

THE PROBLEM

In today's ever evolving marketplace business are doing what they can to capitalize on the changing wants and needs of their consumers. An attribute that many consumers are now demanding is that the products be made in a more sustainable fashion. But when you are bombarded with claims of being more sustainable than the competition how can you make a conscious and informed decision?

This is the problem that the Sustainability Consortium is trying to address. They are working on a universal grading scale, similar to a nutrition information chart, by which consumers can compare different products.

This is necessary so that consumers can find their way through the green washing and determine if it is the "recyclable packaging" or the "low-carbon production" that make the product they choose more sustainable.

THE PROJECT

During the Spring Semester of 2012 I worked as an intern at the Sustainability Consortium's Fayetteville office in the University of Arkansas Research Center. I updated and edited the floating documents they have on different product categories ranging from beef to toilet tissue.

THE OUTCOME

The work I did and am continuing to do at the Sustainability Consortium is to keep the documents they constructed on the different product categories updated, formatted, and edited correctly. Since I am a business student and do not have a technical degree I was not working on the research and Life Cycle Analysis of the different product categories but rather helping organize and edit the information the researchers brought forward.

Major Consortium Members

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SUSTAINABILITY

The work that the Sustainability Consortium is doing helps bring all three systems of sustainability together.

They start by completing a Life Cycle Analysis on a product category that identifies the hot spots and describes the different environmental impacts throughout its production. All this information is crucial to fully understand the environmental system and how it is effected by the products' production.

Next they compose a document for the product category that highlights the hot spots and discusses how these might affect society. This document is made available to all members of the Sustainability Consortium. The availability of this information is a huge step in aligning the social systems with the environmental and economic systems.

The economic system is the system that the Sustainability Consortium has the least direct impact on. They do not provide economic differences on the different production means but rather outline them and provide the information needed to determine what the costs might be.