

What motivates businesses to purchase green products?

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Eighty-eight percent of U.S. businesses choose to purchase green products because they care about the environment, according to a survey of more than 1,000 business decision-makers commissioned by SCA Tissue North America's Tork brand. Despite possible misgivings that environmentally friendly products are more costly than their counterparts, most respondents (82 percent) reported either an increase or no change to their bottom line due to their choice to purchase green products.

This zero impact to the bottom line may explain why the majority of business decision-makers have maintained or increased their green purchases compared to last year, further confirming that eco-friendly business purchases are on the rise across the country regardless of business size.

"These findings show a shift from personal responsibility to business responsibility where the environment is concerned," says Mike Kapalko, SCA Tissue's sustainability marketing manager. "Business decision-makers are proving now more than ever that it's possible to make a positive difference in the environment while maintaining a successful, profitable business."

Despite these findings, results show eco-friendly messaging is over-saturating the marketplace, with a majority of respondents (63 percent) wary of the abundance of "green" claims made by manufacturers today. In fact, many respondents feel that products declaring to be green are probably eco-friendly, but also exaggerate claims.

Additionally, nearly half of the business decision-makers surveyed (46 percent) stated it would be beneficial for their company to have a green certification, yet most are not sure which certification was most respected in their industry, and more than a quarter were unsure how to validate a green certification claim if they had one.

David Gottfried, Tork Green Hygiene Council (TGHC) member, managing director of Regenerative Ventures and founder and first staff president of the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC), recognizes the "green" certification process for a business can be overwhelming but offers advice on identifying relevant certification programs.

"There is no shortage of 'green' certifications available to businesses," said Gottfried. "Start simple and utilize the Energy Star certification, which allows business owners to set basic goals and track savings. Additionally, LEED Certification is the best standard for measuring building sustainability, and the best way for you to

demonstrate that your buildings are truly eco-friendly and making a positive impact on the environment.”

The survey also shows that certain “green” practices are considered to have a greater impact on the environment than others. Purchasing recycled products was the most popular answer when asked what has the biggest environmental impact, followed by manufacturing products that use recycled materials.

Other survey results found that 41 percent promote green efforts publicly, with most companies publicizing their efforts through corporate Web sites. Conversely, according to another survey conducted by Harris Interactive on behalf of SCA Tissue North America’s Tork brand, Web site promotion is the least preferred way for consumers to learn about corporate green initiatives.

Additional survey results:

- 83 percent always or sometimes think of the environment before making purchases
- 85 percent have maintained or increased their green purchases compared to last year
- 31 percent were unsure how to validate a green certification claim if they had one
- 75 percent of those working for companies with 501 to 1,000 employees are in favor of a green certification
- 62 percent of businesses that promote their green practices do so through their corporation’s Web site