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Corporate Activism

A not-so-new trend, rapidly growing

We used to call it greenwash, when it was. In the transparent 24/7 cash-strapped world, the commercial world is waking to the realities of industrialisation and realising they have to change to meet the challenges of a forever-changed economic future. Some are slower than others, but everyone will have to rise to survive. Board rooms across Britain are engaged in debate around strategies for sustainability. Sustainability equals survival. It should be said that most corporate leadership fundamentally operates on the belief that they're in business to serve their stakeholders. What they've failed to do in the past is fully recognise who all their stakeholder groups are. Now they're seeing stakeholders as consumers and shareholders, but also as a much, much wider audience. This is the year when the top-down will have to meet the bottom-up revolution.



One of the ways we're seeing the manifestation of corporate activism is through the products and services we're offered. Increasingly supermarkets reflect reduced packaging, encouraging fewer plastic bags and promote online shopping for its environmental benefits. But there are much more radical changes afoot. PUMA, the global sports brand has launched its 'clever little bag', sending the shoe-box to reside only in memory, thereby reducing its water usage, transport impacts and waste. Pampers offers a vaccine to a developing world baby for every pack of nappies purchased.

In the absence of binding global governance agreements, expect to see the brands creating revenue streams out of good business practises. The propositional space opened up by brands who offer better choices for consumers can only be a good thing for people and planet. Let's hope the efforts are far-reaching and urgent enough. To end on a positive, this quote from Ray Anderson, CEO of Interface, a US-based carpet manufacturer, "We're doing well by doing good and doing good by doing well". We say long live Corporate Social Opportunity.