



Marketers Can Help Kids Help Save Planet Earth

A new generation has stepped up to meet the challenge of preserving our environment. These young activists come from all socio-economic backgrounds and from all parts of this country. Unlike prior generations, one thing these mini eco-warriors do have in common is a unified concern about their environment and a profound belief that they can make a difference.

A recent study conducted by Just Kid Inc has revealed that, simply put, the youth of this country do care. They care about helping others, and they care about the health of the planet. They believe they can and must make a difference.

In 2007, we conducted extensive qualitative and quantitative research with both kids and moms on the broader kid altruism movement. The results of those studies reflect the desire among children, starting as young as six years of age, to help others. While young people still love their video games, music, sports, etc., 56% said they love to help others just as much.

This is a powerful statistic that could help promote products. Fifty-eight percent of children 6-12 years old said would buy a product that gave part of the profit to save baby tigers as opposed to 42% who would stand to win allowance for a year.

Even though children want to help, there seems to be a frustrating lack of kid-centric program alternatives for the causes kids care about most, such as endangered animals, world hunger and the environment. To that end, a follow-up study to kid altruism was conducted in September 2008 in order to dig deeper into the specific environmental cause with kids.

The goals of this "ECO Kids" study were to provide a current update on how powerful the green movement is among kids starting at the age of eight, to understand which pieces of the environment kids care about most and determine what relationship brands can have in the service movement. In addition, the study explored ways in which corporations can create a range of alternative program models and new products to leverage this movement with kids. Nearly 600 young people ages 8-14 were given a 15-minute questionnaire online about the issues facing the environment.

As might be expected, helping endangered animals was the No. 1 priority for kids, with overwhelming numbers saying that animal and plants should have equal rights to exist on this planet as humans. Over 80% of those surveyed wanted to get involved in protecting endangered species and help create safe places for them to live.

Kids' knowledge of environmental issues and what they mean was impressive. Again, over 80% were interested in such critical issues as keeping the air and water clean. These specifics ranked higher than stopping global warming itself that only 72% answered as their top interest, which suggests a weak link between the cause and what kids care about most.

The survey also shows that youth want to make a difference and believe that one person can make a big difference in the planet's health. One interesting statistic is that 83% believe they can make a difference, but only 46% believe that kids themselves are most responsible for protecting the environment. More than

50% responded that they do what they can by practicing such things as turning off the water while brushing teeth and recycling.

The kids were clear saying they need help. Fifty-six percent feel that big companies should be responsible for protecting the environment. Half believe the responsibility lies with politicians, but 46% place the burden squarely on their own shoulders (even more so than adults as we've seen in other studies). Only 37% placed responsibility with parents. This is an amazing statistic that should be taken seriously by marketers. Children believe they are more responsible for protecting our planet than their parents or even scientists.

Kids also told us that they will reward companies with their purchases if they help the environment, and they will withhold their purchases if your products are harming it. They further suggest that corporations should partner with such organizations as schools, kid entertainment brands, churches, sports teams, scouts and other environmental organizations to reach a wider audience.

Here's how to get started. On the corporate level, companies can build kid engagement programs that provide kids opportunities to live and promote sustainability in their own lives. Divisionally, corporations should consider continuity programs that work across brands and leverage cross-promotional opportunities across their portfolios. And deliver brand-specific applications to drive growth in the form of new products, new promotions and environmentally friendly upgrades to current packaging.

In addition, there are immediate actions that corporations can take right away. Ways kids suggested include giving a portion of sales to environmental causes, using recycled materials for packaging and using less packaging, using natural ingredients from the earth and helping kids like them get involved in environmental programs and activities.

Most important, nine out of ten kids say having fun and helping the environment would encourage them to get even more involved in saving and protecting the environment. Therefore, companies should look to partner or create programs that can do both. Kids also place enormous importance on meeting other kids who love the things they love, learning more about environmental issues and being able to put pressure on leaders who have the power to make changes.

Kids represent the future, and it is clear that given the right resources and outlets, they are ready and willing to put their money in places that support causes they care about and take on the task of making the world a better place for generations to come.



Janet Oak is Managing Director of Innovation and Strategy at Just Kid Inc. Founded in 1994, Just Kid Inc. is a strategic research and innovation team focused exclusively on children 2-12 and their parents. Its team of 20 seasoned kid experts approaches every challenge through a "kid's lens," with a passion and respect for the young consumers its clients serve.