

34

Solutions for Retail Stores

We are history's greatest consumers. People who return from less-developed parts of the world are frequently thrown into culture shock by the abundance of our consumerism. The retail sector works hard to encourage this, stoking the furnace of global warming. In an eco-conscious world, retail stores would be centers of education where we learn to balance good housekeeping with good planetary housekeeping.

The best role models are small and local. Small Potatoes Urban Delivery (SPUD) provides home delivery of organic food to customers in western Canada and the US, sourcing more than 50% of its products locally and delivering by bicycle where possible. Each delivery van carrying 80 orders saves 160 car trips, reducing fuel use by



SPUD.CA

SPUD is the largest organic food delivery company in North America, serving more than 19,000 customers.

Any difficulties which the world faces today will be as nothing compared to the full effects which global warming will have on the world-wide economy.

— Prince Charles

40%. Larger retailers are also making a big effort, however.

Set Meaningful Goals

In Britain, Marks & Spencer (M&S) has pledged to reduce its CO₂ emissions by 80% and to send zero waste to the landfill by 2012. Tesco has pledged to reduce the carbon footprint of its stores by 50% by 2020. Wal-Mart has pledged to make its stores 20% more energy efficient, to have them run on 100% renewable energy by 2013, to double the fuel efficiency of its trucks by 2015, and to achieve zero waste by 2025. The challenge is not easy. In 2006 Wal-Mart's carbon footprint increased by 8.6%.¹ Among other things, eliminating use of the refrigerant HFC-134a is essential. (See #97.)

Use Energy Sustainably

Many retailers are building model factories and green stores. Because the margins in food are so low, \$100,000 saved by efficient lighting has the same impact as increasing sales by \$10 million. Wal-Mart has invested \$17 million in a partnership with GE to develop an LED refrigerator lighting system that will reduce its carbon footprint by 28,000 tonnes a year.

Travel Sustainably

Stores can make their trucking operations more fuel efficient — but what about their customers' footprints? Every time an out-of-town box store opens, two local stores close down. Stacey Mitchell from The New Rules Project has calculated that Wal-Mart's yearly share of Americans' travel produces as much carbon as Wal-Mart itself.² IKEA —

perhaps the greenest large retail chain in the world — is encouraging 10% of its customers to travel to its stores by public transport by 2009, helped by a free bus and home delivery service.

Support Local Suppliers

M&S has pledged to reduce its imported food and double its regional food sourcing. Tesco has pledged to give its customers more local products than any other retailer. Still in Britain, Asda (Wal-Mart) has opened 15 local sourcing hubs to deliver local products directly to its stores.

Sell Green Products

Home Depot plans to have 6,000 products in its Eco-Options line by 2009. At Tesco, shoppers who buy organic, Fairtrade and biodegradable items are rewarded with green loyalty card points. In 2008, the British stores Waitrose and Sainsbury's each gave a million efficient light bulbs away for free, while Tesco sold them for 2 cents each, supported by an electric utility. Wal-Mart sold 100 million bulbs by 2008, using lower prices, more shelf space at eye level and end-of-aisle showcase displays. It also plans to double its selection of organic products.

Green up Your Supply Chains

All of IKEA's 1,600 suppliers have to sign onto the IKEA Way, which lays down green rules for emissions, waste and chemical management, working conditions and child labor. Wal-Mart is asking its electronics suppliers to fill in a sustainability scorecard, which it will use to influence purchasing decisions, and challenging its suppliers to make their products with renewable energy. It has also

- *Best Practices in Greening Retail*: tinyurl.com/2s5f5o
- Canada Grocery Stores Green Scorecard: static.corporateknights.ca/CK23.pdf
- Global Forest and Trade Network: gftn.panda.org
- Green Retail (UK): talkingretail.com/news/green-retail-news
- IKEA: ikea-group.ikea.com
- M&S: plana.marksandspencer.com
- Retail Energy and Environment Club (UK): thereec.co.uk
- SPUD: spud.ca
- Wal-Mart: walmartstores.com/Sustainability

joined the Global Forest and Trade Network, pledging to phase out all illegal and unwanted wood sources from its supply chain and to increase the proportion of wood products that come from credibly certified sources. The British retail chain Boots runs supplier workshops on packaging and energy efficiency.

Reduce Your Packaging and Waste

M&S and Wal-Mart have both set ambitious goals (see above), and Wal-Mart is using a packaging scorecard with its 2,000 private-label suppliers. In 2007, Sainsbury's gave 6.5 million reusable bags to its customers, reducing plastic bag use by 50%, and is packing its own brand products in compostable packs. In the US, IKEA is aiming to increase its reclaimed store waste from 67% to 90% by 2010.

Educate the World

Tesco is developing carbon footprint labeling for all the goods it sells. M&S is helping its customers reduce their energy use by running a Carbon Challenge with the Women's Institute. Wal-Mart employees are undertaking personal sustainability practices to improve their wellness and the health of the environment. When M&S started to go green, its CEO took his 100 top executives to see *An Inconvenient Truth* to get them motivated. These are small beginnings — but that's how oak trees grow.