

# THE GREEN CERTIFICATION PROCESSES EXAMINED

Examining the current confusion about Green certification and the failures of the Certifiers

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# THE GREEN CERTIFICATION PROCESSES EXAMINED

## Executive Summary

### *Overview*

Broad acceptance, acceptance, and credibility for Green certification comes from the foundations of the certification process. The concern for the dilution and mimicry of serious efforts to establish a Green operation are engendered by a willingness of businesses to make a token effort while other firms are fully engaged in the process. In the end, the consumer is either misled or confused about the choices being made although the desire to act as a conscientious eco-consumer is evident.

### *Findings*

We need not look far to discover examples of credible certification or hollow facsimiles in the marketplace and professional careers. The level of criteria applied to the certification determines its value and breadth of acceptance.

Certification through validation, audit, or testing is the only way to assure both compliance and public confidence. Everything short of a substantial review process lessens the value of the certification and tends to increase the potential for public deception.

### *Summary*

The exploding number of Green certifications confuse both business owners and the public. The demarcation between the plethora of Green certifications are clearly divided between the LEED, ISO, and Green Business League approach of testing, audit, and verification and programs offering voluntary compliance.

The dilution of the Green certification does harm to the environmentally-committed firms, and invites the kind of abuse of the system that harms any participating industry as well as the trusting consumer.

We conclude that certification by independent, third-party programs, or independent audit, are the sure and certain method to provide Green certification across the wide expanse of applications represented in the marketplace.

## Overview of the Green Certification Problem

The FTC has set out three criteria for legitimate advertising claims that seems to address the problems found in the marketplace. *Substantiation*, meaning that claims are based upon reliable evidence to support such claims. *Specificity and Clarity*, wherein broad and ambiguous advertising has no sure reference point. *Overstatements*, where claims may represent no real value over the competition. The fact that the FTC has taken notice of the puffery of Green advertising set the tone for this discussion on Green certification which falls broadly in the arena of advertising. Certification is the latest integrity test before every kind of business at this time. We must all wonder whether business will stand or dodge the question that has huge implications to our world.

The trend of environmental compliance has created a void in the business world that many firms are eager to fill. The problem is made worse because there are plenty of "instant certifications" that work very hard to appear as good, if not better, than the legitimate ones. It is very simple to create a website, organize content, buy Google adwords, and promote hard to make an empty certification program seem like a national program.

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**Green-wash** (*gren'wosh'*) - verb:  
*the act of misleading consumers regarding the environmental practices of a company or the environmental benefits of a product or service.*

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Compounding the problem of Green certifications is the underlying issue of ethical business practices and a willingness to participate in a subtle public deception. Rather than establishing a standard of credibility, these shallow certifications are fundamentally driven to collect money and to provide an "Easy Green" certification that has no verification processes. The vast number of Green business certifications almost always defaults to the "voluntary compliance" method of qualification that cannot be verified.

As the appetite for Green products and services grows, the eagerness to capitalize on this market increases as well. David Suzuki says it this way, "Through our loss of a worldview, our devotion to consumerism and our move into the cities and away from nature, we have lost our connection to the rest of the living planet." If there is a disconnect in the ethical foundations as business overreaches to capture the market, we have lost the essential trust of the public, and have become nearly entirely dependent on branding, marketing, and saturation despite the truth. The hollowness of this marketing attitude is a cancer, not a cure.

**TerraChoice** has named the "Six Deadly Sins of Greenwashing™," which points a bright light on the penchant that American businesses have for the quick-fix mentality toward Green compliance. Of the six deadly sins, it seems that the "Sin of Fibbing" is unfortunately the choice of many unwitting business people. While the TerraChoice study dealt primarily with Green products found on the shelves of stores, these products did not invent themselves. There were marketing and corporate decisions that seemed to have been made in haste rather than with full appreciation of the ethical standards that were being bent or broken.

Companies everywhere see a growing Green market that provides the ubiquitous motivator for pushing Green-labeled products to meet that perceived market need. It is obvious that the interest in Green products happened prior to any clear standard for Green compliance. Under this cloud of ambiguity, businesses were free to incorporate Green claims that were either credible or less-than credible.

To our latent embarrassment, Greenwashing has become the most popular form of Green business certification. The ability to lay claim to the title of a Green business was up for grabs in the early days of Green awareness. It was easy for the weakest Green business claim to rival the most impressive claims for a Green business, because there was no broad-based standard for a Green business that has captured the marketplace.

"Going Green" most often means that a token effort is made and the Green appointment comes by self-acclamation. "Green" was amorphous and ill-defined, allowing the best and the worst to borrow the term at will.

A survey of the Green business certification labels reveals hundreds of Green business certifications that require only a fee and voluntary compliance. Websites like U.S. Green Business Certification overtly declare a fee schedule, a downloadable self-audit, and the issuance of a Green business certification with logo. The Green Business Bureau lists a fee schedule, offers a variety of self-assessment "audits," and provides their certification without any validation. Green Business Alliance offers its trademark logo for a fee and a signed "Promise" to Green the business per the outline provided.

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*"Any environmental claim that cannot be substantiated by easily accessible supporting information, or by a reliable third-party certification."*

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*TerraChoice on the "Sin of Fibbing"*

These and other examples come back to fundamental credibility issues. The overt and blatant use of the word "audit" illustrates the purposeful deceptions found in many "Easy

Green" website certifications. For example, when you file your taxes, this is a form of "self assessment" using the criteria provided. The IRS knows full well that these voluntary assessments are nearly meaningless, unless the real potential of an audit by an authority is the real measure of compliance. If people will cheat on something as serious as their taxes, they will certainly cheat on something as non-consequential as a Green certification.

An audit is not the same as a self-assessment, yet this misrepresentation is the singular proof of these Green certifications. It is an oxymoron to think that a business can conduct an audit on itself. We may as well sell "Round Squares" or "Dry Water." There is a failure of credibility at the very beginning when the terms used are inherently deceptive.

Congressman JC Watts has said,

*“Character is doing the right thing when nobody’s looking. There are too many people who think that the only thing that’s right is to get by, and the only thing that’s wrong is to get caught.”*

The purpose for these deceptive practices is not merely the ability to post a Green business logo in the building or on the website. These certifications are not about self-satisfaction or personal achievement. These certifications and representative logos are clearly meant for public consumption. They convey to the public something of value since the obvious perception is that an environmentally-compliant company is making the world a better place and offering a product that might ease the strain on our over-stressed resources. The public trust is not well served by a "smoke and mirrors" approach that makes a reflection appear as the real thing.

The obvious desire to take an unaudited program and falsely declare it audited, compliant, and worthy is clearly part of the deceptive elements of Greenwashing. The sin of fibbing is rampant in American Green businesses because it is so readily available. Of course, these companies hope that no one challenges the credential of a well-designed logo and a professionally done website with a measure of due diligence.

Montaigne must have had greenwashing in mind when he wrote (over four hundred years ago):

*“They who in my time have attempted to correct the manners of the world by new opinions, reform seeming vices; but the essential vices they leave as they were, if indeed they do not augment them, and augmentation is therein to be feared; we defer all other well doing upon the account of these external*

*reforms, of less cost and greater show, and thereby expiate good cheap, for the other natural, consubstantial, and intestine vices."*

*(from Michel de Montaigne's Selected Essays, "Of Repentance", translated by Charles Cotton and published by Borders Classics)*

Fiji water is transported 5,434 miles to a LEED facility in Los Angeles before this unique water is placed into plastic bottles and shipped thousands of miles to a store near you. The Boston Globe points out that the Chevy Tahoe was recently named the "Green Car of the Year," but gets only 20 miles per gallon. A Brazilian company bulldozed "thousands of hectares of tribal forest," but boasted that they were creating a 'nature reserve' in a ploy to spin the negative news about their efforts." All of these revelations are bound to create a backlash toward these "Easy Green" businesses, even though these companies claim to be "making an effort." We all should remember the destination of the road that is paved with "good intentions."

Credible Green companies are impacted as well. After all, how can customers tell the real Green companies from the Green pretenders? To the otherwise occupied customer, they all look alike, and there simply isn't enough time to investigate the plethora of certifications in the market. This is exactly the best feature of "Easy Green" certifications. Harried consumers will hopefully "never find out" that the Green logo on the business door was bought over the Internet with less scrutiny than a porn site requires.

## **Governmental Guidance for Green Business**

**T**he problem of establishing a credential is the lack of information on the subject. The EPA has the DfE project that helps sectors improve their products or services. After more than a decade of public angst over the environmental issues, there has been little offered as a governmental solution.

In the fall of 2009, President Obama signed Executive Order 13514, which was one of the best outlines for the Green and sustainable businesses. This order was only applicable to governmental agencies, but actually serves as a harbinger of what is coming to businesses everywhere.

The executive order laid out a variety of requirements that was brief yet well rounded. It appears to be a skeleton that can be thoughtfully fleshed out. For example, the Green fleet area called for sizing down vehicles to match the job and opting for alternative fuel vehicles.

With this indicator, the educated environmentalist could expand on the topic to find better maintenance to improve fuel economy, GPS systems to track and improve routes, and water recovery systems when washing vehicles.

The executive order also called for a reduction in paper use, and suggests using recycled paper and duplex printing. We know that there are dozens of other paper reduction strategies that can greatly improve on this concept.

To date, it seems that Executive Order 13514 is the best guide for a Green or sustainable business although it lacks in the broad applications. Any Green business certification would do well to pay close attention to what is being said in this order. It is the best guide we presently have from the government regarding Green business.

It is also noteworthy to point out the expectation of all agencies to install a sustainability officer. A few notable businesses have already installed sustainability officers. The breadth of subject matter that must be considered in a Green business and cannot be addressed by a layman. For this reason a Certified Sustainability Officer™ can be placed within the company, or a Certified Green Consultant™ can act as an outsourced sustainability officer.

The primary task assigned to the sustainability officer in this order is the creation of a sustainability plan that is a roadmap for orienting and installing Green practices throughout the company. Much like a CFO or CIO, the CSO may be in management, an employee, or an outsourced specialist who works with the company to map out a path to environmental compliance. This task requires more than a passing or modest knowledge of environmental issues. Often a Sustainability Policy is first developed to communicate the new mission statement to all stakeholders followed by the Sustainability Plan which is the itemized schedule of Green and sustainable improvements. These improvements must be accomplished to move the company into environmental compliance and Green business certification.

## **The Credible Credential**

**T**he sure cure for Greenwashing is very evident. We have all heard the phrase that "You cannot prove what has not been measured." The proof of the first down in football is when they "bring out the chain" to measure whether the team has advanced the ball the required ten yards. How often have we seen a player jump up declaring a first down, but find out when the referees (auditors) measure the distance that the team has come up short?

Speeders know the speed limit on the highway, and yet they feel obliged to travel at speeds that they deem are still safe since they are "traveling at the same speed as traffic." Then the officer (auditor) measures the speed on a radar gun and writes a ticket.

College students do not grade their own tests, toll booths do not trust that travelers will pay the proper amount, and golfers are not trusted to keep their own scores. Why? Because it is just simply too easy to give yourself the benefit of the doubt, a free pass, and credit for good intentions as good enough.

Verification by a third-party audit is the only way to provide a certification that can be respected. The willingness to short-circuit the system and proclaim that voluntary compliance or a self-assessment is as good as a true audit is a convenient lie. This lie is not only self-serving, but a willingness to deceive the public for monetary gain. If this were not so, these voluntary, self-assessments would not need the incentive of a certification and logo to show off to the buying public.

There is always an easy way and a proper way to do any good thing. Many watched one of several marathon races where runners finished a grueling effort to win their rewards fairly. Then there were reports of some people who took short-cuts, got rides on bicycles, and simply entered in the last mile. Baseball player have used steroids to secretly cheat the system. As these cheaters ran through the line, the cheers they first experienced turned to jeers and angry resentment when the truth came out. These people were cheaters who believed that the shortest route served their selfish interest. Obviously, the public did not agree; and the backlash was worse than the brief adulation enjoyed at the beginning.

## **Establishing Standards for the Credential**

**A**udits require a set of standards. Those standards can be very low or require a company to perform at a higher level of compliance. B Lab, for example merely requires a company to "rewrite its corporate governing documents to reflect its social and environmental mission and pay an annual fee of \$500." Will Green certification quickly become a race to the bottom to see what firm will offer the easiest qualification requirements?

In another manifestation, many local Green/Sustainability committees that are popping up in cities operate on a borrowed set of criteria that is then disseminated to local business that are "checked off" and returned as a weak kind of voluntary compliance. These community-

based programs frankly should not become an end to themselves, but participate in a national program that lends credibility and transparency to the locally-recognized program.

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*"Only a mediocre person is always at his best." William Somerset Maugham*

It is defensively argued by these low-level commitment programs that voluntary compliance is the a "good thing." Agreed, but is one man with a bucket enough to save the Titanic? We are beyond the point of "random acts of kindness." Local programs can create a Keystone Cops-like confusion that does not serve the serious demand for credibility that can transcend county, state, and national limitations.

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*"All good is hard. All evil is easy. Dying, losing, cheating, and mediocrity is easy. Stay away from easy." Scott Alexander*

We have all heard that, "The good is the enemy of the best." In my school days 64% was a failing grade, but not if we could have decided to lower the goal from 100 to 64. An Icelandic proverb states that "Mediocrity is climbing molehills without sweating." If our highest commitment to the environmental crisis is climbing molehills of environmental compliance, we deserve the trouble that now threatens to destroy our society. Local organizations need to see the larger picture and participate nationally to provide the kind of local programming that allow businesses to subscribe locally and nationally to a serious compliance program.

There is a need for a national standard that is not being constantly revised by local committees who think that they have greater insight than the last group that set out their chosen set of Green ideas. One local committee was led by the owner of a framing store who was assisted by a worker at the local chamber of commerce. The result of this ever changing chorus of voices across the American continent that is little more than a cacophony of confusion. Instead of perpetuating confusion, there is a need for national standards to arise, and these standards need not be a government imposition.

The other error to avoid is the "niched solution" to environment compliance. The promoters of solar panels make this the major issue of "Going Green," while those promoting carbon credits claim that becoming "carbon neutral" is the most critical issue for a company to consider. LEED promotes Green buildings as the core solution, Green Seal promotes Green products. The Green Business League believes that a holistic approach includes all environmental contributions and falls under a broad system of "Green Practices."

## Third Party Certification

**R**eturning to the issue of certification by audit, the credibility of the audit is frankly built upon the key issues of independence, professionalism, and national standards. The dumbing down of the certification process flies in the face of a horrific world crisis. We do not know what will happen when our present 6.7 billion people worldwide expands to the predicted 9 billion people in 2025, but we do know that it presents an unmet challenge with substantial consequences.

We are glaringly aware that our resources are finite and limited. Thomas Friedman's book, Hot, Flat, and Crowded is one of the best treatise on the realities that our world is facing since the days of the bubonic plague, cholera, and typhus that stripped millions of people from the face of the earth. None of us want to be proponents of doomsday theories. Yet, we all know that the prospects for a good life in the future diminish with each day of delay and neglect.

The World Water Council reports that "While the world's population tripled in the 20th century, the use of renewable water resources has grown six-fold. Within the next fifty years, the world population will increase by another 40 to 50%. This population growth - coupled with industrialization and urbanization - will result in an increasing demand for water and will have serious consequences for the environment."

Short of government intervention, the best way to bring about change is the unification of our efforts behind a common goal. The combined strength of a national movement has immense potential for change. While we must appreciate every contribution no matter how small the effort; this is, however, not the time for token efforts. What is needed is an all out attack on the massive environmental tsunami that is approaching.

Local groups should not take undue pride in their fiefdom glories but meld their efforts with a strong national effort to consolidate Green business standards. This is not about political gerrymandering or advancement of a favorite segment of Green or sustainable services. It is required that everyone step up to the challenge with more than a modest effort.

I have argued that "The environmental crisis is a universal problem that requires universal participation." Universal participation is the problem that got us to where we are today, and it will undoubtedly require universal participation to get us out. What is implied in this obvious expectation is that there will be some uniformity to the effort.

A national standard will emerge, and it should come sooner than later. Executive Order 13514 has given confirmation of what is needed to provide a comprehensive approach to the Green business model. In this order, we find a broad range of subjects to consider. The list includes: water conservation, paper reduction, waste recycling, fleet improvements, carbon reduction, and improving energy strategies.

A thousand books can be written, hundreds of ad hoc committees may form, and hundreds of Green or sustainability firms will be created to address the environmental needs. What will be missing is the national credibility to incorporate something more than these smaller realms of influence. Logic demands what environmental forecasters should already know. We cannot throw rocks at a monster that must be killed with a boulder. Tokenism is, therefore, an insult to our intelligence and the threats facing mankind for years into the future.

We cannot adopt a "This too will pass" attitude thinking that somehow, somewhere a solution will appear on the horizon like a rescue ship steaming toward a stranded survivor. News of innovations and breakthrough are heartening, but there is no "Big Fix" that will solve this issue. What is needed is a behavioral change that transcends geographic locations and boundaries. Good intentions of smaller programs are welcome, but the emergence of a national standard for Green business certification is the next necessary step.

## **The Future of Greenwashed Companies**

**T**he public fraud of unaudited and purposely misleading Green certification will certainly run ashore in the near future. Some enterprising investigative reporter will start turning over rocks and exposing the hidden truths that the creature beneath will not enjoy. The only question that will arise after the explosion of truth in the news media will be how quickly the programmer can get that badge of shame off the website.

Scams exist everywhere. Some cause small embarrassments that we can laugh off as mild stupidity, and others are decisions in life that we strongly regret once rude enlightenment comes home to roost. It is certain that "unaudited audits" will prove to be a lapse in good judgment, even though the price was affordable and the process seemed easy.

Local projects offering free Green business programs depend on either good will volunteers, funding from an unpredictable source, or the involvement of those who have something to sell to others in the program. We have all had the unpleasant experience of promises made, but the later frustration of calling a number that is no longer connected.

## Conclusion

Corporate America, whether large or small, has been badly portrayed as good citizens of the world or unworthy stewards of the environment. It seems ludicrous to now drop the ball a second time by attempting to "Game the System" through Easy Green or Token Green efforts. How stupid is making the same mistake the second time when we have been bitten so badly the first time we encountered this monster? This is the environmental state of the union, which is one of disarray and partisanship.

Business may have led the previous generation into the concepts of "planned obsolescence" and convenience mania. It is now time to lead the public out of the games of folly by a willing spirit to be good environmental citizens and leaders of sustainable practices that are gravely needed at this present hour. The message must be clear and unified, and the enlistment needs to be universal. The amalgamation under one respected banner is the smart method that allows Green certification to have substance and credibility.

The world cannot afford to hesitate in its duty or pretend that this looming crisis will go away if we merely accommodate a few inconveniences. Leadership is the magic solution that is needed today rather than the misbegotten efforts of privateers or Washington bureaucrats. In an hour of desperation, the real heroes stand up and stand out. Business people everywhere never suspected that the duty to lead in this manner would fall on them, but they know that this is the hour when men determine to live or die.

The rally of those who will lead is not a hollow boast, but gains substance in a national theme that all should and must follow. This is not the solution that can be manufactured by governments or by marketing firms. It has at its roots the human will to survive and the desire for a better tomorrow. This is an hour when a national standard becomes our rallying flag, and leaders stand to carry the banner that millions will follow.

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## Ten Ways to Greenwash Your Company

**1- Green Misdirection:** Ignore the real issue and divert attention to the “other things” that are better. For example, Fiji bottled water operates out of a LEED silver certified building, though they transport the water more than 5000 to the US, put it in plastic bottles, and ship it again throughout the country.

**2- Green by Proxy:** Do what Clorox did, since bleach is not a Green product. They bought out Greenworks and now they hail their Green contribution. Green by Proxy is buying someone else’s Green solution without really changing the way you operate.

**3- The Green Dumb Down:** Why not produce the very same product that has been diluted or slightly altered and slap a Green label on it? Dilution of harmful ingredients does not make a product Green.

**4- Charitably Green:** Tout the fact that a few pennies from every purchase (of an otherwise non-Green product) will be given to a Green charity.

**5- Token Green:** This process is defined as doing the minimum that can be done to make something Green. So, a hotel can put in CFL bulbs and declare that they are Green, although there is so much more than could and should be done.

**6- Green by Discovery:** No change is required with this method. The company discovers that there is already something Green about their product or service. There is no Green commitment except for the realization that they tripped over an idea already in existence.

**7- Green Pretenders:** There are more than a few products that blatantly misrepresent the products, poorly label, or confuse the buyers to produce sales even though the product is not Green by any reasonable standard.

**8- Radically Green:** Some Green products are sold just for the environmental wackos (sorry, but its true). The overhype is not on the product, but on the necessity to buy the product.

**9- Mean Green:** Hate runs two ways. Villianizing the opposition is kind of like the Mac vs PC commercials where the purpose is to denigrate the competition to make your product seem better.

**10- Meaningless Green:** Some Green claims are not relevant to the subject. So, does it matter that the package says, “No Heavy Metals,” “CFC-free,” or “No Bleach Added”? These ingredients are either already banded or may mask other ingredient still in the product.

*Taken from post on [www.greenbusinessviews.com](http://www.greenbusinessviews.com)*

## THE GREEN CLAUSE IN RFPS AND CONTRACTS

As a simple task for any company wishing to promote the need for Green in their community and their marketplace, the SPA has suggested that all companies adopt an "Environmentally Preferred Purchasing" program. This does not preclude the other criteria that may apply to the purchasing process or price competition. The simple task of placing a "Green Clause" in all RFP (Request for Proposal) or pending contracts is simply a smart way to expand the environmental influence through a market sector.

Adding the Green Clause is, however, a matter of Green ethics since a company is asking its customers to "Buy Green" via their company. It seems more than logical that the company would "walk the walk as well as talk the talk." Remember that the environmental crisis is a shared problem that asks that all participate in the solution.

The upgrade of RFPs and pending contracts with the Green Clause seems to comply with the elements of the Green Supply Chain as well. We know that a market is made up of buyers and sellers. To have a viable market, we must have active sellers and active buyers. A preponderance of sellers and a few buyer spells disaster for the marketplace. Therefore, the willingness to place a preference on soliciting Green vendors to seek our business is the smart way to encourage a Greener marketplace as well as a Greener world.

The inclusion of the Green Clause is actually quite simple:

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*"In harmony with the Green Supply Chain initiative, we (require/prefer/desire) that all bids or quotes submitted per this RFP come from Green certified companies and include Green certified products. Green certification, however, shall be by a national third-party program that verifies and audits the Green and Sustainability claims of all vendors and services for this company."*

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Any due diligence for Green certification claims are easily resolved by verifying the source of the Green certification. If it is found to come from an Internet website without the requirement for a true third-party audit, the submission may be rejected.

This allows the company to participate in the Green Supply Chain initiative, and the EPA's program for environmentally preferred purchasing. This is also a practical concept that allows a company to apply Green ethics to its internal operations. In the end, businesses demonstrate environmental leadership at a time when it can make a real difference.

## THE GREEN PIG SYNDROME

One would hope that what I am about to say is mostly fantasy, but I don't think so. On the heels of a variety of calls from people claiming to be environmentally concerned, I am finding that environmental issues rarely supersede convenience and cost. One remarkable comment came when a person replied to me, "I don't mind being environmental as long as it doesn't cost me anything." Frankly, I was too shocked to respond like I should have. The best response was that irresponsibility is costing us all the time. The price of doing nothing is rarely zero. What is the price of not going to work? What is the price of refusing to fill the gas tank when the needle is on empty? What is the price of neglecting our children when they ultimately require an attorney to get them out of their latest jam?



So, it occurred to me that there is a "Green Pig Syndrome" (GPS) at work. The Green Pig Syndrome is like greenwashing, except that it means that we don't want our environmental obligation to intrude into our lives. You see, you can paint a pig green, but it is still a pig! A pig will do absolutely nothing different than it has always done. It will squeal and complain when things don't work like it wants, and it will consume as much as it can in a day, hoping only for another day to do the same.

We love convenience, luxury, and excess. Constant gratification isn't such a bad way to go, wouldn't you say? If there were no consequences to how we lived life, one might suppose that we would all be happier. Or, at least we think that would be best. Like it or not, we live in a consequential world, and every day is an investment in making life better or worse. The simple task of depositing your trash in the next trash bin or throwing it out of the window has compounding consequences. We can survive the odd incident, but I have been in countries where trash lines the streets and festers in the alleys.

The Green Pig Syndrome is a values placement process. Pigs, I am told, are relatively near-sighted but are considered the fourth most intelligent animal in the world. They see only what is in front of them, and they are driven by their appetites. Who wants the life of a pig, though? In our example, they are not long thinkers. So, they never worry about how the world will be tomorrow. Life does not consist of what can be done today no matter what the real cost might be in the long term. That would be a Green Pig's attitude, however.

Let's face it. You can paint a pig green, but that does not change the way it thinks. And, anyone can paint themselves as environmentally-concerned, but how many things are they willing to change? The success of the environmental program is not just in building Green

buildings or buying Green products. Those embracing these solutions are merely “Green by Proxy.” The real impact is felt when Green is made a part of the lifestyle. It could be considered behavior modification, but it is the necessary modifications for our collective future. We need not “Go Radical” in our transition to Green. It is a learned behavior that allows for people to grow into a better environmental citizen.

The hard facts are that Green will cost everyone something, and it will certainly intrude on our convenience-oriented world. We cannot make the necessary changes without changing the behavior of each and every person. It will not be convenient, comfortable, or enjoyable. It is, however, necessary for the world that we all hope to enjoy for a while. Don't be overly concerned. This is not a call to monastic living, moving into a grass hut, or trading your car in for a bicycle. It is the challenge that we all face in this hour in history. It is our hour, and it is our challenge. The problem is not as fierce as a war, or as urgently pressing as a hurricane. Environmental problems are more like the rising tide without enough high ground to keep ourselves out of the encroaching waves. Slow disasters still deserve our attention, even though we are not up to our necks in trouble yet.

The remedy for the Green Pig Syndrome is not an H1N1 shot. We can be Green humans who have the intelligence to see the future and change what we are doing today. There is a cost to Go Green, and there are simple ways to transition to Green Practices that are often mildly intrusive. Some Green practices are even beneficial. If you are ready to be both human and a humanitarian, it is time that we all decided to make the changes without concern for the cost or inconvenience. The Green Business League assists businesses in their Green business certification through honest programs of audit and certification.

*Post by R Michael Richmond, Director of Development of the Green Business League, Inc.*

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