



Marketing Remanufactured & Recycled Products to Mail Order Catalogs

Materials for the Future Foundation

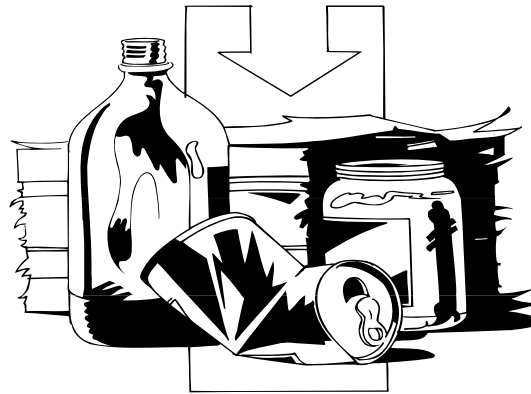
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The mission of the Materials for the Future Foundation is to support community-based initiatives that integrate the environmental goals of resource conservation through waste prevention, reuse, and recycling with the economic development goals of job creation/retention, enterprise development, and local empowerment. Our work focuses on low-income communities, communities of color, and areas of high worker displacement, especially in the San Francisco Bay Area. This paper will help the manufacturer to place a ready-to-sell product into mail order catalogs.

Introduction

Marketing recycled and remanufactured products can be challenging as these types of products are new to many consumers. The product must be competitive with similar non-recycled products in price, availability, quality and ease of purchase. This paper will help entrepreneurs who have developed a recycled product to market it through mail-order catalogs.



This is a preliminary guide for creating a successful mail order marketing strategy, particularly for small and/or start-up enterprises, and not intended to comprehensively cover all aspects of product development and marketing.

Mail order catalogs are an effective marketplace for small-scale manufacturers for various reasons. Numerous mail order catalogs carry only recycled or environmental products. The target audience is

already interested in earth-friendly products, which can make selling through the catalog easier than selling in a retail store or more general catalog. Catalogs are accessible and convenient, allowing people to make purchases from their own homes. Most recycled or remanufactured content enterprises are small, and these environmental product catalogs are accustomed to dealing with the issues and problems associated with a relatively small manufacturer.

Successful Products

No clear definition exists for determining the success of environmental products. The categories of products are diverse: household goods, clothing, office supplies, building materials, personal care items, gift items, etc. This paper lists catalogs which carry basic household, clothing, personal care and gift items. Household/outdoor and gift items, clothing, and beauty and cleaning supplies are generally successful areas for recycled or remanufactured products. No one type of product consistently prevails; a product which is innovative and unique will be most successful.

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Design a product which fills a specific niche and is not currently on the market. The customer may not first look for recycled or remanufactured content, but still values those environmental attributes. If the product replaces a non-recycled similar item and compares in price and quality, customers will opt to purchase the recycled or remanufactured products. Many people, particularly those who receive these catalogs, specifically buy products which are natural, non-toxic and have 100% recycled or remanufactured content. However, if a product is not made from recycled or remanufactured content but still has environmental benefits (such as a water purifier made from non-recycled plastic), it may still sell well.

Before Approaching the Catalogs

Before marketing the product to a catalog, be prepared to answer some questions, either through filling out a form or a having a conversation with someone at the catalog company. Know: the length of time required to make a specific number of products; any potential problems which may occur during production such as equipment breakdown or malfunction, loss of feedstock materials, etc.; and the materials/energy used and the waste created in the manufacturing process. Catalogs want to know what production setbacks could potentially occur and how those setbacks could inhibit product availability. The catalogs also want to know the production timetable, i.e. how much time is required to make 100 items and how much more time is required to make more than 100 items.



Know the costs associated with making the item, including labor, overhead, materials and equipment. Determine the profit needed to make the product financially viable. The catalog mark up will significantly raise the price for the customer, so do not overestimate costs. The customer is not generally willing to pay more than \$25 to \$50 for household or gift items. However, do not underestimate costs, either. If necessary,

hire an outside consultant to assess manufacturing costs and pricing. If the product is unique, beneficial and serves a specific purpose, people will buy it, even if the price is slightly higher.

Develop a Marketing Strategy

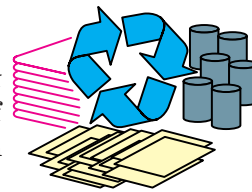
DETAIL the product's attributes, other environmentally responsible aspects, and why the customer should buy this product, rather than a competing one. The product description could be the most important selling point, both to place the product into catalogs and to entice customers to purchase it. Be accurate, specific and enthusiastic about the product and its environmental benefits. Be aware that stringent regulations exist governing usage of terms like degradable, compostable, recyclable, recycled content, source reduction, refillable, ozone safe/ozone friendly. All claims must be substantiated and qualified. Generally, any claim that is not supported by independent scientific verification may be challenged by government or consumer groups. A recycled content claim may be made only for materials that have been recovered or otherwise diverted from the solid waste stream (either pre- or post-consumer). Any claim, made through product name, logos, graphics, etc. must have clear and prominent qualifying language substantiating the environmental claim. Any claim must clarify whether it refers to the product or the packaging. Contact the Federal Trade Commission for the "Guides for the Use of Environmental Marketing Claims".

HIGHLIGHT any positive aspects of your company such as community involvement, donations to the community, mission statement, volunteer projects, employee benefit programs, etc. A company "is what it does" and the connection between management practices and product success should not be underestimated.

EMPHASIZE the durability, success and reliability of the product. Specifically, highlight how the durability of the product will never necessitate its disposal (if true for the product), or how the customer can maintain the product to prolong its life.

KNOW the competition and why this product is better than other similar products (especially non-recycled or non-remanufactured content products). Customers are excited by the environmental aspects of a product, but price and quality are still important factors.

ADVERTISE to the catalog and the customers that the manufacturing process is environmentally safe and friendly. For example, state that only x pounds of waste are created through manufacturing x number of products or x amount of waste is being diverted from landfills or being recycled. Also advertise the long term environmental benefits and impact of the product such as: reduced energy usage; fewer working parts for breakdown; less pollution than standard products; reusability; ability to be recycled at end of life.



REDUCE the amount of packaging material—this saves money and lowers the product price as well as saves energy and materials and reduces waste. The consumer will first notice the product packaging, so try to design packaging which is attractive, unique and also holds to the same environmental standards as the product.

KEEP TRACK of sales records, although most of the catalogs cited in this publication do not require a previous sales record. A record of successfully selling the product elsewhere could help the catalog's decision to carry the product. However, retail store sales differ greatly from catalog sales and retail sales records generally are not considered a good indicator of how a product will sell in a catalog.



Contacting the Catalog



Most of the catalogs listed in this publication prefer a preliminary phone call and letter with a product description and a sample product. Contact the catalog first to determine the name of the person to address correspondence to (often in the purchasing or marketing department).

Placing the Product in the Catalogs

Product selection is subjective. Many of these catalogs gather input by passing the product around to staff, deciding if people like the product, if it works, if the employees would use it and think others would, if the product fits the image or categories of the catalog. The catalog will know what types of products are currently selling well and can judge the potential success of the product based on previous market trends. Some may carry the product on a trial basis and, depending on customer response, decide whether to permanently carry the product. Again, the success of the product will depend on uniqueness, quality and price.

Each catalog has a distinct focus—some carry utilitarian products, others carry more gift or art items, others may focus more on cleaning and beauty products. To start, target the catalogs with a product line similar to your product, then eventually branch out to more general catalogs (even catalogs which carry non-environmental products).

Choosing Product Representation

A product representative will represent several products from various manufacturers and likely will target more than one market. A representative can save the manufacturer time and energy by doing the marketing for the manufacturer. A small-

scale enterprise probably better benefits from representing their own products. Most of these catalogs prefer to work directly with the manufacturer, as representatives generally service large geographic and product areas and may be difficult to contact.

Production Levels

The catalogs listed here do not require a minimum available quantity, which allows a small-scale manufacturer to still be successful. A catalog will determine the quantity of product likely to sell, and then set up an agreement to manufacture that amount within a given time frame. Some catalogs use drop shipping—the manufacturer warehouses the product and sends the product directly to the catalog customer. Spend time going over the production process to finalize all details of scheduling and quantity. Some catalogs may be willing to help the manufacturer expand their manufacturing ability, particularly if an item is extremely successful.

More Advice

Be flexible. If the catalog has valid ideas to make the product or packaging better, listen. Do not have a static product—change with customer demand or suggestion, pay attention to the market.

Be professional. Meet deadlines. A catalog will respond more favorably to professionalism in correspondence and response to phone calls, letters, faxes.

Research the market. Know the competition and how the product compares to other similar products.

Be creative. Develop products by discovering ways to save materials, energy and time.

Mail Order Catalogs

This list is intended as a helpful resource only, not a comprehensive listing of all mail order catalogs.

Planet Natural
Eric Vinje
P.O. Box 3146
Bozeman, MT 59772
406-586-5891
406-587-0223 (fax)
ecostore@mcn.net (email)
<http://www.planetnatural.com/> (website)

The Eco Zone
Karol Roman
RR2, Box 2210
Brackney, PA 18812
717-663-2962
717-663-2962 (fax)
ecozone@aol.com (email)
<http://members.aol.com/ecozone/homepage> (website)

Also available for consulting for design, marketing, product development, publishing and website design.

Real Goods
Eileen Husted
555 Leslie St.
Ukiah, CA 95482-5576
707-468-9292
707-468-0301 (fax)
realgoods@realgoods.com (email)
<http://www.realgoods.com> (website)

Seventh Generation
Bill Gibler
360 Interlocken Blvd.
Broomfield, CO 80021
1-800-456-1177
1-800-456-1139 (fax)
recycle@seventhgen.com (email)
<http://www.seventhgen.com/> (website)

Continued on following page



Mail Order Catalogs, continued

EcoMart*

Marketing Department
P.O. Box 5071
Cleveland, OH 44101
216-781-7700
216-781-7701 (fax)
ecomart@aol.com (email)
<http://members.aol.com/ecomart1> (website)

Enviroshop

Dennis Altshuler
9714 N. 71st St.
Paradise Valley, AZ 85253
1-888-541-7104
602-905-1082 (fax)
custserv@enviroshop.com (email)
<http://www.enviroshop.com> (website)

Jade Mountain

P.O. Box 4616
Boulder, CO 80306-4616
303-449-6601
info@jademountain.com (email)
<http://www.jademountain.com> (website)

The Green Planet

Anabelle Ship
P.O. Box 61025
Newton, MA 02161
617-332-7841

Friedman & Sun*

Avram Friedman
P.O. Box 657
Dillsboro, NC 28725
1-800-586-4602
1-704-586-4620 (fax)
<http://www.digi-all.com/2316/friedman>
(website)

Mountain Star General Store*

Alicia Lamb
P.O. Box 307, Rte. 86
Ray Brook, NY 12977
518-891-8061
518-891-8057 (fax)
gsgs@stardesign.com (email)
<http://www.gsgs.com> (website)

* primarily an online catalog

Other Resources

•Scientific Certification Systems

1939 Harrison Street, Suite 400
Oakland, CA 94612
510-832-1415
510-832-0359 (fax)

www.scs1.com (website)

provides scientific certification of environmental claims

•Green Marketing and Management: A Global Perspective

by John F. Wasik, Blackwell Publishers, Inc.

•The Catalog of Catalogs

Woodbine House

6510 Bells Mill Road
Bethesda, MD 20817
1-800-843-7323

www.acatalogofcatalogs.com (website)

a listing of 14,000 mail order catalogs for \$24.95

•Division of Advertising Practices, Bureau of Consumer Protection, Federal Trade Commission

Kevin M. Bank, (202)326-2675
6th and Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20580

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