

The Certified Most Sustainable Conference Talk: Greenwashing 101

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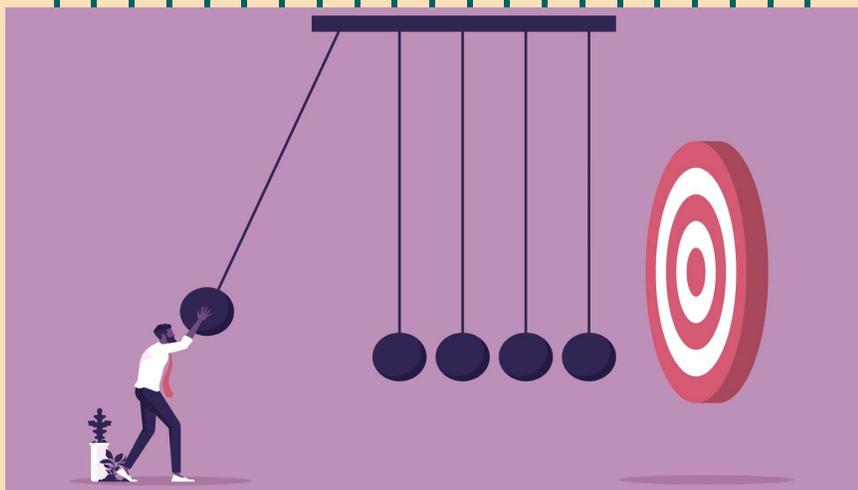


UNIVERSITY OF
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International Institute for
Sustainable Laboratories

Learning Objectives



- Gain a deeper understanding of Greenwashing within scientific supply chains
- Identify Greenwashing red flags, techniques to identify Greenwashing, and common examples
- Understand the current assets and limitations of procurement data to help identify Greenwashing
- Discover actions you can take to combat Greenwashing

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What is Greenwashing?

Greenwashing- the act or practice of making a product, policy, activity, etc. appear to be more environmentally friendly or less environmentally damaging than it really is



Methods and Tactics of Greenwashing

- Claiming to be on track to reduce emissions to net zero when no credible plan is in place
- Being purposely vague or non-specific about operations or materials used
- Applying intentionally misleading labels such as “green” or “eco-friendly,” which do not have standard definitions and can be easily misinterpreted
- Implying that a minor improvement has a major impact or promoting a product that meets the minimum regulatory requirements as if it is significantly better than the standard



Methods and Tactics of Greenwashing

- Emphasizing a single environmental attribute while ignoring other impacts
- Claiming to avoid illegal or non-standard practices that are irrelevant to a product
- Communicating the sustainability attributes of a product in isolation of brand activities (and vice versa)



“Even among consumers considered expert consumers, well informed about greenwashing and the market in question, it is a challenge to identify greenwashing.”



Netto et al., 2020

Why Do Companies Greenwash?



- Easy opportunity for profits
- Lack of regulations



Liu et al., 2023. Why greenwashing occurs and what happens afterwards?...



Cislak et al., 2021. Words not deeds...

Compostable

- Marketers who claim a product is compostable need competent and reliable scientific evidence that all materials in the product or package will break down into — or become part of — usable compost safely and in about the same time as the materials with which it is composted.
- Marketers should qualify compostable claims if the product can't be composted at home safely or in a timely way. Marketers also should qualify a claim that a product can be composted in a municipal or institutional facility if the facilities aren't available to a substantial majority of consumers.

Degradable

- Marketers may make an unqualified degradable claim only if they can prove that the “entire product or package will completely break down and return to nature within a reasonably short period of time after customary disposal.” The “reasonably short period of time” for complete decomposition of solid waste products? One year.
 - Items destined for landfills, incinerators, or recycling facilities will not degrade within a year, so unqualified biodegradable claims for them shouldn't be made.

Free-of

- Marketers can make a free-of claim for a product that contains some amount of a substance if:
 1. the product doesn't have more than trace amounts or background levels of the substance;
 2. the amount of substance present doesn't cause harm that consumers typically associate with the substance; and
 3. the substance wasn't added to the product intentionally
- It would be deceptive to claim that a product is “free-of” a substance if it is free of one substance but includes another that poses a similar environmental risk.

The Federal Trade Commission

- Green Guides are designed to help marketers avoid making environmental claims that mislead consumers
- The Green Guides were first issued in 1992 and revised last in 2012. The 2024 update has not yet occurred

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Words and Phrases to Watch Out For



- Green
- Biodegradable
- Sustainable
- Eco-friendly
- All natural
- Recyclable
- Assembled in the US
- Designed in the US

Tools to Help Identify Greenwashing

- Utilize procurement systems
- Scrutinize product end of life
- Observe marketing tactics
- Review the company as a whole



Procurement Systems

- **How they help**
 - Auto populate with manufacturer data
 - Can be filtered
 - Provides “clues”
 - Must understand how to interpret certifications and designations
- **How they are limited**
 - Vary from institution to institution
 - Sometimes lack clear information about manufacturing origin
 - Use terms which lack meaning (ex. biodegradable)



SUPPLIER DESIGNATION

- SMALL BUSINESS
- MINORITY OWNED BUSINESS
- SMALL DISADVANTAGED BUSINESS
- UGA CONTRACT VENDOR
- FREE SHIPPING
- WOMAN OWNED BUSINESS
- HUBZONE CERTIFIED
- DISADVANTAGED BUSINESS
- ACT MY GREEN LAB CERTIFIED
- VETERAN BUSINESS

Understanding Designations

- Is it assigned or paid for by the company?
- Does it reflect the sustainability of product?
- Are terms and criteria defined in procurement system?

Product Details

Brand

Acceptable Quality

Anti-Static **Anti-Static**

Color **Blue**

Silicone-Free **Silicone-Free**

Standards

Cat III: 2777; Declaration 5:2016; EU Declaration

Latex-Free **Latex-Free**

Powdered/Powder

Palm Thickness **4 mm**

Cuff Style **Beaded**

Cuff Thickness **4 mm**

Manufacturer Part

Finger Thickness **4 mm**

Accelerator-Free **Accelerator-Free**

Disposable Glove T

Product Description

Nitrile gloves provide a good balance of protection and dexterity.

Compliance & Restrictions



Environmentally Preferable Product - This item has been designated by the manufacturer as an environmentally preferable product (EPP) because this item has one or more environmentally preferable attributes.

Environmentally Preferable Attribute: These biodegradable powder-free nitrile gloves have been assessed to standard test methods ASTM D5511-18 and ASTM D5526-12.

ons

le Product - This item
he manufacturer as an
le product (EPP)
e or more
e attributes.

le Attribute: These
ee nitrile gloves have
rd test methods ASTM
26-12.



Disposable Gloves:
L (9), 4 mil,
Nitrile, Grain, 1.5

of 100

Add to Cart



Top

Certification Considerations

- Is it internationally recognized?
- Does it make sense for the product/service?
- What aspects of sustainability does it address?
- Is it a company-wide, factory or product certification?
- Are basic criteria required in order to receive certification?



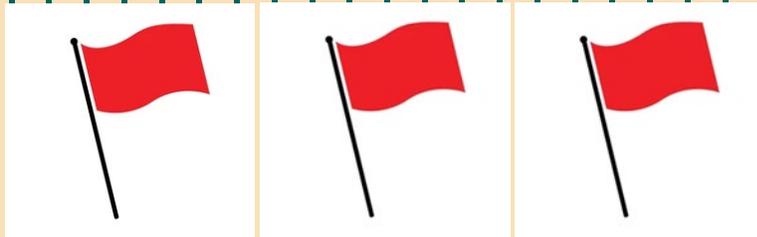
SA8000



ACT.
The Environmental
Impact Factor Label

Product End of Life





Marketing Strategies and Sales Mentality

- Watch out for red flags
- Sales representatives should have the information available and/or will be happy to provide information requested

Look at the company as a whole





What can I do now?



- Ask vendors and manufacturers the hard questions and **demand better**
- **Be a detective** and look for flashy words that are left undefined, what certifications a company or product has, how a product is disposed of, and the company's practices as a whole
- **Expand your view** and consider the whole lifecycle of a product
- **Vote with your dollars**/purchasing power
- **Share** your knowledge. Join the Lab Materials Management Working Group!

Questions?



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