

GOODSENSE™

Practical marketing brilliance.

Building a brand on sustainability without getting burned



"We need marketing that does good, rather than marketing that just looks good."

John Grant,
The Green Marketing Manifesto

To build a successful brand on sustainability you need to be:

Respectful

Authentic

Inspiring

Respect for the public and your peers demands you avoid misleading, exaggerating or distracting in your claims. These acts are deemed greenwash and regulated in Aotearoa NZ under both a voluntary code and by the Fair Trading Act.

While it can be tempting to make general claims about sustainability to reassure customers, green advertising claims are strictly regulated in New Zealand. Advertising or packaging which implies environmental credentials beyond what the advertiser can carry severe penalties under the Fair Trading Act. Even the images you use can fall foul of the regulations.

Avoid:

Wishy wash claims – Don't imply vague benefits. Do have the facts on file.

Dodgy labelling – Don't invent your own. Do use gold standard third party verification.

Fake-it pics – Don't use images to imply it's green. Do use credible, relevant pictures.

OTT statements – Don't exaggerate or use absolute statements like 'green', 'eco-friendly' or 'good'. Do use relevant statements where you can substantiate the claim eg 'kinder', 'better'

Flowers in the desert Don't point to one good thing you do and ignore the bad. Do be clear about the progress in sustainability you have yet to make.

The public make claims about greenwash to both the Commerce Commission, which regulates the Fair Trading Act, and the Advertising Standards Authority, which is the industry voluntary compliance body. If you're making any environmental claims, check the [Advertising Standards](#) and the [Fair Trading Act requirements](#) to make sure you comply.

Committing greenwash is toxic to your brand and damaging to both your business and others trying to operate more responsibly. It's essential to make genuine improvements to the core

impact your products and services make, before you commit to sponsorships, ads or other promotions.

Authenticity requires a brand has it's own 'house in order':

A strategy in which values and purpose are aligned with business goals and deeds

Internal staff engagement and action

External credibility amongst peers, customers, influencers and journalists based on a track-record of significant improvement and reporting against published targets

If the brand is respectful and authentic in its sustainability, there is a significant opportunity to inspire others.

Guidelines for inspiring

Sustainable Advantage highlight four areas for marketing action:

1. Focus on values and ethics – honesty, customer service and value for money
2. Be open and honest about where you are on the sustainability journey, connect with communities and listen for opportunities
3. Take steps towards being responsible and collaborate to build trust from customers, staff and suppliers
- 4. Help customers, staff and suppliers 'join the dots' between behaviour and issues, educate and inspire.**

(Source: Sustainable Priorities Monitor, March 2009)

Most importantly, brands seeking to educate and inspire must do so from a position of credibility. To succeed, they must:

- Have a **track-record** of making improvements to their own footprint



- Have credibility and dialogue with **NGOs and journalists** active in the sphere they seek to influence
- Be **strategic** in choosing the issues to champion, selecting areas where:
 - they have credibility and knowledge
 - media and the public will understand the relevance
 - public or supply chain engagement can make a genuine difference, especially to the social or environmental impact of the sector
- Have **clear goals** for the change they want to see and communicate them effectively
- Be ready to **engage honestly and transparently** with media and the public through interviews and social media

In order to deliver these, many brands, seeking to use their influence for good, start by [working with staff](#), not just fostering a culture of sustainable thinking at work, but also seeking to inspire employees to take that home.

Brands that seek to fast-track their green marketing to education and inspiration need to be aware of the significant risks of backlash. Corporate Social Responsibility initiatives 'tacked' onto inherently unsustainable business models are unlikely to lead to long-term success or public trust.

Building brands on Ideals

In 2012, [new research](#) found a causal relationship between a brand's ability to serve a higher purpose and its financial performance. From this research, Millward Brown and Jim Stengel developed a list of 50 brands - the Stengel 50 - which they say built successful, deep relationships with customers, achieved the best financial growth from 2001-2011 and would have been 400% more profitable to investors over that period than the S&P 500.

The team valued thousands of brands across more than 30 countries, looking at Business to Business and Business to Consumer brands in 28 categories with turnovers between \$100 million to over \$100 billion. **The analysis showed the most successful brands were ["built on an ideal of improving lives in some way, irrespective of size and category"](#).**

"We found that this ideal is both a source of inspiration externally among customers, as well as a compass for internal decision makingand influences all facets of the business from HR and Marketing to R&D and Finance."

Benoit Garbe, Millward Brown

While the Stengel 50 list includes a high number of brands with strong reputations for sustainability - such as Method, Seventh Generation, Stonyfield Farm and Chipotle - the ideals aren't simply about CSR or altruism, but about authentically basing the business on a brand ideal of delivering a human value. The research identified five human values recurring repeatedly in the Stengel 50 list of brand drivers:

- **Eliciting Joy:** Activating experiences of happiness, wonder, and limitless possibility
- **Enabling Connection:** Enhancing the ability of people to connect with each other and the world in meaningful ways
- **Inspiring Exploration:** Helping people explore new horizons and new experiences
- **Evoking Pride:** Giving people increased confidence, strength, security, and vitality
- **Impacting Society:** Affecting society broadly, from challenging the status quo to redefining categories

[Click here](#) to explore Jim Stengel's model for brands implementing an ideals-based strategy.

"Third Man Records stands for a lot of things and when you stand for things people come to you."

[Jack White, owner and founder](#)



Get expert support with marketing sustainability

As New Zealand's leaders in marketing sustainability GoodSense can help with your questions, strategic planning, brand strategy and marketing and communications implementation. We can offer also offer you an expert review of your current green marketing material, with pricing from **\$495 + gst**. To find out more call us on 09 973 0960 or email Kath@goodsense.co.nz

[Read more about the clients we help with marketing sustainability](#) and the work we do.

Learn more about sustainable marketing, online

Created and tutored by Kath Dewar, this unique online course offers structured interactive content across 10-12 hours of learning, extensive extra resources and unlimited access for six months. Study at your own pace whenever you want, wherever you have an internet connection. Multi-choice tests, tutor-marked assessments and assignment feedback from Course Director and sustainability marketing expert, Kath Dewar.

You can find out more about the [Sustainable Marketing Online course and sign up via the SBN here](#).

Kath Dewar, GoodSense MD, welcomes your questions about marketing sustainability and invites you to connect on :

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