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Title: Cleaning Up Corporate Images

When a major corporation decides to tout its environmental friendliness, chances are it'll turn to A.J. Grant for help. As President of Environmental Communications Associates, Inc. (ECA), Grant may suggest the company sponsor an acid rain conference or ban Styrofoam cups in the lunchroom.

ECA, located in Boulder, Colo., offers environmental make-overs to companies seeking a kinder, gentler image. The agency assesses a client's environmental stance and designs programs to embrace it. Programs could be as simple as in-house recycling to sponsoring the cleanup of a toxic waste dump or polluted waterway.

Increasingly, Grant predicts people will insist on doing business with environmentally friendly companies. In fact, the more people use their purchasing power to voice environmental concerns, the better off our planet will be, she says.

'Consumers are now basing their purchases on their values,' she observes. 'As a result, corporations are being commanded to change for the first time in a long time.' According to ECA's brochure, planet Earth could be a corporation's 'most important new client.'

ECA, the country's only environmental marketing firm, already has its own impressive client list: *Fortune* magazine, the Humane Society of the United States and Good Housekeeping, among others. ECA staff is equally impressive. It included acclaimed professionals in environmental sciences, marketing, advertising and design.

'Corporate America is wide-eyed and willing' to curb damaging environmental policies, Grant contends. However, consumers can't expect miracles overnight. 'We're going into companies and realizing that for them to implement a program is a major policy change and at the rate that corporate America moves – it's slow. As consumers, we have to give them that chance.'

Earthy Entrepreneur

Grant's environmental interests trace back to college. After majoring in Environmental Studies at the University of Colorado, Boulder, she worked for the U.S. Forest Service. 'I thought it was a great job because I was outdoors,' she recalls. 'Then, after we had clear-cut a beautiful Aspen grove and dead trees were lying everywhere, I realized I had just done all the stupid things we had condemned in our studies.'

Grant decided to become an entrepreneur instead. She studied Commercial Art and in 1980 established Grant Communications, a Boulder, Colo.– based advertising agency.

After completing a successful environmental campaign for a local health food market last year, she launched ECA. ‘I think I finally have the vehicle to be able to motivate and expedite change. It’s probably one of the most exciting times to be alive.’