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## **CREATE FUTURE VALUE** **OPPORTUNITY IN GREEN**

Most of you have probably noticed a slow but growing trend in the cleaning chemical business - that of cleaning chemicals turning “green.” No, I don’t mean the color green (although the trend in product colors is also undergoing a concurrent change to imply “greenness”), I’m talking about “Save the Planet Green.”

The green trend started back in the 1960’s when the environmentalist movement was hatched. This was largely a grassroots movement that gradually gained acceptance after more and more environmentalist advocates moved into positions of authority in education and politics.

This progression however, was not smooth, and there were some “bumps” along the way.

As the 1960’s came to an end, young environmentalists would leave their college campuses and go into their chosen career fields. For many, this meant education and eventually politics. This laid the groundwork for the growth and eventual dominance of what could be called the “environmentalist attitude.”

Nowhere was the growth of environmentalism more important than in our educational institutions. Environmentalists – now teachers – pushed for environmentalist curriculums, and got classes instituted teaching environmental awareness. This set the stage to create generations of school kids “sold” on environmentalism. Don’t believe me? Talk to a sixth grader about their views on the environment, they’re very well educated on this subject and also very convinced!

At the same time environmentalism began to take hold in education (early 1970’s), politicians became aware of the environmentalist movement, and the potential of pandering to likely voters. One politically inspired disaster that directly affected our industry occurred early in the 1970’s. This was the wholesale banning of any cleaner with a phosphorous content regardless of the situation – just the word “phosphate” on the product’s label got it



banned. In some cases, this banning was instituted statewide without regard to the effects that would ensue.

This was a disaster for our industry because at the time, we had no real alternative to phosphates for water conditioning. Needless to say, non-phosphated products of the early days were terrible, and the results they delivered were awful.

Unfortunately, this left a really bad taste in the chemical cleaner industry's collective mouth about green chemistry.<sup>1</sup> As a result, the industry fought the switchover to green chemistry with lawyers, legislators, and general foot-dragging. In my opinion, this knee-jerk, "stick-it-down-their-throats" legislation inspired by environmentalist activism set our industry back on the environmental scale by at least thirty years.

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Fast forward to 2007.

A lot has happened since the 1970's. Our industry has worked very hard (albeit grudgingly at times) to make environmentally acceptable products that work well. In fact, at INTEGRA, some of the top performers of today are carrying the INTEGRA Green logo.

What happened? Well, after the fiasco of the 1970's just described, mainstream companies came to realize that ant-phosphate (and other environmentally inspired legislation) laws were here to stay. Furthermore, decision makers in the industries we served were, more and more, wanting to make the shift to green cleaners – a direct effect of thirty-plus years of environmentalist teaching in our schools.

During this time, raw materials suppliers got the message too. Their customers (the blenders) were seeking environmentally friendly solutions for *their* customers. The move to green chemistry has generally been a groundswell process. The pressure has come from the bottom up, fueled by customer demand.

Also – and this is key – the average American citizen, and certainly those under forty, have an environmentalist attitude. Go back forty years from today, and you're in the late 1960's, about the time environmentalism started growing on American college campuses. This is no coincidence.

The center of gravity (from an age-demographic point of view) has been reached on the subject of environmentalism. Soon – very soon – those educated in the environmentalist world view will be fully in charge of our society.

So if you ask the question, "Is green chemistry a real and permanent change in the chemical cleaners market?" My answer is: YES, GREEN IS HERE TO STAY...

So what are the implications of that?

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<sup>1</sup> I was working for ECOLAB at the time this wholesale banning took place. Ironically, the people at ECOLAB were looking at alternatives to phosphates themselves, but these were still in the experimental stage. When the landslide of anti-phosphate legislation hit, everyone was taken by surprise (it happened so fast). This constellation of laws cost ECOLAB untold amounts of money and credibility because of the shoddy performance of their non-phosphated products. It was shoved down their throats nonetheless, and as you might expect, they fought back and resisted the move to green products. The general impression from just about everyone back then (including me) was that the green stuff doesn't work – avoid using it at all costs.

Quite simply, the implications are that opportunities abound if you're willing to re-think your sales approach and your product lineup. Here's the list of TO DO's:

1. Completely scrap the idea that green cleaning products are inferior to "regular" cleaning products (the old standby's). In fact, stop thinking of green products as a different type of cleaner. In a few years, green products will be the "standard," and what we consider to be the "standards" of our industry today will be outpaced by green products – green will then become the standard.

2. Search out green products to fill out your cleaning chemicals line. You must make sure that you test these against your old standby's to validate the green's performance. As of right now, you probably won't be able to go completely green, but rest assured, the industry's manufacturers are working overtime on green chemistry - it's just a matter of time.

3. Devise a well crafted green products sales presentation. Don't assume that your prospect thinks green doesn't work. It is true that past attempts to sell inferior green products has cast a negative mind-set amongst some prospects, but there are many prospects out there who would rather use a green product if it works well for its intended application. Remember also, that if your prospect is under forty, he or she will likely be very open to green cleaning.

4. Sell green as your first choice, not as a "well if that's what you *really want*, I can get it for you" second choice. Believe me, green is alive and well, and many of your prospects will actually prefer green products (as long as they do the job).

5. Finally, and very importantly, get out in front of your competition on green. Become the recognized "Green Guy" in your area. Do everything you can to establish yourself as a green chemical application expert.

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Yes, the writing as they say, is on the wall. The use of green cleaning products is a well established trend that is here to stay. As time goes by, more and more of the "old standby" products we depend on today will be replaced by a green product that will work as well, or even better than the old products we always relied on.

Raw material producers and chemical blenders alike are constantly scanning the market for green ingredients that perform well. In addition, many ingredient designers are coming up with remarkable additives to propel the effectiveness of green cleaning products. We've only seen the tip of the iceberg.

Now for a minute, let's talk about potential for improvement. If you're a blender, you're constantly looking to make a better product than your competitor. Here's the bottom line: The room for improving the "old standbys" is limited to the point of being totally absent. By comparison, the room for improving green products (and getting a leg up on your competition) is unlimited!

Knowing this, where do you think the industry is putting most of their research and development dollars?

**AND where do you think *your* future lies?**

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**MONTH**

**BIO-CLEAN**

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YOUR CUSTOMER CAN BUY – AND NOW  
WE’RE MAKING IT EVEN BETTER!**

**It’s coming soon. Look for the new and improved version of  
BIO-CLEAN. BIO-CLEAN is an INTEGRA Green product that  
has the unlimited room for improvement I spoke about earlier.  
Since it’s already a top seller, and a top performer too, can you  
imagine...**

**First gets the business, second gets the leftovers, third gets thrown out - which one are you?**

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