



Why You Should be Seen Selling Green

by Daniel H. Chinitz

I drive an all-electric car. I really like the fact that I own an emissions-free vehicle yet wonder if it was a smart investment when I consider the extra cost to buy it versus the overall gas savings. But I knew that going in. So why did I buy it? Well, among other things, it makes me feel good.

So what about the products you sell? Do they have the potential to make your customers feel good? Certainly the whirlpools, air baths and steam generators on your showroom floor make people feel good, but obviously in a different way.

But you also have this "green" category to sell and it can make people feel good about their purchases. Plus new categories are wonderful for the bottom line. Are you taking advantage of this opportunity? When I had my showroom back in the 80's and 90's, the only green products we had were the annual attempts to sell that year's variation of the color green forced on us from our major fixture manufacturer. We had yard sales every year to get rid of it all.

You might have more green products at your disposal than you think. For example, selling faucets with a PVD (Physical Vapor Deposition) finish is better for the environment than many other finishes. This is because PVD generates less hazardous waste and uses less hazardous materials (i.e. no little tubs of chemicals) during the plating process. You might have clients that would like to know that. And you make more money selling these higher priced PVD finishes plus they should not have issues after your client's cleaning help goes to work on them.

You probably also have items that are not part of your daily "bread and butter" offering that contribute to this green way of thinking. I used to love it when my salespeople sold one of these "extra" items that went beyond the basics as it added nicely to the sale.

One example of this is the Towel Radiator. Not only are they a luxury but the better brands add heat to the bathroom which saves energy, particularly during the "between season" months. These items allow the user to be comfortable without turning on the house heating system, which would be a real waste of energy. Do your salespeople discuss this with their clients? Now that green item can become a necessity!

Another example is whole house water conditioning equipment. Your clients could be more green by buying less plastic water bottles. And why give that category up to the local water softening guy who often just push salt systems that are bad for the environment every time they backwash?

Some green products can actually fall into the "no choice, have to buy" category. For example, you're probably going to sell a new water closet for every remodel. But the more expensive water closets that use less water also clean and dry without paper; that's green and puts more

dollars in your checking account while offering your customer an option to be better to the earth and "feel good" about their purchase. And don't forget, "sell a toilet, sell a fan." A new ventilation fan will use less energy than that old one. And without that lovely rattling noise.

Now I'm not an expert on green products but the more I learn about them, the more I think showrooms should at least devote a section to showing them. Or have them spread out throughout your product mix to demonstrate how they are both practical and smart. But show them somewhere!

The trick is to give this some thought and discuss with your staff what products you sell (or could sell) that are considered green. This can be good for the earth and the bottom line. It makes your showroom more interesting and gives your people something else to talk about, which makes working at your showroom more enjoyable. It also gives your clients something to discuss with their friends later on. You are demonstrating that you are not just another plumbing showroom with 12 water closets lined up against the wall. Your place of business is all about ideas that save energy and make people *feel good* about their purchases.

Furthermore, our industry has some manufacturers joining this green revolution by actually getting certified that their products are green. Companies manufacturing brass items, for example, have to establish to an independent third party auditor of environmental claims that their products contain a high percentage of verifiably recycled material. It requires them to document the chain of custody of the material used to make their product. In addition, these firms have to allow an outside certification team in to inspect their facilities to insure that every claim that they make could be verified and substantiated from both a physical and documentary review.

We seem to be getting past the point of debate as to whether this "going green" is myth or the real deal. You certainly have customers who feel it is a reality. Take advantage of this opportunity by displaying products that satisfy this requirement. You will help your bottom line, you might help the earth and you'll certainly fuel that wonderful "feel good" need we all have in us.

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