

# Arizona companies climb onto green bandwagon

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Inside Tucson Business

Cox Arizona wants to know what could be more earth friendly than a little blue Honda and Mercedes Benz Smart Car traveling around promoting energy efficiency.

The cable company toured the state with the cars during June to introduce its Green Initiative for 2007, a multistage plan to support a healthy environment by replacing all small to midsize vehicles in the company fleet with hybrid models, incorporating global positioning system devices in new vehicles to reduce fuel used on customer service calls and company-wide support for telecommuting, water and energy conservation.

Former Vice President Al Gore's Academy Award-winning documentary may have been called "An Inconvenient Truth," but for companies, large and small, the threat of global warming has made green a very popular color.

That's not just true for multinational companies, either. At the same time as Cox was promoting its greenness, Sun Lighting at 4545 E. Broadway was unveiling energy efficient credentials of its own.

Now a certified Energy Star distributor, the retailer is promoting its qualifications as a green energy store, with energy saving products and trained sales staff ready to assist anyone ready to embrace the technology. The company is even promoting its bulb buy-back program, where they offer store credit for all incandescent bulbs traded for compact fluorescent versions.

"We're selling a tremendous amount of green products right now," said President Danny Levkowitz. "We're not tree huggers by any means, but this is a national trend."

As people are discovering that the prices have come down from \$7 per bulb to as little as \$2, "the idea of more light and less power seems like a good idea."

And the bulbs last longer, he said.

"They have eight to 10 times the life in them, which means changing a bulb every three to five years, rather than every few months, something that makes this a better gig, all the way around," Levkowitz said.

It's more than dollars and cents to the customers, too, Levkowitz said.

"There's a whole movement trying to reduce greenhouse gasses and fossil fuel consumption," Levkowitz said. "We're trying to do our part."

For some companies, the green label



The Honda Fit car, along with special blue Smart Cars, are the latest additions to the Cox Communications fleet as the company joins a new trend toward green solutions. Viewing the car are (from left) Pam Meichel, director of human resources; Michael Dunne (behind wheel); Tim Cervantes, director of operations for Cochise County; Anne Doris, vice president of southern Arizona, and Holly Capps, vice president of Cox Media.

is a recent addition. University of Phoenix, which used to promote convenience as a feature of its online classes, now is promoting the environmentalism of its FlexNet program, which allows Masters of Business Administration students to take all except their first and last classes and read their textbooks using the Internet.

"They were the pioneers of this kind of education," said spokeswoman Jennifer Malleo. "People don't have to drive a half-hour to a campus to take a class."

The sudden emphasis on green, especially in home construction, has been problematic for Tucson's long-time green builders, John Wesley Miller and Ted Bednar.

Miller said he sees vindication of his efforts in the sudden surge in interest.

"I couldn't be happier with the attention," Miller said. "It's wonderful that everybody is thinking green."

Public concern about global warming has helped, he said, "but I think we've finally reached a critical mass, where all sorts of different interests are now coming together."

Bednar said the competition is making everyone better.

"Everyone tries to get up on everybody else," Bednar said. "If they're trying to do that with better efficiency, it benefits the consumer."

Yet, Bednar worries that calling everything green could dilute its meaning and lead to misunderstandings about what the public can expect in energy efficiency and concern for the environment.

"The term is getting polluted," he said.

Bednar said an example is the two levels of Energy Star certification.

"The second level is hardest to attain," Bednar said. Unless the public knows the difference, "They'll be disappointed."

Marketing fads come and go, said Melinda Burke, director of the Terry J. Lundgren Center for Retailing at the University of Arizona's John and Doris Nortop School of Family and Consumer Sciences.

"But this one could stay around awhile," she said. "With the issue of global warming front and center, concern about the environment isn't likely to go away, any time soon."

Major retailers, including Wal-Mart, have made green a priority, finding products and managing their business to leave less of an ecological footprint.

"That's an indication of how seriously they take this," she said.

As for how serious consumers are, Burke said that depends on whether they're willing to sacrifice.

"People want to feel they're having an impact and making a difference, but if we're really going to be serious about it, we're going to have to hurt a little bit," Burke said.

She highlights the "green tourism" now being featured at various resorts as an example.

"You pay more and you don't get to do everything you'd want to do," Burke said.

Traditionally, consumers aren't interested in paying more for less, "but this is an educational process. As they become more educated, they may be willing to make sacrifices."

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