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produces his skateboards in a solar-powered factory

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THE ECO-ADVANTAGE

It's beginning to feel like a new feature of the business cycle: Every few years or so, American companies and consumers embrace the concept of green business. We're certainly in the midst of one of those moments right now. But something seems different about our current green awakening.

This time, the action is being driven as much by markets as morality. High oil prices, global warming, the sense that chemicals cause real harm and the earth's resources are indeed finite—these are not so much charitable causes to embrace as they are problems that entrepreneurs can solve. Wall Street and Silicon Valley certainly understand this: Venture capital firms invested \$958 million in renewable energy companies in the first half of 2006 alone.

Today's green revolution is being driven by a whole new set of entrepreneurs. We asked our staffers and contributors to find the most intriguing ones out there; then we narrowed the list to the 50 in the pages that follow—**The Green 50**. The range of businesses is astonishingly wide, from high-tech firms making big bets on the future of energy to decidedly low-tech concerns that are simply determined to find a different way to do business. What their efforts add up to is a new way to think about being in business. We're betting that most of them will be around for several business cycles to come. —Larry Kanter



THE GREEN 50

THE INTEGRATORS

Bringing fundamental change to everyday life. And, for that matter, death

Talk about quiet leadership

"WE DON'T WANT to be known as the organic winery of the Napa Valley," says John Williams, founder of **Frog's Leap Winery** in Rutherford, California. It's an odd thing for him to say. Frog's Leap was started in 1984 and in 1988 became the first Napa winemaker to have its grapes certified as organic. Today, Frog's Leap produces 60,000 cases of wine a year, all from grapes that are grown organically. Perhaps more notably, they are grown with water-saving dry farming methods.

In recent years, other vineyards, in-

cluding Bonterra and Rubicon Estate, have followed Frog's Leap's lead. (Still, fewer than 2 percent of all wine grapes grown in California are certified organic.) But Williams is reluctant to brag, and not only because he's modest. "Up to this point, there's been no advantage to marketing your wine as organic," he says. Indeed, Frog's Leap's labels don't even say "organically grown." So why bother? "We're doing it because it leads to higher quality," says Williams. "And it's better for the health and longevity of the vineyard and the workers."

Indeed, at Frog's Leap, which does about \$10 million in annual sales, com-

mitment to a healthier environment goes beyond grapes—and beyond Frog's Leap. The winery has erected solar panels to meet the bulk of its power needs, uses geothermal energy to cool and heat its buildings, and built its new visitor center and headquarters to exacting green building standards. It also has hosted organic farming conferences and "Solar Stampede," an event promoting solar power among other winemakers. Frog's Leap is now developing a work-sharing program with other wineries aimed at keeping more seasonal field workers employed full time. The upfront costs of things like building green add 2 or 3 percent to a project's costs, Williams says. "But the paybacks are the kind we're used to in the wine business, where we take a longer-term view of investments," he says. "I really have difficulty coming up with a single disadvantage to being a green company." Even if the rest of the world doesn't know it.

How to make your business greener

Going green doesn't necessarily require a radical makeover. A series of small steps—many of which don't cost a dime—can add up to a new way of doing business.

- 1. Stop throwing away money** Go through your trash. You'll get a new sense of how much it costs to buy, store, and dispose of stuff. Eliminate unnecessary photocopying and reuse packaging for shipping.
- 2 Get an energy audit** Most local utilities offer businesses free on-site consultations on how they can reduce usage and save money. Among the frequent suggestions: Improve insulation, and install timers to turn lights off automatically.
- 3. Go paperless** Encourage e-mailing. When paper is necessary, photocopy on both sides and use old letterhead for scratch.
- 4. Consider the commute** Provide preferred parking for carpoolers. Offer transit passes to employees who take the bus or subway and bike racks for cyclists. Let workers telecommute.
- 5. Curb business travel** Teleconference instead of traveling. For must-go trips, keep track of the miles driven and flown and buy "carbon offsets" from a nonprofit like Carbonfund.org to make up for the greenhouse gas emissions.
- 6. Buy green** Tell suppliers that you're interested in sustainable products and set specific goals for buying recycled, refurbished, or used. Make the environment, and not just price, a factor when purchasing.
- 7. Detox** Many offices have toxic substances, such as used batteries and copier toner, on hand. Talk to suppliers about alternatives to toxics, and make sure you properly dispose of the ones you can't avoid using.
- 8. Rethink transportation** Consider the petroleum it takes to ship and receive products. Evaluate the impact of products you buy or sell, and find ways to mitigate those impacts.
- 9. Get the employees involved** Create a team to lead the company's eco-efforts and determine where you can have the biggest impact for the least amount of money.
- 10. Communicate** Inform suppliers and customers about your efforts. And get in touch with local regulatory agencies, many of which offer financial incentives to businesses that clean up their acts.