



Going, Going Green

Helping customers make green choices is a never-ending pursuit at Waldeck's Office Supplies

GREEN GOES MAINSTREAM
Clifford Waldeck has been active with several environmental boards and commissions, and his office supply store is stocked with products from United's Green catalog.

**GREEN
TODAY,
GREENER
TOMORROW**

While many resellers are still trying to figure out how to go green, Clifford Waldeck is already worrying about what the next generation of green will look like. "Figuring out what that next generation of green product is going to be is kind of a delicious challenge," he says.

Waldeck's Office Supplies has been serving customers since the 1950s and currently has a retail store in the heart of downtown San Francisco. Both online and walk-in customers can't help but notice the company's environmental orientation. "Being able to show customers how they can use products and purchase more efficiently is a strong marketing tool," he says.

"Saving money by going green is the strongest message out there right now," says Waldeck, and one that is entirely appropriate in today's uncertain economy. Two-sided copying and rechargeable batteries are just two of the approaches that business customers can adopt that both save money and support a green position.

Walking the Walk

Waldeck first started selling and promoting green products about five years ago; his efforts in that regard followed his own personal green commitment. He had served on environmental boards and commissions and reached the point where he wanted to practice what he preached. At that time there weren't as many green products in the market as there are today, and identifying what was available and assembling a green offering was both fun and challenging.

"There was recycled content on products back then, but there really wasn't any uniform marketing plan in place," explains Waldeck. "Now with United's Green catalog and green kits, we have the tools." He has passed out green kits to customers and received orders back on a number of items included in the kit. "These materials not only help customers go green, but they enable dealers to become green leaders in their communities," he adds.

To help reduce greenhouse gas emissions, Waldeck's encourages consumers to shop green and shop local. Buying local is also part of being green and is an approach that needs to be raised with customers whenever possible. "There have always been folks that wanted to buy local. Now it has become an altruistic topic to talk about," says Waldeck. Being locally owned and operated has become desirable again.

"Being green is about being a community leader and greening your community," says Waldeck. He encourages resellers to get more involved in their local environmental community. "I joined a group called The Business Council on Climate Change (bc3sfbay.org). Not only does it help me stay on the cutting edge of the green movement, it continues to be a great source for new customers for Waldeck's." Many dealers



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—Clifford Waldeck,
Waldeck's Office Supplies

today don't have retail locations, but they can still reach out to their communities by offering recycling services and limiting the amount of time their trucks are on the road making deliveries.

To reduce its own carbon footprint, Waldeck's makes neighborhood deliveries using a hand truck. The retail store is merchandised based on products found in United's Green catalog—top recycled items include ring binders, sheet protectors, and paper clips. Customers can take advantage of free in-store recycling of cell phones, batteries, and inkjet and laser cartridges, and they receive a compact fluorescent bulb with every in-store purchase.

Office Supplies Become Cool

"The economy we're in today is all about building relationships," continues Waldeck. "The local office supply dealer can help build relationships with customers and others in the community." The big box stores can't do that as effectively, if they can do it at all. "This is really our opportunity to be proud of what the office products industry is doing," he says. "It is now kind of cool to be selling office supplies."

That coolness extends beyond recycled products and energy-saving products to include products that make the office a more comfortable and pleasant place to work. "You spend almost one-third of your life in the office, so it should be a comfortable and fun experience," says Waldeck. He gets as excited about the latest ergonomic accessories as he does about products with high recycled content. "The more comfortable the office can be, the more productive workers can be, and the more fun there can be in the office."

"What is exciting for me is figuring out what the next-generation office supply store is going to look like," he says. He envisions a community-based business with a combination of recycled products, energy-saving products, and ergonomic products.

Toward the end of June, Waldeck's had an in-store event that emphasized recycled products. The company sent

out 2,700 e-mail invitations, which produced better attendance than he anticipated. There was a constant stream of traffic in the store during the three-and-a-half-hour show.

Visitors were able to meet with manufacturers' reps to learn about a variety of green products. The reps are a great resource and they are happy to come out for such events, says Waldeck. "It is a wonderful way to differentiate your business and put your efforts on an equal footing with the big box stores."

The show featured only green products, but wasn't billed as a green event. While there still might be some customers who don't accept the necessity of green approaches, Waldeck isn't deterred. "I want to make green the mainstream," he says. **O|L**