

Survey: The Greener the Business, The Greener the Bottom Line

WASHINGTON, Jun. 06 /CSRwire/ - Three out of four small businesses responding to a recent survey reported that, unlike much of the economy, sales for green products and services actually increased over the course of the recent economic downturn. Among those businesses, the greener the company's practices, the higher their sales, according to a major new survey conducted by Green America (GA), EcoVentures International (EVI), and the Association for Enterprise Opportunity (AEO).

In a report presenting the survey findings, the three groups note that, over the past 10 years, the market for green products and services has expanded dramatically. For example, the green building market has increased by 1,700 percent while the conventional building market has contracted by 17 percent. The organic food market has increased by 238 percent in comparison to the non-organic food market's expansion of only 33 percent.

Conducted from late June through early August of 2012, the survey of 1,305 small businesses shows that:

- Of the respondents that reported gains during the recession, the more green the company was, the more likely it was to report increased sales. The survey segmented the 1,305 respondents into three groups based on the green attributes of their products and services and their level of adoption of specific actions intended to make more efficient use of water, energy and/or waste. The "deep green" segment in the survey (the 27 percent of business owners whose answers reflected the most intense embrace of "green") reported stronger performance compared to their "light green" peers (38 percent of respondents) on nearly every dimension tested. There also was a "medium green" segment accounting for 35 percent of surveyed businesses.

- Nearly six out of 10 (58 percent) small businesses said that they had been able to expand their products and services with green offerings during the recent economic downturn. Of this group, 84 percent said their investment in these new green products and services had been rewarded with increased sales.

Survey analyst Dr. Julie Cincotta, principal, CLA Organizational Solutions, LLC, said: "This survey shows that green business is not just about feeling good, it positively impacts an organization's bottom line. Green products and services are in growing demand by the American public. Small business operators agree that green practices and products can be the key to more sales and bigger profits."

Russ Gaskin, chief business officer, Green America, said: "In the three decades since Green America first started promoting sustainable practices in business, the market has clearly shifted dramatically. We believe that the market preference reported by the small businesses in this study is just the tipping point. Sustainability is clearly becoming a competitive imperative in business."

Lauren Frederic, program manager, EcoVentures International, said: “The market is clearly demonstrating its preference for sustainable business practices. This is evident by the rapid growth of industry green segments – from green cleaning to socially responsible investing, which are systematically seizing market share from the conventional economy.”

Tammy Halevy, senior vice president, New Initiatives, Association for Enterprise Opportunity, said: “This survey and report clearly demonstrate that adopting green practices provides even the smallest businesses an opportunity to grow. These insights into what green strategies and practices actually contribute to profitable growth will be invaluable to business owners, and also AEO’s growing network of members and partners that provide capital and advisory services across the country.”

OTHER KEY SURVEY FINDINGS

- Nearly four out of five (79 percent) of small business survey respondents strongly agreed that offering green products and services gave their businesses a competitive advantage.
- 75 percent of small businesses surveyed planned to expand their portfolio of green products and service offerings.

For the full survey results, visit biggreenopportunity.org.

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

The new findings are based on a survey conducted by Green America, EcoVentures International, and the Association for Enterprise Opportunity from late June through early August of 2012. The survey sample was self-selecting and comprised 1,305 small businesses with various levels of commitment to green practices, services and products. A number of institutions, including Intuit, eBay and non-profit community lenders, and service providers across the U.S., distributed the survey to their small business clients and customers.

ABOUT THE GROUPS

Green America is the nation’s leading green economy organization. Founded in 1982, Green America (formerly Co-op America) provides the economic strategies, organizing power and practical tools for businesses and individuals to solve today’s social and environmental problems. Green America’s Green Business Network helps small businesses adopt and benefit from their green practices through an assessment and certification program, discounted business services, and access to a national market of caring consumers. www.GreenAmerica.org

EcoVentures International helps small business harness the power of environmentally and socially responsible “green” practices to grow revenue, create jobs, and strengthen local economies. EVI deploys strategies that promote sustainable, market-based business development by working with citizens, businesses, community organizations, and industry stakeholders. eco-ventures.org

The Association for Enterprise Opportunity is the voice of microbusiness in the United States. For two decades, AEO and its more than 400-member organizations have helped millions of entrepreneurs

contribute to the economic growth of their communities and America. Its network includes a broad range of organizations that provide capital and services to assist underserved entrepreneurs in starting, stabilizing and expanding their businesses. AEO's One in Three Alliance is a national movement to create awareness that if one in three Main Street microbusinesses hired one additional employee, the country would reach full employment. www.aeoworks.org

EDITOR'S NOTE: A streaming audio replay of the news event will be available on the Web at biggreenopportunity.org as of 5 p.m. EDT on June 6, 2013.

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Green America

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