

Midas Touch Turning Products Green?

June 1, 2011

The move toward sustainable, eco-friendly products may be putting marketplace shelves in danger of the Midas touch—every product “touched” or placed on the shelves is turning to green, even if it hasn’t earned the right. [TerraChoice](#) released a study last fall—[The Sins of Greenwashing: Home and Family Addition](#)—stating 95 percent of all consumer products claiming to be green are committing at least one of the seven deadly “sins” of greenwashing: Sin of the Hidden Tradeoff, Sin of No Proof, Sin of Vagueness, Sin of Irrelevance, Sin of Lesser of Two Evils, Sin of Fibbing and Sin of Worshiping False Labels. Although, it did note 4.5 percent of the products are “sin-free”, compared to only 1 percent back in 2007. TerraChoice defines greenwashing as “the act of misleading consumers about the environmental practices of a company or the environmental benefits of a product or service.”

Since its 2009 Sins of Greewashing study, BPA-free claims have increased by 577 percent and phthalate-free claims are up by 2,550 percent since 2009. That’s a huge increase in BPA claims. The study also reported 73 percent more green products are on market shelves today than in 2009. The good news is manufacturers are jumping on the green bandwagon and seeking ways to be more eco-friendly. Problem is, how many of these companies are really *are* green and not just *claiming* green? It’s hard

to tell. What’s interesting is the study findings also indicated big-box retailers stock more green products with legit environmental certifications than smaller outlets that boast green.

As a retailer, how do you filter what products you stock on your shelves in regards to eco-friendly, green claims? Do you require third-party certifications? Also, do you get a lot of questions from shoppers regarding the legitimacy of product claims, or products you recommend over others that have a sustainable reputation?

If you have an interactive interface in your store that’s available to shoppers, think about making TerraChoice’s [Name That Sin!](#) available. It’s a game that helps them spot the greenwashing sins.