

THE TRUTH ABOUT BEING GREEN

A green business must also be economical and feasible if it is to succeed.

by Jim Burton

Jim Henson's Muppet frog, Kermit, is a smart little rascal. He sings a song proclaiming, "It's not that easy being green." Of course, he was referring to his own color and how that creates all sorts of problems for him, but it's also true about today's economy—"It's not that easy being green."

First, you have to determine exactly what it means to be green. The Urban Green Partnership in an article titled "What is Green?" notes:

Green is the design, commercialization, and use of processes and products that are feasible and economical while

- *reducing the generation of pollution at the source;*
- *minimizing the risk to human health and the environment....*

Since the industrial revolution, people have become disconnected from the very life forces that sustain us (urbangreenpartnership.org/what-is-green).

One could deduce that "going green" means a return to the days of an agrarian society in which family units essentially hunted and gathered to meet basic needs. Indeed, meeting basic needs is about all they were able to do. While using animals for transportation and power reduced the generation of pollution at the source (unless you were the one who had to muck out the barns), a return to those days is not feasible.

Brian Milani says green economics is "primarily about 'use-value,' not 'exchange-value' or money," and "about regeneration—of individuals, communities, and ecosystems—not about accumulation, of either money or material" (www.greeneconomics.net/what2f.htm, "What Is Green Economics?"). He adds that in the current economic system, "any use-values generated (i.e., social needs met) have been secondary ... to the primary goal of monetary accumulation."

Entrepreneur.com proclaims in "The Green Economic Revolution" that "going green is a trillion-dollar industry propelled by the energy independence and global warming solutions your customers, colleagues, investors, and competitors desire now."

I think green is a lot simpler than these quotes would indicate. We cannot return to an agrarian or barter economy. The only way people accumulated money (wealth) was by producing things others valued—food, transportation, clothes, shelter, etc. At the base of the human-needs pyramid, these things made life better for individuals and for society. I don't know if green is a trillion-dollar industry, or even an industry, or if there is a revolution. This may be hyperbole. But I think the Urban Green Partnership may be at least partially right. That "the design, commercialization, and use of processes and products" must be "feasible and economical" has always been a key to success. If you add reducing pollution and minimizing risk, you have a winner and might just get a significant piece of this supposed trillion-dollar green pie.

But beware those who seek the rewards by improper means. *Fraud Magazine's* "A New Wave in Green Energy Fraud" (Vol. 24, No. 5, Sept./Oct. 2010) suggests there is reason to suspect that all of the money being thrown at green technologies is leading to many instances of fraud around the world. The article indicates that governments have allocated about \$200 billion in direct spending, subsidies, and tax credits (p. 37). The author details a number of discovered frauds in various countries ranging up to 5 billion Euros—signaling a direct link between "easy money" and those who would acquire it dishonestly. When the rules are unclear, people will make them up as they go.

You are obviously interested in green possibilities, or you wouldn't be reading here. This issue features the well-crafted thoughts of some gifted people on the subject of "green"—articles you may find enlightening, provocative, and well worth the time. You may get a great green idea.

Kermit's song continues: "People tend to pass you over"—which will happen if you focus entirely on the green without enough attention to the feasible and economical. We must remember Kermit's admonition, "It's not that easy being green," as well as his conclusion, "I'm green, and it'll do fine."

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