

Development of a Sustainability Minded Marketing Plan

Includes:

Final Report

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CHARLOTTE™ PRODUCTS LTD.

Trent Community-Based Research Project #6100: Development of A Sustainability-Minded Marketing Plan

Created for: Charlotte Products Ltd.

Researcher: Will Hoben

April 2024

*Creating safe, healthy spaces
for future generations*



Trent Community
Research Centre

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Executive Summary

The following report will canvas the objectives, methodology, key challenges, and recommendations for the Trent Community Research Project #6100: Development of a Sustainability-Minded Marketing Plan. The project timeline began in September 2023 and concluded in April 2024 and was designed to help Charlotte Products promote sustainability as a key aspect of its marketing mix. The methodology for this project included a literature review, an analysis of the sustainability marketing strategies of key competitors, and an internal as well as an external survey. This research recommends that Charlotte Products continue to engage in key partnerships to facilitate sustainability, bolster its webpage and communication channels, and ensure sustainability is incorporated in all areas of the organization. The next steps of this research will also be identified following these recommendations.

Research Questions

This project was guided by two principal research objectives as highlighted within the project agreement and will aim to be addressed within this paper. These research questions are as follows:

1. How do Charlotte's environmental initiatives, sustainability strategy, and marketing compare to those of Charlotte Products' Competitors in the Commercial Cleaning Industry?
2. How can Charlotte's environmental initiatives and corporate sustainability strategy be incorporated into a marketing plan?

Methodology

Literature Review

This research will seek to address instances of applied marketing in a business-to-business context with an emphasis on establishing best practices for sustainability marketing in the industry. The objective of this research is to build upon the idea of sustainability and marketing as an ethical and practical method of promotion (Lim, 2015). A key area of Lim's paper that this research will expand on is moving beyond marketing theory and into the applied practice of sustainability marketing (Lim, 2015). The next paper analysis for this literature review focused on the positive responses towards sustainability marketing, the main positive responses were "positive attitudes towards brands, willingness to pay a premium price, and positive word-of-mouth intentions" (Fatemi et al., 2023). Critically negative responses were found to be possible as well, these included "perceived greenwashing, negative brand evaluations and resistance to sustainable products with unknown third-party labels." (Fatemi et al., 2023). This research will consider the effects of sustainability marketing not just as a function of "factual and descriptive" promotion but instead as a method of influencing sustainable behaviour (Villarino & Font, 2015).

External Analysis

Spartan Chemical

Sustainability is not readily apparent in the messaging of Spartan Chemical’s social media. However, Spartan Chemicals’ website holds the most information available as to what Spartan Chemical is doing in terms of sustainability. Pictured to the right is one of two of Spartan Chemicals’ sustainability web pages found on their website. Spartan Chemical relies on third-party certifications as a central method of communicating the sustainability of the organization. Each product page contains the specific certification that the product has achieved which is a strong method for quickly communicating the verifiable sustainability of the organization. The common certification Spartan Chemical has is EPA Safer Choice, USDA Biobased Product certification and a few products have obtained a Green Seal Certified Product status. The strongest aspect of Spartan Chemicals’ sustainability marketing is a direct link on the sustainability webpage to a “Sustainability Brochure”. The Spartan Chemical “Sustainability Brochure” features key sustainable products for specific usages with the footer of each page of the report providing key sustainability insights, this foot is pictured as the last photo for reference.

FEATURED PRODUCTS

In the six categories of our Spartan Sustainable Products, we offer many environmentally preferable options that enable you to clean for health. Contrary to the myths of the past, these products work just as well as traditional cleaning products. Using sustainable products is not more expensive than a traditional cleaning program either, that is just another misconception. Keeping facilities clean without negatively affecting the health of its occupants and custodial staff is the primary goal of a “green” or sustainable program.

General Housekeeping

Spartan offers a variety of janitorial chemicals that are formulated from the ground up to be environmentally preferable, yet feature the performance and attributes of their non-environmentally preferred counterparts. You don't have to compromise when going green with one of these Spartan products.

Clean by Peroxy® FloorFront® BioRenewables® Glass Cleaner BioRenewables® Restroom Cleaner



BIORENEWABLES®



BioRenewables® Glass Cleaner pH 8.0-9.0

This versatile and easy-to-use product contains 84% bio-based material. It removes tough soils such as grease, smoke, oils, tape residue, food stains, dust and dirt from window glass and sills, mirrors, countertops, chrome, fluorescent lights and tubing, and any other glass or mirror finish.



BioRenewables® Glass Cleaner RTU pH 7.5-8.5

A convenient, ready-to-use version of BioRenewables Glass Cleaner. Ideal for work environments where dispensers are not readily available or an RTU product is desired.



BioRenewables® Restroom Cleaner pH 1.5-2.5

A citric acid-based, toilet, urinal and shower room cleaner/deodorizer that contains 83% bio-based material. It removes soap scum, water spots, light rust, and is safe to use in urinals, shower rooms, and other similar hard, non-porous restroom surfaces.



BioRenewables® Industrial Degreaser pH N/A

Formulated with soybean oil technology and boosted with d-Limonene, it contains 57% bio-based material. Removes grease, dirt, cosmoline, tar, many inks, most adhesives, and industrial oils. Safe to use on ferrous and non-ferrous metal, concrete, and ceramic.



BioRenewables® Waterless & Waterless Plus Hand Cleaners pH 7.0-8.0

These hand cleaners are made with a soybean-solvent base to remove heavy-duty soils safely and easily. Produced with 80% bio-based material, they also contain a unique blend of surfactants to emulsify soils. Waterless Plus has pumice to life away ground-in grime.



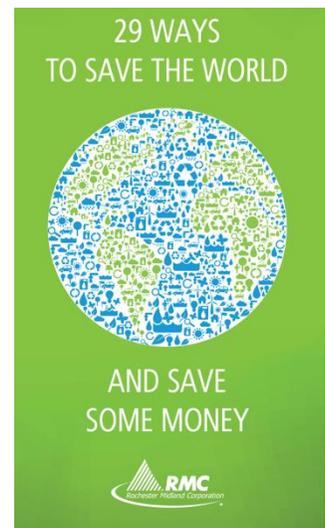
SPARTAN SUSTAINABILITY INITIATIVES

ENERGY USE & GREENHOUSE GAS (GHG) EMISSIONS

- > 25% reduction in energy usage
- > 20% reduction in annual Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Emissions:
 - GHG emissions of 144 passenger cars
 - CO² emissions of 1753 barrels of oil
 - Annual energy usage of 91.5 homes
- 18-21% reduction in the GHG Emissions embedded in each gallon of product
- 54% reduction in vending machine energy usage

Rochester Midland Corporation (RMC)

A strength of Rochester Midlands' sustainability profile is the webpage that the organization uses. Each section of Rochester Midlands website has elements of sustainability woven into the information creating a consistent and cohesive sustainability message. The website landing page states clear values of sustainability with the strength of the organization's website being the dedicated sustainability webpage. The main strength of RMC's sustainability webpage is its engaging and interactive slideshow that highlights important sustainable benefits the organization has had on its end users as well as some results of RMC's water and energy consumption testing. Additionally, RMC uses key partnerships and certifications as a way to reduce "greenwashing" with a notable partnership being "Green 2 Sustainable" a sustainability consultant which RMC has contracted to provide insight into sustainability (Green2Sustainable, n.d.). Additionally, the home office building of Rochester Midland is LEED certification which is a certification that verifies the building as a "Green Building" (RMC, n.d.). Rochester Midland has also published a small document available for download which highlights ways in which user organizations can help contribute to sustainable development pictured to the right (RMC, n.d.) Another aspect of Rochester Midland's marketing mix is the use of social media, with LinkedIn being the primary stream used. Posting on LinkedIn is consistent and highlights new products, events, and notable community involvement such as the sponsoring of animal research as a way to address the social responsibility of the organization.



Dustbane

The sustainability marketing of Dustbane is the third external organization analyzed to benchmark which elements of sustainability marketing are being used within the industry currently. Dustbane provides consistent posting across two main social media channels (Instagram and LinkedIn) emphasizing sustainability across almost every post. The use of easily understood design and visual aids helps illustrate the sustainability story of Dustbane including their current initiatives and impacts. Examples of Dustbanes ability to illustrate its sustainability in captivating ways include a running header which states how many trees the company has planted, a graphic that summarizes Dustbanes sustainability impacts and an introductory video which highlights Dustbanes sustainability story.

Celebrating 4 Years of Giving Meaning To Your Cleaning™
 Together we have made a difference!

- 🌳 629,942+ Trees Planted
- 🍲 3,037 Meals Provided
- 👜 3,650 Hope and Snack Bags Created
- ❤️ 54,000 Litres of Chemicals Donated
- ♻️ 94 Million+ Plastic Jugs Diverted from Landfills

We are proud of the progress we've made so far and look forward to continuing this journey with you!

The social media footprint of Dustbane was characterized by consistent posting across a variety of channels (LinkedIn and Instagram) and offering engaging posts that are representative of the brand’s core value of sustainability. Examples of these featured posts include the weekly occurring “Give Meaning To Your Cleaning Wednesdays” and the “12 Days of Sustainability,” an event in which during each of the 12 days Dustbane pledges to plant 1,000 trees (Dustbane Products Ltd., 2023).

655,954 Trees Planted!

DUSTBANE | Chemicals ▾ | SDS | Equipment ▾ | Resources & Downloads ▾ | Sustainability | Contact ▾

DUSTBANE | Since 1908

Dustbane Products Ltd.
 4,259 followers
 3mo · 🌐

+ Follow ✕

As we conclude our 12 Days of Sustainability series, it's a moment to celebrate not just our recent achievements but also to honor the legacy of 115 years that has shaped Dustbane.

Founded by Chester Pickering, our commitment goes beyond providing products; it's about doing what's right for society. On this final day, we proudly spotlight our initiative, "Give Meaning To Your Cleaning," by recapping our achievements to this day:

- 🌳 604,000+ Trees Planted (and counting!).
- 🍲 3,037 Meals Provided
- 👜 3,650 Hope and Snack Bags Created
- 🌿 54,000 Liters Of Chemicals Donated

[See translation](#)

👍👍👍 12 | 2 comments · 1 repost

👍 Like | 💬 Comment | ➦ Share

Internal and External Surveying

Internal Survey

This survey was distributed to all members of the Charlotte Products team to engage feedback on the internal perception of sustainability within Charlotte Products. It was critical to understand the current culture and awareness of Charlotte Products' sustainability profile internally before addressing external perceptions. Key themes of this internal survey were the deepened organizational understanding of key sustainability initiatives specifically the local ethanol sourcing and local bottle production (94% & 88%). Additionally, the perception of Charlotte's overall commitment to sustainability was perceived to be generally positive (53% of respondents believe Charlotte is **very** committed to sustainability). Overall internal awareness and perception of sustainability was generally positive and internal team members were able to identify areas for improvement. These areas for improvement can be utilized going forward as both practical solutions to becoming a more sustainable organization as well as creating key examples for marketing material of how Charlotte is making tangible steps in the direction of sustainability. With the internal culture identifying Charlotte as an organization that is a champion of sustainability with clear sustainability initiatives, going forward emphasis will be placed on translating these internal perceptions to those who are external to the organization.

External Survey

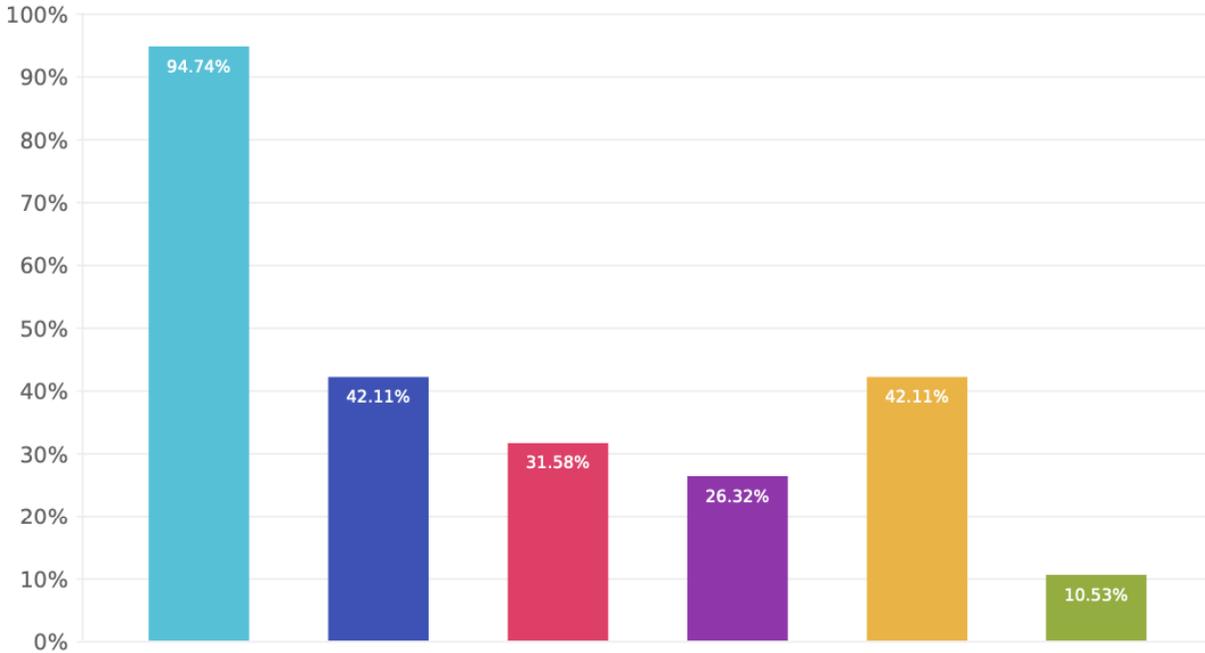
The objective of the external survey was to gauge the perceptions and awareness of Charlotte Products as a leader in sustainability with an emphasis on how effectively Charlotte is currently communicating these initiatives. The survey was distributed to four distinct target groups of Canadian contacts and prospects as well as US contacts and prospects. The response rate across these four different groups was not ideal with the highest number of responses coming from the Canadian contacts (20 total responses). As one Charlotte team member explained, the Canadian contacts are often the most engaged group in terms of email communication and consequently are more likely to participate in a survey distributed via email.

Key takeaways from the external survey dictate a prevailing theme that organizations and people who are familiar enough with Charlotte to participate in a survey from the organization are also knowledgeable about the number of sustainability initiatives and messaging Charlotte engages in. Emphasis was placed on recyclable packaging and local manufacturing/ material sourcing as important elements of selecting cleaning products among the survey respondents. Additionally, a large number of the respondents identified that they learned of Charlotte's sustainability initiatives from the sales team (95% of respondents) product label (42%) and website (42%). These findings direct attention toward the need to provide a comprehensive sustainability webpage and ensure product labels are congruent with the Charlotte brand.

Q7

Where do you engage with Charlotte Products sustainability efforts? Please select all that apply.

Answered: 19 Skipped: 1



- Sales team
- Product label
- Social media
- Newsletter
- Website
- Other (please specify):

Recommendations

1. Continuing to Pursue and Engage Key Partnerships and Certifications

Partnerships and third-party certifications are important elements of combatting greenwashing and also provide a level of validity beyond just the specific marketing of Charlotte Products. While some certifications are not justifiable given their lack of recognition, high price or other factors targeting key partnerships and third-party accreditation bolsters both credibility and reputation. A common third-party certificate Rochester Midland Corporation possesses is a LEED-compliant building, while Dustbane emphasizes the ability of its products to help meet the LEED requirements for green cleaning. Potential certifications such as the benefit corporation certification carry a large network and are widely recognized by the greater public which provides a large amount of utility and trust if that certification could be obtained. Additionally continuing to engage in partnerships with organizations such as GreenUp and Green Economy Peterborough/Canada will provide immense credibility in the realm of sustainability. A potential initiative that GreenUp could help facilitate would be to provide insight to its members on “green cleaning” solutions and strategies in conjunction with Charlotte Products.

2. Develop a Dedicated Sustainability Webpage

The need for a dedicated sustainability webpage has been recognized and acknowledged during this research. The benefit of a dedicated webpage for organizations’ sustainability commitments and initiatives has been revealed as an industry best practice through external analysis. A dedicated sustainability webpage provides a standing source to engage with and provide deeper insight into the sustainability initiatives of Charlotte Products. This webpage should contain key sustainability initiatives, such as Charlotte Products’ full sustainability story, certifications and awards received for sustainability, different forms of media such as YouTube videos that focus on sustainability aspects of Charlotte Products, specific sustainable products, customer tips and tricks to help the end user be more sustainable and a feedback option. Content like this is already available on the Charlotte website but condensing this information into one webpage in a compelling manner will reflect a greater level of commitment. Eliciting feedback from customers as well on this page can yield potential subject matter expert advice from people within the industry and familiar with Charlotte Products. The sustainability webpage can also include

references to Charlotte Cares community activities as well as mention of the volunteer work that Charlotte Products supports.

3. Increase the Frequency of Sustainability Across All Channels

At every “touchpoint” and impression someone has with Charlotte an element of sustainability should be present. According to Red Crow Marketing Inc. a potential client needs to view something up to ten times before it becomes memorable (Redcrowmarketing, 2021). Following this knowledge to boost the sustainability profile of Charlotte Products, sustainability should be interwoven into all areas of promotional and informational material when appropriate. An example of increasing the “touchpoints” of sustainability would include the graphic of the benefits that Charlotte brings to their partnerships pictured below.

THE VALUE WE BRING TO OUR PARTNERSHIPS



Create synergy combining strategic perspective of trends in our industry and actionable solutions.



World class, award winning cleaning products and programs supported by proper processes and validation to support all market segments



Leaders in surface cleaning including seasoned professionals with an intimate knowledge of distributor and end user needs and simplified knowledge transfer

Currently, the graphic does not have any mention of sustainability, altering this slightly to include a mention of sustainability as a benefit of Charlotte Products will help to project a more cohesive image consistent with the desire to be perceived as a leader in sustainability. Additionally, one of the identified areas that customers engaged with and learned of sustainability efforts from was the product label of the products they were using by placing some signifier of the sustainability benefit of Charlotte Products is another way to add a new “touchpoint” whether it be adding more certifications or a small informational sentence identifying that the bottle being used was blow molded on site. This is a tangible example of how providing organic points of contact for the end user and the sustainability brand of Charlotte Products can help to increase the overall profile of Charlotte Products as a sustainability leader. It is noted that, based-on findings of the external survey from the Canadian contacts, a large portion of communication occurs with the sales team and based on the awareness and perception of Charlotte as a sustainable organization, sustainability is being communicated effectively. To bolster this perception ensuring all communication has some reference to sustainability whether it be a social or environmental initiative will be beneficial.

4. Provide Transparency to Avoid “Greenwashing”

One of the key negative responses to sustainability marketing is the perception that the material being presented is disingenuous and is subject to “greenwashing”. As a result, providing verifying information and data to claims that are made will help to dispel responses and perceptions of “greenwashing”. In the context of Charlotte, utilizing third-party certifications of the USDA Bio preferred program and implementing data yielded from the GHG audit in



Pioneering the Bioeconomy. Protecting the Planet

This badge signifies our long-term commitment to using renewable materials, reducing our reliance on petroleum, supporting the bioeconomy, and bettering the planet through innovation

Enviro-Solutions® Limited was one of the first 500 companies to earn the right to display the USDA Certified Biobased Product label on a certified product.

As the USDA BioPreferred® Program celebrates the 10th Anniversary of our certification and voluntary labeling initiative, they are recognizing Enviro-Solutions® as a BioPreferred Program Pioneer and showing their appreciation for businesses like ours that showed faith in their mission.

conjunction with Greenup and Green Economy Canada. This can also apply to self-reporting on key sustainability metrics from within Charlotte such as how bottles are blow moulded on site or highlighting the amount of locally sourced ethanol used to quantify claims and provide another layer of transparency. Social media posts can

be leveraged as well with content including what current areas of sustainability Charlotte is working towards improving or providing insight into how many blow moulded bottles have been created during the calendar year and what benefit that provides.

Difficulties

Notable key difficulties to the research included the lack of survey respondents and sample size as well as the lack of literature surrounding positive examples of marketing sustainability responsibly in the business-to-business context.

The lack of survey respondents for the external survey was apparent and could have an effect on future understanding and assumptions of the external perception of the Charlotte Products brand going forward. It is noted however that the category with the most respondents was that of the Canadian contacts who based on an anecdotal assessment tend to be those the most familiar and immersed with Charlotte Products initiatives and brand.

Summary

To conclude this report, to better position itself as a sustainability leader it is critical for Charlotte Products to increase the visibility of sustainability within its current marketing mix. The recommendations provided in the research have compared industry best practice against the current strategy for Charlotte Products. In order to exceed these industry benchmarks Charlotte Products must better articulate its sustainability story, pursue third party accreditation and partnerships, develop a sustainability webpage, increase the frequency of sustainability in all of its channels, and provide insight into its practices to suppress any notions of greenwashing.

Immediate steps should include the creation of the sustainability webpage before beginning to increase mentions of sustainability in other areas of the business. When sustainability is mentioned more frequently it will be critical to have a standing webpage dedicated to the initiatives and actions of Charlotte Products for people to engage with. Performing an internal audit of all marketing and promotional material that is used to ensure that it is aligned with the sustainability messaging that Charlotte Products is targeting.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Internal Survey Questions and Results

Internal Survey Questions

Internal Sustainability Survey

Please take a few minutes to complete the short survey below. We want to learn more about what sustainability means to you, and to get your feedback on what Charlotte is doing to support this important initiative.

Sustainability: supports a long-term goal where society is able to exist and develop without depleting all of the natural resources needed to live in the future.

1. Are you aware of any of Charlotte's Sustainability efforts? Y/N
 - a. Solar panel wall
 - b. Local bottle production
 - c. Local raw material sourcing (ethanol)
 - d. Lighting efficiency upgrades
 - e. Digital resources and paper reduction
 - f. Other:
2. How important is sustainability to you? 1-5 rank
3. How would you rank Charlotte's commitment to sustainability? 1-5 rank
4. Do you feel that Charlotte communicates our sustainability efforts sufficiently? Y/N
5. Rank the following 6 sustainability goals in order of importance:
 - a. Good Health & Wellbeing – Human Health & Wellness, Creating Safe, Healthy Spaces
 - b. Responsible Consumption & Production – Concentrates (ES72/64H/364)
 - c. Quality Education – Knowledge Transfer
 - d. Industry Innovation & Infrastructure – Local Sourcing and Blow Moulding
 - e. Partnerships for the Goals – Charlotte Cares and CAM Containers
 - f. Climate Action – Recycling, Energy, Water Consumption, etc.
6. Do you want to learn more about sustainability? Y/N
7. Do you have any recommendations on how we can further increase our sustainability efforts?

Internal Survey Results

- 94% of respondents know about our local ethanol sourcing; 88% know of our local bottle production

- 53% of respondents think Charlotte is very committed to sustainability; avg. rating is 4.41/5 (88%)
- 76% of respondents feel Charlotte communicates our sustainability efforts sufficiently
- 75% would like to learn more about sustainability
- 53% said that sustainability is very important to them personally; avg. rating is 4.12/5 (82%)

Appendix 2: External Survey Questions and Results



Charlotte Products
Sustainability

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