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Boston Business Journal

New businesses buzzing with green monikers

Boston Business Journal - by Jesse Noyes Journal staff
Friday, March 28, 2008

If you need proof that the eco-friendly trend has reached the business world, just take a look at the number of business that incorporated with the name "green" in the Bay State last year.

From "G" Green Design Center LLC to the World Green Business Association Inc., more than 75 companies formed in 2007 to capitalize on the growing fascination with all things green by tacking the word onto their brands, according to data from the Secretary of the Commonwealth's Corporations Division. That represents a nearly 178 percent increase over 2006, when only about 27 companies that incorporated with the title green.

The Business Journal took the raw number of companies incorporated in 2006 and 2007 that used the word green in their titles, and then narrowed both lists to businesses that were referencing an environmental concept rather than another use of "green," such as an owner's name.

The list of companies from last year extend across various industries -- from real estate to automotive, marketing to energy -- demonstrating that the marketing of environmentally friendly products and services is reaching all sectors of business in the state.

"There's no question that 2007 was the sort of the year of greening of the consumer marketplace," said Jennifer Ganshirt, managing partner of Winston-Salem, N.C.-based marketing firm Frank About Women, which conducted a study of consumer behavior around green businesses last year.

Many companies are trying to tap into public concern for the environment by attaching the buzzword green to their brand.

OM Realty adopted the name Boston Green Realty LLC last year when the owners became certified eco-brokers, said co-owner Suzanne DiMeco. "Part of our ambition is to place a dollar value on these green related features in the home."

Laura Briere, a vice president at Worcester-based Vista Consulting LLC, started the World Green Business Association, which provides marketing tools for companies looking to go green, last year. "We really wanted to encapsulate the hot buzzword," she said.

The term is alluring because it serves as a catch-all for various complex solutions to environmental problems, said Georges Dyer, partner at Greenland Enterprises LLC, a Boston-based consulting firm that incorporated last year and aids companies that want to adopt environmentally sound practices. "It's a good shorthand to capture" a wide swath of ecological concerns, he said.

But as businesses chase after the green, the term is in danger of becoming overused and watered-down, which is part of a trend experts call "greenwashing." "The word green, I think, will be overused in a year," said Jamie Tedford, CEO of Boston-based marketing firm Brand Networks Inc.

It was a concern for Nicole Goldman last year when she was opening "G" Green Design Center, a retail showroom for green building materials and accessories in Mashpee. "We did struggle with the name a little bit because there are so many things that are green, green, green," she said.

But Goldman said the name has been effective at pulling a number of eco-conscious consumers in. "As soon as we opened people were pouring in here," she said.

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