

## Making Green a Go

Nicole Goldman believes environmentally conscious design materials shouldn't be so hard to find--or install.

By Jason Daley | [Entrepreneur Magazine - June 2010](#)

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If you watch any of the dozens of home-improvement shows on cable TV, you'd think that bamboo and cork floors, super-efficient water heaters, nontoxic carpets and paints are all the rage. When interior designer Nicole Goldman moved to Cape Cod in Massachusetts with her family and decided to do an eco-upgrade on their home, she didn't find it to be a walk in the park.

"I tried to do it as green as I knew how to make it a showcase for interior design," she says. "I wanted a solar roof, radiant heat, bamboo floors. But I had to go through someone in California to get the floors, and I had to beg my local contractor to put it in. It was like pulling teeth."

That experience was the genesis of ['g' Green Design Center](#) franchise, which Goldman launched in late 2008. The retail store/showroom features certified green flooring, cabinets, carpets, countertops and other products. After clients and 'g's' interior designer come up with a plan, the store orders the materials from its specialty manufacturers and finds a qualified contractor for installation.

"The idea is about making these hard-to-find materials accessible," Goldman says. "There's nothing more frustrating than finding a great carpet without off-gassing and not finding an installer to put it in."

'g' takes a royalty on all transactions from franchisees, and because the stores don't carry a warehouse of inventory, their footprints are just 1,500 to 2,000 square feet. Late last year, Goldman's first franchise opened in Norwell, Mass., and she says she's on track to open half a dozen more in 2010, with a 100-store rollout during the next seven years. We talked to her about what it takes to be the queen of green.

### Who are your franchisees?

We're interested in people looking to do something green but who don't know exactly what they want to do. This can be a really satisfying job--you're not just doing good, you're also living your green lifestyle. It's not like selling pizza.

### Are people willing to pay for green products?

Isn't it smart to be energy efficient and nontoxic? What's the downside there? I tell people we're not casting judgments because you're not green enough. You can start with one little piece. Light bulbs. Paint. Once you make these products available, it's amazing the ubiquity of people who come in. These products have a lot of mainstream interest.

### What about Home Depot's new green section?



To get green: Nicole Goldman of 'g' Green Design Center.  
Photo © David Lang

Our prices are competitive with similar high-quality products--not with the cheap junk some home-improvement stores sell. We don't sell the cheap bamboo from 2-to-3-year-old trees that are full of formaldehyde. We sell the harder 5-to-6-year-old bamboo. You get what you pay for. Are you going to be replacing mine in a couple of years? Not with a 25-year warranty.

**What are your plans for expansion?**

I'd like to move to a place where we have a regional distribution center for our franchises. I'm also working on a 'g' line of cabinets and cleaning products. My lofty goal is to eventually drive the cost of green materials down.