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### ***[The Green Train is Coming](#)***

***[A recent survey identifies the trends, attitudes and practices of North American buyers toward Green products.](#)***



Scot Case



Mike Sawchuk

Earlier this year, TerraChoice Environmental Marketing Inc., a science-based marketing firm, released its annual EcoMarkets 2007 Summary Report. One of the key goals of the report is to inform the organization's clients and partners about trends, attitudes and practices of North American buyers toward environmentally preferable purchasing, especially in the B2B (business to business) and B2G (business to government) arenas. This study involved more than 690 procurement professionals across North America with more than \$5 billion in annual spending. It was conducted between November 2006 and January 2007. Of the respondents, 52 percent work in private or publicly held companies. The next largest segment, 42 percent, works in smaller organizations, those with 100 employees or fewer.

To gather a more in-depth perspective, this year TerraChoice partnered with the North American Green Purchasing Initiative (NAGPI) as well as the Responsible Purchasing Network, both of which are directly involved with Green purchasing trends in both private and government as well as other market segments.

"We looked at a number of market segments and their Green purchasing behaviors," says Scot Case, vice president of TerraChoice and its certification arm, EcoLogo™ "But a great deal of attention was paid to the jan/san and paper industries, both of which have seen a tremendous growth in Green manufacturing and interest in the past few years."

According to Case, some of the key areas of interest for the jan/san industry and specifically for jan/san distributors selling to government and large private industries include:

- Environmental influence on purchasing: The survey found that for the majority of organizations in North America, no more than 40 percent of their annual spending is influenced by environmental factors. However, it did find that an overwhelming majority, 91 percent, indicated that they do consider Green factors at least occasionally, and 16 percent said they always consider environmental factors when making a purchasing decision.
- Green above all else?: The respondents were asked if they would select Green products no matter how well they performed or at what cost. The study found most purchases are based first on how well the product performs, then its durability, price and the total cost of ownership. These factors were followed by environmental considerations. Additionally, 60 percent of the respondents said they would not pay a price premium for an environmentally preferable product, indicating that a Green product must be competitively priced in order to be considered.
- Paper products: The study found that nearly all those surveyed have instituted paper reuse or recycling programs, and a significant number, approximately 60 percent, now have paper reduction programs as well.

**However, 82 percent believed that Green paper means the paper has been recycled, not realizing that Green-certified paper involves several factors, including how the products are made, which chemicals are used, what water and air emissions are released during the manufacturing process, and even whether the trees are from sustainable forests.**

**• What are green cleaning products?: The survey found that respondents are still confused as to what a Green cleaning product really is. Fifty-six percent believe they are products that contain no harmful by-products or ingredients, 31 percent consider Green cleaning products those that are biodegradable, and 22 percent believe Green cleaning products are not harmful to the environment or people. Green-certified cleaning products involve all of these but with greater emphasis on the ingredients used to produce the product, the actual manufacturing process, recycled materials and packaging of the product, and other factors.**

**• Required to use Green cleaning products: Finally, the 2007 report found only 28 percent of those surveyed report that their janitorial contracts require the use of Green cleaning products, and 30 percent said they simply did not know.**

**"Even though Green factors and procurement may not be as high as may have been expected at this point in the Green evolution, there is little doubt Green purchasing is more common today than it has ever been before," says Case.**

**But what is even more significant is the trend for the future. According to Case, when the respondents were asked if their organizations will be "Greener" in the next two years, 76 percent said yes. "They indicated they will be actively purchasing Green products," adds Case. "This ensures the customer demand for environmentally preferable products will continue to grow in the near future."**

#### **Green tidal wave?**

**One of the points often made about the growth of Green cleaning is that it has been customer-driven. Schools, universities, government entities and private industry have asked that environmentally preferable cleaning products be used in their facilities, and the industry has responded.**

**"However, I still think we are at the beginning of a Green tidal wave," says Mike Sawchuk, vice president and general manager of Enviro-Solutions, a manufacturer of Green-certified cleaning products. "I still believe there is a lot of room for growth and many in our industry are not taking advantage of it."**

**As an example, Sawchuk says a leading research group recently conducted a symposium regarding Green cleaning and the use of other environmentally preferable products. Most of those attending were administrators from colleges and universities. Noticeably absent were jan/san manufacturers or other members of the professional cleaning industry.**

**"I see this as another example of how our customers, in this case school administrators, are going to demand Green cleaning products instead of jan/san distributors already leading and convincing them that it is the direction they should be going," he says.**

**In business terms, Sawchuk believes some jan/san distributors will make it their job to be in the right place at the right time to seize the opportunities that Green cleaning will bring, while others will be caught off guard.**

**"I spoke with one distributor who said the demand for Green cleaning is still not an issue in his area of the country," says Sawchuk. "But, I told him he might miss the 'Green train' when it pulls in; we have already seen this happen many times with other distributors in other areas in North America."**

**Along with getting on the Green bandwagon, Sawchuk says distributors can make themselves even more indispensable to their clients by understanding how Green cleaning should be implemented in different market segments. "Green cleaning will mean different things to a hospital, for instance, than an office building," he says.**

**"Understanding and guiding these different market segments as they transfer to Green cleaning is a significant value-added service that will present new opportunities for the astute distributor."**

**Without question the trend is toward more Green and more Green-only facilities. "This is no fad," says Case. "It could almost be called a lifestyle direction. Working, living and learning in Green facilities are the ways**

***people want to live in the coming years."***

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