



Follow the Awareness Path

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When it comes to "Green/Sustainable," it is like that old commercial: "You can pay me now ... or pay me later." The inference was that if you bought a Fram filter, you wouldn't have to pay the mechanic later to fix engine damage. This concept works in our "greening" industry, too. We can look at it globally with our environment. If we don't change our perspective and our habits, we can really have a mammoth problem with climate change and pollution.

I am not into fear mongering. Fear shuts down the brain and causes us to be reactive. I prefer being proactive. I think that if we start on the awareness path, any change in our behaviors will help. First, we need to see that change is necessary. Our customers are beginning to see that, but they often don't have the more rounded picture. Education is the key. It works for us in manufacturing and retail, as well.

There has been a lot of talk in our industry lately about where we have to be. Well, you know that "where" can seem impossible to achieve if the small steps on the path are not made clear, or if the bar seems to be set too high. We would see the blazing sign in the distance that says "GREEN GOAL", but getting there may seem too hard if the path of small achievable steps is not clear.

Many will simply not try if the goal appears too difficult. What have we accomplished if people give up? Who likes to be told that they have to do things this way and it is the only way? Not me! It puts my hackles up! Customers feel the same way I do! But having multiple paths laid out where we can find our own way to that goal gives us the feeling that we have some choices on the way.

Take heart, and a deep calming breath. Green is achievable. This can be done with recycling everything you can, changing your light bulbs to energy saving ones, and putting in weather stripping around your doors and windows.

Green is also in the quality of goods we offer. If consumers fill their homes with well-made furniture that is built to last several generations, they are using less of earth's resources (trees, fabric etc.) than if they purchase "bargains" that are designed and built to be replaced in less than five years. Because of the need to replace those "planned obsolescence" pieces, more and more trees and other resources will be used. When I hear the cry, "Woodsmen, woodsmen. Don't cut down that tree!", I think that if we all bought smarter, there would be less of that cutting. It is the same for all of our waste.

Okay, back to the small steps. The first step is education. That is a major move on the path. All we can do is make the changes that are reasonable to us at this time and start the forward momentum on that path.

The next part is bringing the consumer with us. Granted, sometimes they are ahead of us and sometimes beside us, but they are our partners in this journey. I believe in having educational materials in my store and running classes on the topic. I have even made an education DVD to play in my store to promote understanding green and dialog between my customers and sales personnel. It is working great! Lao Tzu, the Chinese philosopher, said it best: "The journey of a thousand miles begins with one step." **HFB**