

OP-ED New partnerships foster eco-shifts

With the environmental “Green Wave” sweeping America, the government/business dynamic has improved drastically. Firms are now seeing green as a strategic advantage, while government is moving beyond its traditional role of regulator and enforcer. Government and the American enterprise system are now working closely in furthering the goal of driving environmental progress while the economy grows.

For decades, government’s relationship with corporate America has been akin to a Western standoff – with the law on one side, the bandits on the other. Agencies like the EPA have built a well-earned reputation as regulators, prosecutors of violators, and perceived adversaries of business.

Armed with costly mandates, hoards of lawyers, and scores of enforcement personnel, the battle lines have been drawn between two powerful forces: Innovation via regulation is a slow, costly process for business and the consumer, versus the more progress that is needed on energy efficiency and environmental protection.

As communicators, our crafting of messages and brand strategies to withstand scrutiny in the green space is part of a dialogue with a

internal and external stakeholders that include federal agencies.

Harnessing the power of sustainability still requires that advocates within the boardroom overcome skepticism by proving ROI. With the assistance of government programs, sustainability goals are now within reach of any business.

Engaging the government in a larger integrated process for devel-

Government relationships will give industries a voice in policy development

oping sustainability strategies can yield a variety of benefits from both operational and public relations standpoints.

Firms that speak to sustainability without laying a proper foundation do so at their peril. Credibility is a prerequisite of any marketing plan that seeks to leverage sustainable practices into brand loyalty.

Tax dollars fund countless programs that, when tapped by the private sector, provide cost-effective ways of adding credibility to

sustainability strategies.

Partnership programs like the EPA’s Climate Leaders, Design for the Environment, Performance Track, Energy Star, the Green Suppliers Network, and others utilize sound science and knowledgeable personnel to help businesses establish and meet authentic goals. When goals are met, firms can reap significant PR benefits from the relationship.

Government and business are now creating new standards, best practices, more effective technologies, and more cost-efficient ways for companies to go green.

Building key government relationships will also keep firms ahead of the regulatory process and give industries a greater voice in policy development.

There are also state programs and local government initiatives that break down barriers to communication and cooperation between the private and public sectors.

This paradigm shift is creating tools to be used by the PR industry and companies who seek the benefits of being credibly green. ■

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