



## What is Environmental Responsibility?

Sustainability in the promotional products industry means making, sourcing and distributing promotional items in ways that reduce negative environmental and social impacts while supporting long-term economic success.

Environmental responsibility is a journey that requires continuous improvement rather than a fixed end point. It starts with small steps that lead to greater impact when everyone participates. Every effort contributes to a more sustainable future for businesses and the world we share.

## How Does It Affect Me?

Clients are increasingly aware of their social and environmental responsibilities – and they expect you to be fully versed in the subject as well. By embracing these expectations and delivering results, you have the opportunity to differentiate yourself from the competition.

Environmental responsibility is just smart business. Increasingly, your target audience wants assurances that products comply with environmental, social and product safety regulations and standards.

When regulations exist, compliance is required by law. It is vital that you communicate frankly with your promotional products clients to ensure that you select the right products for their specific applications.

The terms “green” or “eco-friendly” are difficult to define because they are subjective. Marketers use these terms to represent attributes of products, so the Federal Trade Commission stepped in to better define them by publishing the [Green Guides](#). The FTC works for consumers to prevent fraudulent, deceptive and unfair business practices and to provide information to help spot, stop and avoid them. The Green Guides aid marketers in presenting products in a way that protects consumers, clients and companies.

Visit [PPAI’s sustainability resources page](#) for best practices, guides and standards.

# How Can Distributors Demonstrate Expertise In Environmental Responsibility?

By asking your customer and your supplier the right questions, you can ensure that you have the right product for the right audience. You'll differentiate yourself from the competition by delivering memorable, engaging and sustainable solutions.

## Questions to ask yourself:

- What is the perceived value of the items I'm offering?
- Can I offer alternatives, even if more costly, that have better environmental or sustainability claims?
- Can my business truthfully claim or promote any environmental or sustainability credentials?
- What materials are recycled in my community?
- What materials are recycled in my customers' communities?
- Can I offer distribution programs that can increase use of the item by the recipient and reduce waste?
- Can I offer advice on what my customers can do with unused or obsolete materials?
- Do the promotions I'm suggesting include excessive waste?
- How far does the product travel from point of production, and am I prepared to offer an alternative manufacturer closer to point of use?

## Questions to ask your supplier partners:

- Does the product comply with regulatory requirements related to product safety, social responsibility and environmental sustainability?
- Have you conducted factory audits related to manufacturing, social responsibility and environmental sustainability?
- Can you provide documentation (Children's Product Certificate, environmental certifications, etc.)?
- Do you provide lab testing reports?
- What are your company's environmental responsibility and sustainability efforts? How are they articulated?
- Is the product compliant with the sustainability efforts of the customer?
- Do you have materials for buyers that explain your claims?
- Do you have a product buy-back policy or post-consumer materials reclamation program?



## Resources

### Aclymate ▶

Aclymate helps small-to-mid-sized businesses that need an all-in-one climate solution to measure, track, offset, reduce and report their emissions.

### amfori ▶

amfori offers assessment and remediation on environmental and social supply chain risks and impacts at the producer level.

### Aware ▶

Aware specializes in fiber traceability to help companies with compliance, liability and supply chain transparency.

### bluesign ▶

The bluesign system is designed to eliminate harmful substances right from the start of the manufacturing process and sets control standards for environmentally friendly and safe production.

### CarbonSuite ▶

CarbonSuite is carbon accounting software built for NetSuite that helps companies record, report and reduce environmental impact, all directly within the NetSuite ERP system.

### Circular Action Alliance ▶

Circular Action Alliance is a producer responsibility organization dedicated to implementing effective extended producer responsibility laws for paper and packaging. As a nonprofit, producer-led organization, CAA is committed to helping producers comply with EPR laws by providing compliance services, as well as working with governments, businesses and communities to reduce waste and recycle more.

### Debrand ▶

Debrand is dedicated to keeping textiles out of international landfills. By combining a tech-enabled sortation system with human-powered accuracy, Debrand provides options to get surplus inventory off suppliers' hands and onto its next life.

### Green Business Benchmark ▶

Green Business Benchmark provides a software-as-a-service platform for sustainability management, benchmarking and certification. The software evaluates and scores current practices, enabling organizations to prioritize improvements. Real-time scoring, dynamic certification badges and a public profile feature allow companies to share progress and accomplishments, enhancing transparency, credibility and workforce unity.

### NERC ▶

The Northeast Recycling Council is a multistate nonprofit organization that promotes sustainable materials management through research, hands-on projects, training and outreach on issues associated with source reduction, recycling, composting, environmentally preferable purchasing and decreasing the toxicity of the solid waste stream.

### Product Stewardship Institute ▶

The Product Stewardship Institute is a policy expert and consulting nonprofit shaping the emerging circular economy to ensure products are responsibly managed from design to end of life. PSI pioneered product stewardship in the United States and has led the movement for over two decades by convening diverse stakeholders to build extended producer responsibility policies, programs and laws.

### Whitney & Whitney Consulting Group ▶

Whitney & Whitney Consulting Group provides promo organizations with expert guidance for ESG reporting, CSR audits, product safety standards and import regulatory requirements.

Visit [PPAI's sustainability resources page](#) ▶ for more information, including definitions, best practices and links to guides, standards, solutions and more.