

# SEEING GREEN

## A MOVEMENT TAKES HOLD

BY MARGE AXELRAD / EDITORIAL DIRECTOR

NEW YORK—Observers note that it's important to sort out the substantive from the hype, but there is no debate that shifts in consumers' attitudes toward sustainability represent a major trend, almost a revolution.

The movement has possibly been spurred further by the recession and rising energy costs, climate changes, health concerns and the gaining role of business in society—fueling a significant “social purpose” movement. Today, issues about how products are made, how businesses reduce their impact on the planet and how they relate this to their customers are moving well beyond the original definitions of “green,” experts say, to a very real and palpable business trend evident in all industries, including optical.

Marketers have tracked consumer attitudes toward green issues back to the early '90s, when Wal-Mart first initiated its own highly-visible “green” initiative. But studies in this area marked a perceptible change in traction of the attitude in 2008/2007 when GfK Roper identified some 30 percent of consumers as “True Blue,” the most environmentally active, a virtual doubling of that number baselined in 1995. Another 10 percent were called Greenbacks, not 100 percent committed but

who said they would buy green.; about 26 percent Fencesitters; 15 percent Grouzers (uninvolved/disinterested); and 18 percent (half the number from 1995) who were apathetic to green issues.

More recently, SRC's Annual Greentailing Survey—sponsored by ClearThinking and Will Ander of McMillianDoolittle, a retail consultancy—(www.mcmillandoolittle.com) for the National Retail Federation (www.nrf.com) reflects that there is evidence of a rising groundswell of interest in sustainability and green issues as they impact shoppers. (See related charts in Front Lines/NUMBERS, page 24).

In 2007, SRC determined that almost 60 percent of consumers consider “green” at some level in their purchasing behavior. That still held true in 2009, when 15 percent of consumers said they actively consider and purchase/shop green and 53 percent said they occasionally consider and purchase/shop green. That's a combined number approaching 70 percent.

The green performance “stigma”—that green products and services represent a more expensive option—has been giving way as processes and consumer interest has grown.

Regardless, in 2009, the Greentailing Survey revealed, some 45 percent of consumers said they decided to shop at a particular store because mer-

chandise or operations were more green-friendly than other stores. The survey also polled consumer attitudes toward the retailers they patronized, indicating, in order of importance to them, that it was important for retailers to use recycling services, operating in a manner that saves energy, use sustainable materials and packaging were “very important.”

Particularly among women and young adults there is a more positive and active consideration of green or environmentally-friendly products or businesses, while the views are virtually even among income levels of consumers, from those with lower household incomes or high.

Today there are many examples of the impact of sustainability issues at the highest levels and within the financial markets. As an example, just this month, Puma said it will produce the first-ever Environmental Profit and Loss (EP&L) statement. The fitness apparel company has implemented a new method of accounting that it says will allow it to produce a new type of integrated reporting. The EP&L project is part of a larger environmental initiative by Puma's parent company PPR Group, whose other brands include Gucci, Yves Saint Laurent and Stella McCartney.

The EP&L statement is designed to capture the brand's economic impact on naturally occurring

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## Eyewear to ‘Why’ wear? Frame Companies Look at Sustainable Materials, Messages

The optical and sunglass sectors are taking real steps to examine materials and frame-making manufacturing processes to employ new types of bio-based materials as well as packaging and presentation concepts to address growing consumer interest in the realm of sustainability.

New efforts are also integrally linked to “social purpose” values, which are also gaining ground and tie into a growing interest among both young customers and baby boomers to “do good” with the purchases they make and companies they patronize.

Modo’s path has touched all aspects of its business since the launch of eco, its earth conscious optics project. “There’s no such thing as a 100 percent sustainable company,” said Alessandro Lanaro, Modo’s president and CEO. “We decided that we would not only reduce the footprint of making the product, but look for ways to offset the remaining footprint by giving something back.”

First, eco developed a manufacturing process using recycled steel and repurposed plastic to produce frames with a minimum 95 percent recycled content. They went through a rigorous process of having the manufacturing certified by UL Environ-

ment, a new program of Underwriters Laboratories, the world leader in product evaluation. Eco is the first consumer brand to receive ULE’s approval, which certifies that the product’s green claims have been validated by an independent third party—“extremely important,” said Lanaro, “in a world where lots of products make sustainability claims they can’t verify.”

Next eco formed a partnership with Trees for the Future, a 1 percent for the Planet recipient nonprofit that helps communities around the world plant trees, to fight global warming and protect wildlife habitat. For every pair of frames sold, eco donates one tree to the Cameroon Reforestation Project, and expects to plant half a million trees in the West African nation this year.

The frames are shipped in packages made with 100 percent recycled paper, in a pouch of organic cotton. Inside the package is a return envelope for customers to donate their unwanted glasses, via eco, to OneSight, the Luxottica nonprofit foundation that matches the prescriptions to people in Africa and Southeast Asia who would otherwise not be able to afford corrected vision. Modo encourages its retail accounts to consider eco a way to build a competitive advantage and tap into a new and growing audience of eco-friendly consumers.

At Revo, the company’s new Eco-Collection uses a sustainable manufacturing process, either Re-Use or Eco-Use. Revo Re-Use is a frame material made from 100 percent recycled pre-consumer polymer resins, a top-grade recycled TR-90 nylon. Revo’s Eco-use features a nylon frame material made from the seed of the castor bean plant instead of widely-used petroleum based nylons.

The company has also aligned

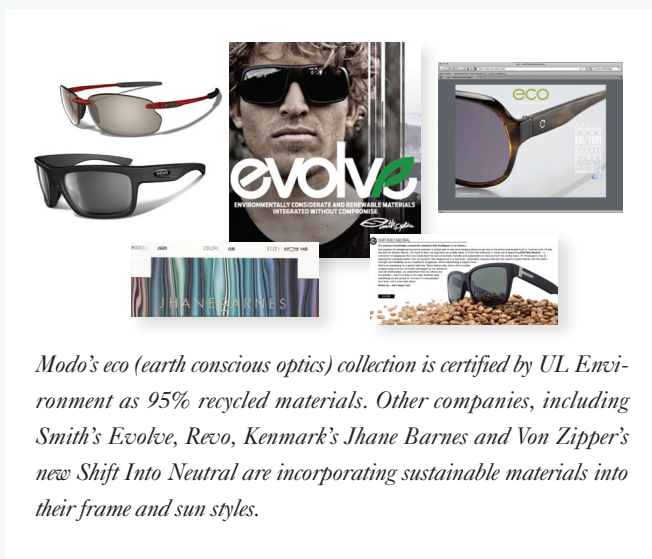
itself “to support people and projects aligned with both outdoor exploration and a humanitarian or ecological cause. These Ambassadors include: Sebastian Copeland, renowned polar explorer and global warming advocate; Alexandra Cousteau, global water advocate and founder of Blue Legacy International, and Jimmy Chin, world-renowned photographer and mountaineer.

Kenmark Optical last year debuted several styles within its Jhane Barnes men’s collection, inspired by the designer’s commitment to the environment. Each new style incorporates Jhane Barnes’s design aesthetic into designer frames for men that are eco-friendly. The frames feature thin sheets of recycled wood pulp laminated into an acetate temple consisting of 30 percent recycled scrap. The styles feature titanium fronts and use bio-degradable demo lenses made from corn rather than standard petroleum based demo lenses. Frames will be packaged with backing cards printed on recycled paper.

Over three years ago, Smith Optics reported it brought environmental thinking to the materials and processes which were used to manufacture its sunglasses, goggles and helmets. After three years of successfully testing bio-based, nylon alternative, Rilsan Clear in a limited range of sunglass models comprising the Evolve collection, Smith is taking another step by introducing the bio-based material into 95 percent of its injection-molded sunglass frames. This material, replaces 53 percent of the petrol-based chemicals in each frame with a resin derived from non-GMO, organic castor plants. All Smith sunglasses are covered by Smith Optics True Lifetime Warranty.

“Shift into Neutral” is a new sun collection from VonZipper, made from sustainable oil derived from the castor bean. The frames come with a cotton sunglass bag and minimal packaging, the company said. ■

*maxelrad@jobson.com*



*Modo’s eco (earth conscious optics) collection is certified by UL Environment as 95% recycled materials. Other companies, including Smith’s Evolve, Revo, Kenmark’s Jhane Barnes and Von Zipper’s new Shift Into Neutral are incorporating sustainable materials into their frame and sun styles.*



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ecological systems. Environmental advocates have been calling for such accounting systems for years, Sustainable Life Media ([www.sustainablelifemedia.com](http://www.sustainablelifemedia.com)) reported.

A just-released Sense and Sustainability poll of 302 Fortune 1000 executives, by public relations firm Gibbs & Soell, reports that nearly nine out of 10 executives—88 percent—say their company is “going green.” The survey also found that 75 percent of executives said that their company has people responsible for sustainability or “going green” initiatives, up from 69 percent in 2010. The survey defined “going green” as “improving the health of the environment by implementing more sustainable business practices, and/or offering environmentally friendly products or services.”

More than one out of 10 (11 percent) executives said there is a C-suite or senior level function specifically and solely dedicated to “going green” initiatives. Nineteen percent said their company has a C-suite or other senior level position that incorporates sustainability or “going green” into a broader job description such as chief technology officer, chief operations officer or director of public affairs, up from

15 percent last year. And 17 percent report that there is a team of individuals whose jobs are specifically and solely dedicated to sustainability, up from 13 percent in 2010.

Scott Pickering, of Wal-Mart’s Health & Wellness optical non-store operations, told *Vision Monday*, “Wal-Mart has a Sustainability department, and it is the company’s expectation that all areas of the business work together to find solutions specific to their business unit. Our Sustainability associates work with leaders in different division, developing and implementing sustainability ideas specifically for the following areas: new and existing facilities, the transportation and distribution network, the supply chain and merchandising (with a specific focus toward packaging), and store operations. The results can be dramatic; the trucks that haul merchandise to our stores are 65 percent more efficient now than four years ago—from the technology of the truck, the trailer, how we load/unload, etcetera.”

Pickering added, “Sustainability fits very well with the mission of our division, Health & Wellness, as well as the mission of our company, Save Money and Live Better. The mission is an external and internal guide to how we make decisions to

serve the best interests of our patients; does they way we handle the resources entrusted to us help our patients save money and live better?”

Noted Pickering, “In Fayetteville Ark. we’ve gone from old style air compressors which run all the time to a new one with variable speed and a holding tank; the ROI on the equipment is a little more than one year. In all of our facilities, we’ve retrofitted lights and put motion sensor lighting in areas where associates are not working. We’ve taken the bulbs out of our vending machines in the break room; it’s approximately \$50 per

year per machine in energy savings. Upcoming projects include developing strategies specifically for tracking energy and water consumption per order produced, and more efficiencies in HVAC through centralized monitoring.

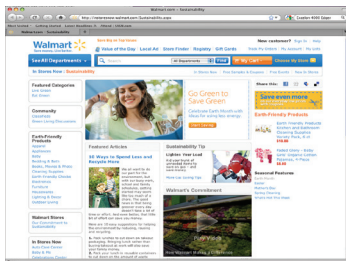
“We’re also examining our packaging across all merchandising areas, from TVs to toasters. In optical, we’re looking at our lens packaging, specifically how can it be more environmentally-friendly? In frames, suppliers pack them with a little cardboard piece that gives structure to the product during shipping; we asked our suppliers to eliminate the inks and dyes on the cardboard since it is not seen by the customer—basically we went from ‘pretty’ to ‘plain’ and hopefully saved the suppliers a little on each frame they send to us.

“We also have a program called My Sustainability Program (MSP) for our associates. Through this program, all of our associates across the globe will have the opportunity to choose an activity in their personal lives to align with the company’s commitment to being a global leader in sustainability.”

Two of the newest initiatives for Wal-Mart are the Sustainability Index and the Healthier Foods initiative. The Sustainability Index will provide transparency to the customer so they can more easily determine the product’s environmental impact of production, use and disposal. As the nation’s largest grocer, we want to provide customers access to healthier and more affordable food choices.”

At VSP Global, a company spokesperson related, VSP has maintained an Energy Star score for all four buildings at a 90 percentile. “We are in the process of certifying our HQ4 building LEED-EBOM with the goal of receiving a Platinum certification. We have implemented additional updates in the Data Center to continue to make it more energy efficient, have completed the installation of lighting sensors in all offices and conference rooms.”

He added, “We’ve reduced water consumption by 50 percent and installed Vending Miser devices that turn vending machines to half power and lights off during down times, resulting in an estimated annual savings of 20,800 Kilowatt hours and



*Wal-Mart’s Sustainability initiatives are a company-wide agenda, led by Wal-Mart’s CEO, Mike Duke, and a range of experts and executive teams throughout the 9,000-store organization, impacting everything from store operations and facilities management, to transportation and product/packaging issues.*



# Make The Switch!

enhanced our recycling program and developed employee engagement with a Green Guardian team.”

At the optical dispensary level, as optical retailers, including independents, revisit their own sustainability initiatives, a new sensibility is taking hold in terms of store fittings and office design. One example is a new collaboration between optical dispensary design firm, Eye Designs and Eco-Lite. The two companies are partnering on improving lighting in existing stores and on refurbishment and new-location projects.

A new website, OpticalLights.com (www.opticallights.com) will detail ways that optical retailers can learn more about Eco-Lite's LED products and other materials improvements and considerations.

The site features an ROI calculator and a quick-contact form for ECPs to request a “30-day Trial Light” or “Free Lighting Analysis” of their optical.

Noted Jeff Gasman of Eco-Lite, who works with retail clients in other sectors like jewelry, and warranties its LEDs for five years or 25,000

hours, “Many retailers commonly use halogens for displays, but besides being hot and not always rendering the best color for displays, the halogens can sometimes fade colors and, with plastic frames, affect their shape or make metal frames hot.”

Eco-Lite's Howard Gurock said, “LEDs can all look the same. It's very important for folks to realize that there are different impacts for residential quality LEDs and those that work best in a commercial/retail environment.” The company can advise overall lighting schemes for optical retailers, too, including lighting around try-on mirrors in dispensaries.

R. Whitman Lord, OD, who runs six Lord Eye Centers in coastal Georgia, recently worked with Eco-Lite and the Eye Designs team to build out new locations for two of the offices. Lord told *VM*, “We had some new real estate opportunities in high-traffic areas and each of the new offices is 4,000-square feet. We were looking for an open layout and Eye Designs helped me with that, working with our architect, to accommodate a large eyecare area, with four exam lanes, twin pre-test rooms, a retinal photography room and separate visual field/scanning room, and our surfacing/finishing lab with a very large dispensary. Four sets of the pendant lights from EcoLite are surrounded by large ovals suspended by cables. We discussed coolness and other issues. We're very happy with the results and we saw our first quarter business up by more than 30 percent compared to our first quarter last year. I attribute that to the new, visible locations and the contemporary look of the offices.” ■

maxelrad@jobson.com



*The six-unit Lord Eye Center, based in Statesboro, Ga. rebuilt two of its locations including its Brunswick and St. Marys' offices including redesigned interiors, featuring Eye Designs fixtures and pendant lighting from Eco-Lite.*

LED bulbs specifically designed to properly illuminate eyewear



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## Lens Companies Explore Sustainability and Communicate Green Efforts

Several ophthalmic lens companies have initiated programs to broaden their own sustainability initiatives and/or to communicate information about lens materials and the impact of how they're manufactured to ECPs and to consumers. Some have also taken a look at their operations and infrastructure to minimize environmental income and save costs.

In 2008, Vision-Ease Lens (VEL) ([www.vision-ease.com](http://www.vision-ease.com)) began purchasing 100 percent renewable energy to power its Ramsey, Minn. headquarters and manufacturing facility. In addition, it revised its manufacturing and shipping for LifeRx lenses, eliminating shipping products across the country twice and saving more than 10,000 gallons of gas and 113 million tons of CO2 emissions per year.

By contracting for renewable energy to power the Ramsey plant, VEL can eliminate 15,759 metric tons of CO2 emissions per year. These savings are equivalent to CO2 emissions from 1,788,767 gallons of gasoline. Translated directly to lens production, each pair of lenses produced at Ramsey using renewable energy eliminates 10.5 pounds of CO2 emissions.

Using calculations via the carbon calculator on the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency website, VEL noted, with renewable energy the production of Vision-Ease lenses delivers the following comparable CO2 reductions:

- Each pair of lenses is equivalent to the carbon sequestered by one tree seedling for one year.
- Two pair of lenses avoids the carbon release of one gallon of gasoline consumed.
- 100 pair of lenses is equal to the carbon release of one barrel of oil.
- 1,000 pair of lenses is equivalent to the reduction of one passenger vehicle for 10 months.
- 10,000 pair of lenses equals the reduction of carbon release of the electricity to power six homes for one year.

"Beyond offering lenses that have a 'green touch,' by acting as a leader in sustainability and green practices within the eyecare industry, VEL is setting an example to those within the industry at all levels to examine their internal practices," said Jay Lusignan, marketing communications manager for Vision-Ease Lens.

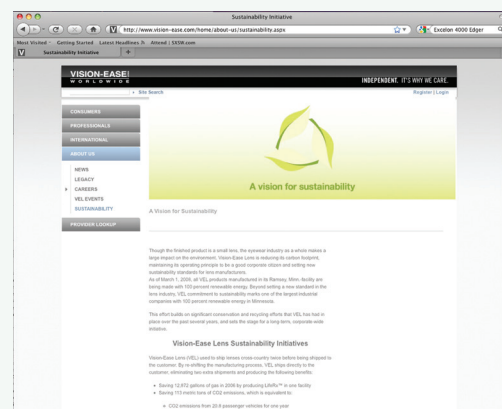
As part of its commitment to environmental sustainability, Transitions Optical is continuing to take steps to reduce its energy and water usage in its U.S. operations—reducing its carbon footprint across the globe.

Transitions Optical ([www.transitions.com](http://www.transitions.com)) has a dedicated Environmental, Healthy and Safety (EH&S) team which reviews performance and waste reduction data and identifies new steps for minimizing Transitions Optical's impact of operations on the environment.

In 2010, Transitions installed conservation measures in its equipment used to wash and rinse lenses, resulting in a 24 percent reduction in water usage for its U.S. facilities. The installation of a new roof, chiller and frequency drives helped to run motors more efficiently and resulted in a 12 percent energy reduction as well.

Globally, Transitions Optical's water reduction for 2010 resulted in an 18 percent reduction over 2009. Transitions is hoping to increase that percentage by 5 percent in 2011, a company spokesperson told *VM*, noting that Transitions Optical re-invests any energy savings back into its green efforts to reduce energy consumption and put in new technologies in all of its facilities.

Essilor's green initiatives have recently centered around Airwear lenses. The company points to a special website, [www.lightersaferegreener.com](http://www.lightersaferegreener.com), which illustrates the way ECPs can learn how patients can support the environment their eyewear. A spokesperson said, "Essilor employs eco-conscious manufacturing processes in its Airwear lenses. Airwear lenses are the first Essilor lens material to go green, significantly reducing its envi-



ronmental footprint by implementing responsible manufacturing" including:

- **Packaging:** 100 percent recyclable cardboard made from 100 percent recyclable wooden fibers for Airwear lens packaging, helping to eliminate 460,000 pounds of plastic waste every year.
- **Water Consumption:** 100 percent recycled water for manufacturing of Airwear lenses, conserving millions of gallons of water.
- **Recycling Excess Material:** Airwear re-purposes unused materials for other industries, such as automobiles, toys and writing instruments.
- **Donating Eyewear:** Essilor supports Lions Club International's Recycle for Sight, program which accepts old, usable glasses and donates them to those in need. ■

*akarp@jobson.com*

## Optical Labs and a New Vision Council Task Force Explore Sustainability Solutions

Many labs across the U.S. have been grappling with the implications of sustainably processing waste materials at their labs. Bob Niemiec, senior vice president, of Eye Care Centers of America, a division of HVHC group, has been using high efficiency lighting, high efficiency heating and cooling and recycling process water wherever possible at the company's huge, San Antonio, Texas lab.

Additionally, the ECCA facility is among a growing number of labs throughout the industry that is exploring new ways to recycle polycarbonate and plastic swarf from its surface generators more efficiently. Noted Niemiec, "We've made various attempt to recycle the swarf material with limited success due to the fact that it is not a pure material and is composed of poly, plastic and back-side hardcoatings." The lab is currently using a briquetter compacting system manufactured by Bazell Technologies, Niemiec said.

At Wal-Mart, Scott Pickering of the company's Health & Wellness Optical Non-Store Operations, said the company's optical laboratories have considerably reduced the amount of landfill waste by recycling using a "super sandwich" bale (see below), a more efficient way to store and transport recyclables. "We put bags of paper, plastic, and aluminum into our cardboard baler, compact until the baler is full, then make a bale of all the product which can be easily broken down and separated at the local MRF. We store the bales of recyclables on our parking lot, and when we have accumulated



a truckload the recycler picks them up."

But, Pickering noted, there is an opportunity to address swarf and processing issues in a broader way. As Jeff Endres, technical director at The Vision Council ([www.visioncouncil.org](http://www.visioncouncil.org)), pointed out in a note to the group's Lens and Lens Processing Division members in April of last year, "Did you know that the mechanical processing of just one polycarbonate lens can yield a volume of one liter of shavings, or swarf? Polycarbonate substrate, which now represents half of the lenses used in the U.S., comprises 50 percent to 80 percent of the volume of waste that lens laboratories send to landfills across America."

Together, The Vision Council Lens and Lens Processing Technology Divisions have formed an exploratory committee or Task Force, led by Pickering.

Pickering told *VM*, "In our optical labs, our number one goal is to find reliable partners to recycle polycarbonate swarf. We have worked with recyclers in the past, but have not had a reliable solution for recycling this product. One year ago, we collaborated with key lens, consumables and equipment suppliers as well as other lab networks to form the Sustainability Task Force with The Vision Council, with the primary goal of finding a reliable solution for recycling swarf."

He added, "The primary problem with recycling polycarbonate swarf is that swarf from 1.67 lenses has the same physical characteristics, looks exactly the same as polycarbonate swarf, and in most facilities is surfaced using the same equipment as polycarbonate but is not valuable to recyclers.

Participating in The Vision Council's Sustainability Task Force to date include these companies, in alphabetic order: Bazell Technologies, Carl Zeiss Vision, Essilor of America, Inc, National Vision, Inc., NSL Analytical Services, Inc., Satisloh North America, Inc., Schneider Optical Machines, Inc., and Wal-Mart Home Office.



Pickering said, "Via the Task Force, we think our industry has an opportunity to work together to provide other solutions. Is there an appetite to look at other projects?"

Endres said, "The committee needs input from member companies and individual experts who wish to take part in finding winning solutions to this major waste stream problem." The mission of the group is to provide a solution to keep polycarbonate swarf out of landfills in the U.S. The group is looking for participation from lens, equipment and consumable suppliers as well as labs and recyclers, while its goals are "to provide a reliable, profitable or cost-neutral and sustainable solution."

Companies with expertise in polycarbonate lens processing, lens production, chemistry, waste stream handling or related knowledge, are encouraged to contact Endres at [jendres@thevisioncouncil.org](mailto:jendres@thevisioncouncil.org) for more information and get involved. Volunteers are asked to commit to two to three in-person meetings and several web-based meetings throughout the year. The group will have its next formal meeting at Vision Expo West in the fall. ■

[akarp@jobson.com](mailto:akarp@jobson.com)

