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## Become a Green Business

**W**e start with the premise that you want to know how your business can contribute to the solution to cancer and other environmental health problems, while at the same time improving your bottom line.

Many of the toxic substances that are accumulating in our bodies have been developed by companies offering us new, improved products. Collectively we have embraced a non-stick, waterproof, fireproof, pestproof, dirtproof, germproof, sweet-smelling, convenient world, but the consequences of our rush to new products is becoming evident in rising cancer rates and other chronic diseases. We need to learn how to do things differently. These 15 solutions explore how businesses can contribute to the goal of a world with far less cancer.

A new vision is emerging for what makes a successful business, with a new language. Its



JOACHIM ROETTIGERS/GAMBITTI

Greenpeace protest against the production of phthalate toxic chemicals, during a BASF shareholder meeting.

Companies that do not understand toxic hazards in their products and who do not take steps to eliminate them face the risk of disruption to their supply chains, exclusion from markets, damage to their reputation, foregone profits and toxic tort litigation.

— Richard Liroff, Senior Fellow, World Wildlife Fund Toxics Program

proponents speak of sustainability, clean production and a “triple bottom line” integrating financial, social and environmental benefits. They admire the efficiencies of closed-loop recycling and zero waste. They get excited about green chemistry, toxics use reduction and chemical substitution. They read papers about industrial ecology and eco-intelligent design. They’re into environmental management, and many are trained in The Natural Step, a system of analysis originating in Sweden that helps a business align its operations with the fundamental laws of nature. Over the dinner table, they discuss big ideas such as biomimicry, natural capitalism and cradle-to-cradle product life cycles. More importantly, they put their ideas into action, creating value and making higher profits along the way.

Businesses are also encouraging their workers to carpool, bicycle and telecommute, and they’re seeking ways to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions. They are serving healthier food in their cafeterias and supporting fitness regimes. They are exchanging their office cleaning products for non-toxic varieties and using unbleached paper. They are retrofitting their buildings to introduce fresh air and daylight and conserve water and energy.

Companies that resist this change put themselves at a disadvantage. Shareholders are already targeting corporate annual meetings to demand disclosure of risks in products. In 2006 DuPont shareholders forced a vote that would

have required DuPont to report on options for eliminating PFOA, the stain repellent chemical used on carpets, textiles and fast-food wrappers that has been found to be carcinogenic. Avon, Chemlawn and Dow Chemical have all faced similar shareholder resolutions demanding safe substitutes.

As the scientific evidence confirms that certain chemicals are carcinogens or endocrine disrupters, companies will eventually be forced by the public or regulators to get rid of them.

On the other hand, there are companies that make chemical safety their top priority. They assess their chemical use throughout the supply chain and comply with the strictest standards globally. They win with innovative materials and products that set them apart from their competitors, and with customers who are increasingly looking for safe, carcinogen-free products.

SC Johnson is one of the biggest manufacturers of cleaning and personal care products, makers of products such as Ziploc, Glade and Windex that have traditionally contained numerous toxic chemicals. They have created a Greenlist™ which classifies and screens the ingredients used in every product the company makes, and they use the information to score the ingredients according to their impact on health and the environment, and reduce the use of chemicals with the highest impact.

Since 1996 SC Johnson has eliminated chlorine-based packaging, including polyvinyl chloride (PVC) bottles; cut 60% of their process waste while increasing production by 50%; reduced the use of virgin materials in packaging by a third;

- Biomimicry: [www.biomimicry.org](http://www.biomimicry.org)
- Clean Production Action: [www.cleanproduction.org](http://www.cleanproduction.org)
- Cleaner Production: [www.cleanerproduction.com](http://www.cleanerproduction.com)
- Corporate Environmental Strategy Journal: [www.cesjournal.com](http://www.cesjournal.com)
- Global Environmental Management Initiative: [www.gemi.org](http://www.gemi.org)
- GreenBiz: [www.greenbiz.com](http://www.greenbiz.com)
- Green Suppliers Network: [www.epa.gov/greensuppliers](http://www.epa.gov/greensuppliers)
- International Society for Industrial Ecology: [www.is4ie.org](http://www.is4ie.org)
- Natural Capitalism: [www.natcap.org](http://www.natcap.org)
- The Natural Step: [www.naturalstep.org](http://www.naturalstep.org)
- The Next Industrial Revolution: [www.thenextindustrialrevolution.org](http://www.thenextindustrialrevolution.org)
- SC Johnson Greenlist: [www.scjohnson.com/community/greenlist.asp](http://www.scjohnson.com/community/greenlist.asp)
- *The Sustainability Advantage*, by Bob Willard, New Society, 2002: [www.sustainabilityadvantage.com](http://www.sustainabilityadvantage.com)
- US Green Seal: [www.greenseal.org](http://www.greenseal.org)
- Zero Waste Alliance: [www.zerowaste.org](http://www.zerowaste.org)

and eliminated large volumes of solvents from their products, in pursuit of the goal of a 50% reduction in volatile organic compounds (VOCs).

The company is doing this out of a desire to integrate sustainability into their product development process, but they are also aware that when a toxic component is *not* eliminated, it has to carry the new European “Dangerous for the Environment” hazard label of a dead fish/dead tree.

No company can achieve an overnight turnaround. What matters is to get started, by setting up a management framework that integrates sustainability goals into your company’s core objectives and working for steady, month-by-month progress, with indicators to show how you are doing.