a dedicated in-house project leader, your efforts won't fall through the cracks.

Finally, start taking small steps around the office to decrease your impact and infuse best practices into your culture. Replace bottled water with tap. Place recycling bins at every desk. Set your office printer to automatically print double-sided copies.

“When a client visits, we bring a pitcher of ice water and lemons to the meeting room, instead of bottled water,” said Steve Robbins, director of sustainability at Willoughby Design. “It’s a small modification that takes no extra time or inconvenience, but it says a lot to people about our business. In addition, it also helps reduce costs.”

### **Re-evaluate Products and Processes**

Once you've made the shift internally, move externally and begin looking at ways to “green” your products and processes. Evaluate vendor relationships, printing methods and product materials to determine where changes can be made. Strategic thinking, such as “right-sizing,” not only reduces materials used in packaging, but can cut transportation costs as well.

Willoughby Design helped Organicare, a line of USDA certified organic skincare products, evaluate everything from paper selection to the type of energy used during the printing process. Organicare's packaging is made using hydro or wind power, and is produced in a completely carbon-neutral facility. Its packaging is Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certified and all the paperboard comes from responsibly managed forests through replanting and careful harvesting.

Companies, such as Procter & Gamble, have used right-sizing to make a difference for both the environment and their bottom-line. Procter & Gamble increased the concentration of its laundry detergents, allowing for smaller packaging that resulted in room for higher quantity shipments, lowering transportation costs.

### **Green Your Communications**

Now that your company has adopted internal and external sustainability practices, it's time to communicate your commitment to a better environment. First, determine how to tell your story. Consider more eco-friendly electronic communication methods. If printed materials work best for your audience, evaluate recycled paper. Recycled paper is no longer gray, grainy and expensive – things have changed.

Also, consider telling your story on the product itself. New Leaf Paper, which produces the first 100 percent recycled paper offered by major retailers, such as Target, includes information from the company's eco-audit on the inside front cover of all its notebooks. Willoughby designers included this information to educate consumers on the environmental savings gained through the use of New Leaf Paper products, including facts like the amount of water and trees saved.

The key to infusing sustainability into a brand or culture is transparency. Consumers and businesses alike are more knowledgeable than ever before about green practices. Taking small steps and sharing your authentic green story will lead to a healthier earth and an enhanced bottom-line for your business.

**About Willoughby Design**

Willoughby Design is a strategic brand design and innovation firm. Founded in 1978, the company lists among its clients Hallmark, Peruvian Connection, Hershey's, Wonder Bread, United Nations and the Kauffman Foundation. The Kansas City-based firm is a member of AIGA, the professional association for design. In addition, the firm is a member of the Designers Accord, a group working to educate clients in green solutions and alternatives. More info: [www.willoughbydesign.com](http://www.willoughbydesign.com).

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