

Greenwashing and the two-faced going-green organization

[Business](#), [Organization](#)



Public relations in the twenty first century demand of organizations to show that they take their corporate social responsibilities seriously. Greenwashing, a term derived from whitewashing, refers to the fact that organizations are being untruthful in their claims to go green. In other words, companies that claim that their products and/or manufacturing processes will be environmentally friendly from now may be misleading the public by hiding large scale environmental malpractices (Whellams & MacDonald).

Thus, Tokar (1997) writes, “[T]he voices of greenwash would have us believe that ‘ responsible’ corporations are taking care of environmental problems for us...” (p. 109). In actual fact, such assertions about going green may be false. An organization may claim to have become environmentally friendly all the way in order to attract environmentally conscious consumers to its products and/or services. The fact that innumerable companies may be making false declarations about going green can be deduced from research on products labeled as environmentally friendly.

According to Walsh (2009), when an environmental marketing company, TerraChoice, set out to evaluate such claims in a retail store, “[t]he results were startling: of the 1, 018 products TerraChoice surveyed, all but one failed to live up fully to their green boasts. Words like nontoxic were used in meaninglessly vague ways... ” Organizations make the untruthful claim of going green all the way in order to attract customers and/or investors who are concerned about media reports on environmental degradation published around the world.

Szili & Rofe (2007) write about another instance of greenwashing. Port Adelaide in Australia is being redeveloped into a cosmopolitan center. As investors are invited to participate in its redevelopment, marketing materials make regular references to remediation of the environment. Yet, Szili & Rofe note that the new Port Adelaide would not be responsible for improving the environment at all (pp. 365-367). Indeed, it is just another false assertion to make money and build goodwill. All greenwashing efforts are geared to accomplish these purposes alone. References

Szili, G. , & Rofe, M. E. (2007, Sep). Greening Port Misery: Marketing the Green Face of Waterfront Redevelopment in Port Adelaide, South Australia. *Urban Policy and Research* 25(3): pp. 363-384. Tokar, B. (1997). *Earth for Sale: Reclaiming Ecology in the Age of Corporate Greenwash*. Cambridge, MA: South End Press. Walsh, B. (2009, Sep 28). Eco-Buyer Beware. *Time* 172(12). Retrieved Mar 23, 2009, from EBSCOHost database. Whellams, M. , & MacDonald, C. Greenwashing. *Business Ethics*. Retrieved Mar 23, 2009, from <http://www.businessethics.ca/greenwashing/>.