got green?

And 10 other brand-curdling cliches of green marketing

got milk?®

got teeth?
www.webuyteeth.com

got ice?

got sand?®

got cat?

got health care?

got hair?
beauty & nail salon

got pig?

got dirt?

got green?

got pot?

GOT BEER?

got muscle?

got originality?

I have a love/hate relationship with the "got milk?" campaign. Don't get me wrong. It's brilliant branding and marketing; an iconic movement around a basic product. As an advertiser, what more can you ask for? The campaign sours for me with every hackneyed use of the tagline. Such a ubiquitously copy-catted call-to-action curdles the original brand with every use. I love the irony of the last one. So to make sure your "green" brand is sustainable, here are 10 cliches to avoid.

Rule #1: Resist the urge to put the word "Green" in the name of your company or product. Really, there's only one organization that should have "Green" in their name. They've owned the brand in public perception since 1970. And they're vigorous about protecting it. Let's be honest, you probably don't really have the cojones to back it up to their level anyway.

Rule #2:   Green leafy logos are in their autumn. They're so prevalent, they actually camouflage your brand. Don't believe me? Google green logo, and tell me which one stands out from the forest of forgettable designs.
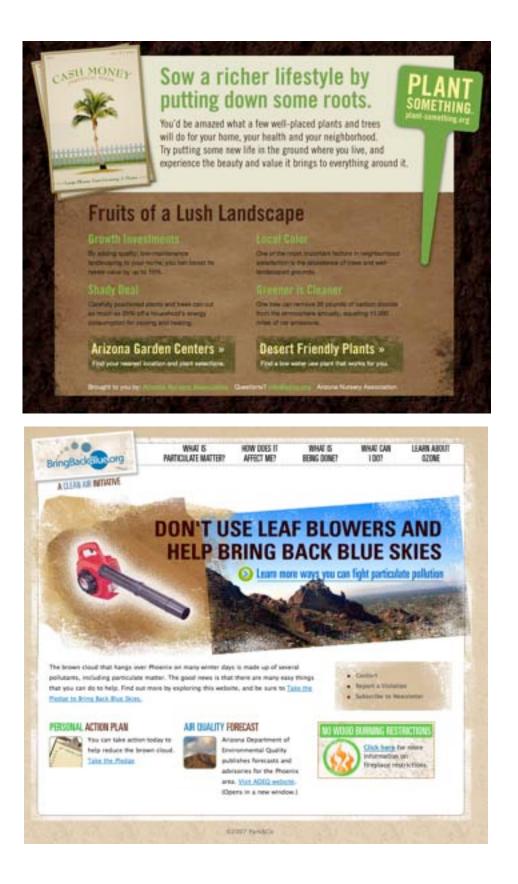
Rule #3: The recycling logo is boring unless presented in an inventive way. It was designed by an architect, feels like an engineering symbol and is synonymous with recycling. It's a given in our life, and therefore not very disruptive or impactful unless applied in a surprising and thoughtful way, as in this Global Water ad.

Rule #4: We get it. We live on planet Earth. You're saving planet Earth. You don't need planet Earth in your advertising. None of the above ads use planet Earth. It's redundant.

Rule #5: Consumers are smart. They know that being "Green" is a good thing. It's like smoke-free restaurants. They're expected. So don't tell us how green you are. Show us.

Rule #6: Fresh green grass and crisp blue skies are important for our neighborhoods, but they don't have to inhabit your website unless you're a solar-powered lawn service. Click here for a [showcase](#) of nature-inspired sites.

butyl acetate, ethyl acetate, nitrocellulose, acetyl tributyl citrate, glycols copolymer, isopropyl alcohol, stearalkonium hectorite, adipic acid/fumatic acid/phthalic acid/tricyclodecane dimethanol copolymer, citric acid and colors, which may contain: D&C Red #6 Barium Lake, D&C Red #7 Calcium Lake, etc.

Rule #7:   Anyone can get all puffed out about being "All Natural." But if you don't mean it, don't use it. You're wrecking it for products that are actually "All Natural."

Rule #8: If you've ever said, "We're a green (insert company, product or service here)" then you've committed "Green fogging," which is a term I just made up about diminishing the view of your really important brand attributes by trying to appear concerned about the planet.

Rule #9: Kids and daisies in your ads and on your website are cute, but they don't sell product. Great products that are affordable, convenient and healthy for you and the planet are what sell. And yes, the name Green Works goes against Rule #8. But like Greenpeace, Clorox was one of the first to market in their category with cleaning products that kick ass, so they've earned the honor of owning that brand space.

Rule #10:   Hand-drawn typefaces, (especially my nemesis, Papyrus,) that try to express "being organic," work with organic consumables, but really nothing else. So if you're Cozy Chamomile tea, you might be able to get away with it. But if you're recycling tires, probably not.

Carbon Offsetting
Until there is a better way,
there is the ETA.

Extra credit: Other trite visuals to avoid include anything remotely environmental in cupped hands, lightbulbs, clouds, a globe in a water drop, and just about everything related to carbon offsetting. The latter is a term for engineers, and most consumers, even the really smart ones, don't know what you're talking about.

got gang green?

If you answer "yes" to three or more of the following symptoms, you may be suffering from "Gang Green,"

the brand-curdling condition of cliched anonymity that leads to something worse than death: Irrelevance.

	Yes	No	Help!
1. Are the people charged with managing your green brand thinking originally?	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
2. Have you put the word "green" in your name, and if so, do you have the passion of Greenpeace to deserve it?	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
3. Has your logo sprouted a leaf?	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
4. Do you use the recycling logo as a crutch to prop up uninspired messages?	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
5. Have you put mother Earth in an ad?	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
6. Does your website look like the eco-equivalent of the Stepford Wives with green grass, blue skies and clouds?	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
7. Do you use the term "All natural" to excite your inner hippie?	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
8. Be honest, have you committed any degree of "Green Fogging" lately?	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
9. Have you adopted children and pretty flowers as your core visuals?	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
10. Have you ever even considered using the font Papyrus?	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
11. Has any sort of environmental image showed up in cupped hands in your creative?	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
12. Do you rely heavily on the color green and its expected cousins, blue and brown?	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
13. Has a globe ever appeared in a water drop, even when you're daydreaming?	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
14. Has a sapling ever emerged from a non-sequitur image like gold coins or a pile of coal?	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
15. Have you ever used "Green" in a sentence referring to both saving money AND the environment?	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
16. Have you ever talked about carbon anything at a cocktail party, church gathering or during sex?	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
17. Is a lightbulb an illuminating metaphor to you?	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
18. Does the fear of "sameness" haunt you?	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]

For help, subscribe to my "Sustainable Storytelling" blog, or call 1-602-682-0620. A friend is closer than you think.