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ASPIRING MINDS ON SUSTAINABLE THINKING

GROCERY BUSINESS: Why did Kruger Products choose to partner with Earth Day Canada?

STEVEN: For Kruger, this comes at a good time. We launched Sustainability 2015 in 2010 and have been primarily focused on internal initiatives. Now we're looking to evolve our initiative into the next step with stakeholders including retailers and consumers. Our missions and core values are very aligned. Earth Day is only one day to most people. But Earth Day Canada (EDC) emphasizes practical environmental solutions that people can incorporate into their daily lives, which is exactly what we encourage through our EnviroCare products because they are everyday products.

When we partner with a non-profit, it's a long-term relationship. We're looking forward to making some positive and lasting changes with EDC in the next few years.

JED: We've been aware of Kruger Products and their Sustainability 2015 initiative for several years. Earth Day Canada's model has always been to partner with sector leaders and Kruger's commitment to lessening the environmental impact of their operations and product offerings is something that we were really impressed with.

GB: How does the consumer factor into these kinds of partnership decisions?

JED: For Earth Day Canada, Kruger Products' consumer reach offers us a tremendous opportunity to communicate environmental values and ethics to a very large audience.

STEVEN: If you ask consumers, they'll tell you they want to do the right thing but that they don't always know what that means so there is a gap between what people say and what they actually do. Working with EDC helps us frame our message in a way the consumer can really connect with through our EnviroCare brand.

GB: Will Kruger Products have retail programs set up in time for the 2012 Earth Day (April 22) and what types of activities will be included?

STEVEN: There isn't a lot of seasonality in our product category, but April has become, in large part because of EDC, a focal point in the retail calendar. It's an opportunity for retailers to highlight green products to their customers. We know consumers look for these kinds of products during April because we actually see a sales increase.

This year we're incorporating Earth Day messaging into some of the EnviroCare programs we're executing that will include online, in-store activation, sampling and couponing components.

GB: Can you speak to the collaboration between a manufacturer, like Kruger Products, and a non-profit, like Earth Day Canada, at the retail level?

STEVEN: We're excited about what EDC can share with us. Some of the projects we develop will manifest as collaborations with retailers because of the immediacy of connecting with consumers.

Most retailers have sustainability targets they are committed to, so working and knowledge-sharing with manufacturers, like Kruger Products, who are also trying to effect change, can have a profound influence for both sides. The best results will likely come from collaborative solutions.

GB: As leaders in your respective fields, what do you see as the next big thing or trend in helping consumers make responsible and informed purchasing decisions?

JED: Today's consumers are becoming more concerned with dubious environmental claims on product packaging and are demanding more clarity and transparency from manufacturers to ensure the environmental integrity of the product.

STEVEN: Kruger Products' solutions are centered on our product offering. Our EnviroCare products are Canada's first line of premium tissue and paper products made from 100 per cent recycled fibre, 88 per cent of which is post-consumer waste. But it's not just offering these products. We, as a market leader, have a responsibility to work with other players to effect change. The easy things have already been done. Getting to the next step, or even identifying what that next step is, is more challenging. The more we can collaborate and share ideas, the more effective the solutions will be.

GB: What other sorts of things does Kruger Products do to help consumers make informed purchasing decisions?

STEVEN: Kruger Products offers one of the largest portfolios of EcoLogo certified products. And we are the first Canadian tissue manufacturer to become Forest Stewardship Council® certified by Rainforest Alliance, which is clearly communicated on the EnviroCare packaging and on our website. To really make a difference, manufacturers and retailers need to communicate consistent information so consumers are confident about the choices they make.