



Nathan Trushell joined WFI for a six month fellowship in August 2007.

Promotion of Sustainable Forestry and Forest Products: A North American Perspective

Linking the Sustainable Forestry Management Concept to Protect Forest Product Industries

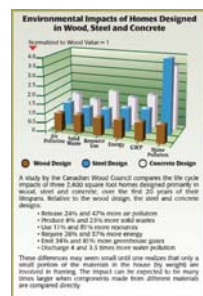
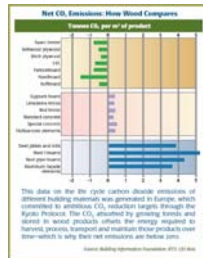
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Trends in Sustainable Forest Management

- Australia, the United States and Canada are facing many similar issues that impact both the management of forests and the wood products industry. Some examples of these trends are:
 - > A shift towards ecosystem management for forests.
 - > Increased regulation on how forests are managed.
 - > Growing adoption of third party forest certification.
 - > Increased focus on forests and climate change.
 - > Fire management in forest environments.
 - > The effect of globalization on domestic markets.
 - > The growing adoption of green building standards.
 - > Increased consumer awareness about the use of forest products.
 - > Market threats from substitute products.
 - > Corporate Social Responsibility and the development of procurement policies for users of forest products.



Forestry and forest products industries are responding in many ways to this dramatically changing landscape. Effective communication strategies are essential to ensure that all the values of forests are recognized in future decision making.



What is the Purpose of Wood Promotion?

Wood promotion has been utilized by the forest and forest products industry all over the world. It is often seen as necessary due to the highly fragmented structure of the sector and the fact that promotional campaigns are generally too expensive for one company. Wood promotion aims to protect or preferably increase the market share of wood at the expense of competing substitute materials.

Regardless of the objective, promotional activities should be justified by measuring the market effects achieved, e.g. better consumer opinion, growing consumption, increasing market shares and rising prices. Direct market influence can be difficult to measure due to the many factors that influence wood consumption.

Credibility is one of the important qualities of wood promoters, but it is faster lost than gained. Key elements of successful promotional work are competence and neutrality, sufficient financial resources for passing over a critical threshold, leveraging to overcome small budgets and well-developed networks of the promotional bodies.

The main problem of wood promotion is fundraising in what is a highly fragmented industry, where for many members of the wood sector, the "enemies" are seen in other wood products rather than in competing materials.

UNECE/FAO Forest Products Annual Market Review, 2001-2002

Case Study: The Wood Promotion Network



The Wood Promotion Network (WPN) was launched in 2001 to defend wood in North America against the threats of anti-wood and forest campaigns and substitute products such as steel, concrete and plastic. Retail chains were also experiencing pressure from high profile environmental groups and required support. The purpose of the campaign was twofold. Firstly, it aimed to address immediate industry risk by promoting the environmental case for wood. The second phase of the campaign intended to seek opportunities to grow wood markets for the longer term. The Wood Promotion Network brought together a coalition of more than 330 companies and allied organizations to leverage delivery of its key messages.

Research identified that builders make 80% of residential wood use decisions. In its first three years WPN developed and implemented a strategy to improve builder and consumer opinion of wood as a building material. Trade efforts included print advertising, partnerships and event sponsorships, builder outreach, media relations, direct mail and web-based communications. Consumer efforts included television and print advertising, supported by high profile media and web-based communications. Opinion polling of builders and target consumers yielded positive results after the first phase of the campaign. For example:

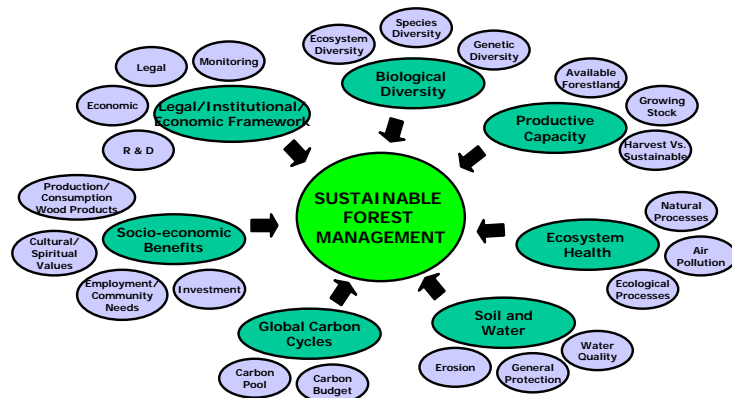
- > In three years, it improved home builders' views that wood is overall, a better building material, by 13%, from 62% to 75%.
- > Improved builders' perception that wood performs well in terms of the environment by 13%, from 75% to 88%
- > The number of builders who agree that forests are abundant increased 9%, to 47%.
- > The number of involved consumers who believe concerns about forests are easing increased 7%, from 33% to 40%- but the number who disagree with that statement decreased from 64% to 49%.

Although the program yielded positive results and was hailed as a success by the solid wood industry the second phase never gained the full support of the coalition. As a result the campaign has wound back as industry funds are directed to campaigns based on specific issues affecting the industry.

Wood Promotion Network: Constructive Gains, Three Years in Review, 2003

Challenges in Communicating Sustainable Forest Management

- > Complex forest ownership structure with large number of forest owners with highly variable management objectives.
- > Highly complex supply and distribution chain when compared to other industries.
- > High level of public involvement and interest in forestry resulting in a reactive approach to issues.
- > Developing and maintaining credibility.
- > Gaining the target audiences' attention.
- > Developing consistent and accurate sources of information.
- > Forestry, by its very nature, is complex and hard to articulate in simple and meaningful messages.



Education Programs

In North America there is an enormous level of commitment to educational programs focused on forests and forest management. Although such programs or activities are varied in their objective, approach and scope they include the following:

- > K-12 student and teacher classroom and field programs, including teacher curriculum support.
 - > Forest education centers providing an interactive experience in a controlled environment.
 - > Tours demonstrating modern forest management.
 - > Workshops to help landowners manage according to best forest practices.
- The majority of educational programs are aimed at providing the broader community with a balanced and factual view of forests. Programs usually include the dependencies between forests and people. From an industry perspective, educational programs are a critical part of maintaining the 'social license' for forest industries to operate.



Key Communication Messages

- > Benefits of active forest management and multiple resource forests.
- > The role of forests and wood in climate change.
- > Focusing on forest issues at a global scale and how the forests of the world are interrelated.
- > Promoting that people are part of our ecosystems and are dependent on forests for their range of values.
- > Reinforcing that forest products are an important part of our daily lives.
- > Leading the green movement by reducing, reusing and recycling.
- > Leading the public debate around forest management by supporting the science that underpins Sustainable Forest Management.



"Place of Origin" Branding

"Place of Origin" branding attempts to leverage market access or price premium based on consumers' association with a geographic location. These types of campaigns have traditionally been used in industries such as tourism, but perhaps most famously for wine. Over recent years other industries have recognized opportunities to position themselves based on their location. The Californian dairy industry for instance has leveraged market share very effectively using these types of campaigns.



Minnesota and Vermont are two states that have embarked on campaigns to differentiate their forestry and forest products industries based on the attributes of their states. For example, the Vermont brand promotes the image of traditional values, quality and craftsmanship to differentiate itself against the mass market furniture industry.

Trending Towards Issue Specific Industry Campaigns

The Green Building Initiative's Green Globes assessment tool has been developed as a response to the growing green building market. It provides competition for other green building systems such as the United States Green Building Council's LEED program.



The Sustainable Forestry Initiative is an industry based response to growing awareness of third party forest certification.



The Canadian Wood Council's Wood WORKS! program is a national campaign aimed to increase the use of wood for non-residential uses. The program follows on from the work of the Wood Promotion Network.

