



*Staffing* *in*  
*the* **Balance**

Everywhere we look today – TV, the news media, political speeches, advertisements at the

office or at home – we can't escape the subject of global warming and greening. It is not a fad but an inescapable movement and has almost become a religion in many ways. We will explore the global warming phenomena, what that means to business – and specifically to the staffing industry, how you can position yourself to take advantage of it and what the actual facts about this subject are. To put this article in perspective, this is my fifth cover story for *SI Review*, and I have been a staffing industry expert for 18 years. In a prior life, I was an executive for a Fortune 500 company in the solar power industry, in charge of environmental engineering and employee health, a member of state and national air and water pollution control associations, and a developer of environmental computer models. Today more sophisticated models are used to predict global warming scenarios – but more about that later.

---

There is so much written and spoken about global warming. We are faced with an embarrassment of riches. The two books that are the most well known are Al Gore's two bestsellers, *Earth in the Balance* and *An Inconvenient Truth*. At the September 2007 APEC conference, the president came out in favor of stabilization of greenhouse gases. As a primer for those who have not followed the story that closely, here is a summary of the dire situation and predictions that have been raised in these books, various articles and numerous documentaries. Gore says that global warming is settled science, and that man is responsible for 70-80% of this phenomenon, which will cause temperatures to go up 14°F and sea level to rise 20 feet over the next 50 years due to the carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) we generate from our current lifestyle. Global temperatures have been constant for 10,000+ years, while we have upset the balance of nature and are in danger of passing the point of no return. Various governmental panels, most notably the UN IPCC, have concluded that people are having profound consequences on the environment, causing everything from generating more hurricanes and melting of the Greenland and Antarctic ice sheets to causing the mass extinction of over 60,000 animal and plant species (1,200 times faster than at any time in

the last 65 million years). Some 10 million people in Bangladesh and 60% of Florida's population will have to move in the next few decades due to global warming. Given that one third of the population lives within 40 miles of the coastline we can't begin to deal with the problems that will result. Global warming will lead to dire consequences for man as well as all other species. Man-made global warming is the cause of over 30 new diseases that have emerged in the last quarter century, and we are setting the stage for an event of the magnitude of the Black Death. The basic tenet is that our wasteful lifestyles have generated too much CO<sub>2</sub>, in addition to modern nitrogen-based fertilizers for agriculture, which account for the other 20%. Cars use gasoline derived from petroleum, and coal is the main fuel for generating electricity for our homes and factories. We would have to go back some 650,000 years to find CO<sub>2</sub> levels as high as they are now. This is measured in parts per million in the atmosphere, which has risen by some 35% from just 1958 to 2005. The urgency appears to be reinforced by the fact that over 40 major corporations have joined the Business Environment Leadership Council, which has as its agenda to reduce global warming through so-called "green" initiatives. Gore says that 98% of scientists agree with his assessment, with only a miniscule 2%

# Staffing *in* the Balance

who either don't get it or who have sold out to industry, and this is echoed by the majority of the media. However, as we will see, things are not always as they appear.

## What Other Industries Are Doing

There has been a groundswell of companies, institutions and individuals who are involved in one way or another in global warming and the greening movement. You would almost have to be living on Mars (which we will refer to later) to miss this second green revolution, which is a combination of an Armageddon level of fear about greenhouse gas and a repeat of the 1849 gold rush mentality to capitalize on the green movement. Everyone, it seems, wants to be a champion of all things green, provide environmental products or services, and be conspicuous in their efforts. California has passed AB32, the first statewide law to reduce greenhouse gases by 25% by 2020. Advertisers and environmental groups are having no trouble getting people to spend gobs of money on PR campaigns touting their green efforts. Companies are doing everything from just using green buzzwords to adding new lines of business to a complete makeover, where they emerge as almost being unrecognizable in their metamorphosis. Here is a fraction of the examples out there.

Waste Management is no longer a dirty old garbage company, but now refers to itself as "the world's largest recycler," while Allied Waste, not to be outdone, is powering its fleet of clean vehicles with waste oil from the restaurants it services. In the investment banking community, Goldman

Sachs is no longer a moneylender but is getting very favorable press by not doing business with firms it has deemed as being "environmentally unfriendly," as its archrival Lehman Brothers has created a Global Climate Council to evaluate the way it does business. The lodging industry awards a "Green Seal" certification for meeting environmental standards for everything from recyclable products to lighting to such industry giants as Marriott and Hilton. The Green Building Council is set to qualify some 100,000 structures as eco-friendly by 2011 (building emits — of all greenhouse gases).

Big box building suppliers Home Depot and Lowe's now insist that their vendors use wood from sustainable forests. Walgreens drug stores (a fortuitous choice of a name), has rolled out printer recharge cartridge stations to reduce waste. Steelcase furniture has rebranded itself as a "manufacturing intelligence company," reducing its environmental footprint with a life-cycle assessment of its products to improve employee health and its client profits. Likewise, Ikea supply management process has cut emissions by recycling most of its waste.

In manufacturing, GE's new buzzword is "eco-imagination." The Water and Process Division is its fastest-growing unit and sells wind turbines as quickly as it can make them, and is projecting related revenues of \$20 billion by 2010 in its ads, while it is dragging its feet transitioning from highly profitable incandescent light to more energy-efficient fluorescents. In the automotive sector, Honda is funding three alternative technologies: hybrids, fuel cells and electric cars, while Toyota

claims to have reduced absenteeism by 14% since moving to an uplifting green sunlit building. The Green Taxi Services naturally uses a distinctive fleet of Prius hybrids. HP, which operates toxic landfill sites, has opened a 50 million pound/year electronic waste recycling network, while IBM has instituted a 140-point customer environmental performance database. Virgin Airline's folk hero CEO Richard Branson is offering a \$25 million prize to anyone who can demonstrate how to effectively remove greenhouse gases from the atmosphere, while Continental's employees are working to reduce the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from its planes.

Chemical and oil companies, long in environmentalist's cross-hairs, have gotten religion big time. DuPont has done a 180-degree turn, selling off its vilified petroleum businesses and much of its old commodity chemicals, and has moved from a culture built on chemistry to one oriented around biology and life sciences. A company whose slogan was "better things through chemistry" now gets 17% of its sales from renewable products and a good guy PR image from such favorites as Kelvar (for bulletproof vests) and Tyvek (a green energy-saving building material). Its stock is up 25% even with a 25% reduction in sales. British Petroleum is almost a poster boy for global warming. It now goes by just BP (as Kentucky Fried Chicken is now just KFC, when fried foods became a dirty word), and its new tagline is "beyond petroleum." It is involved in making biofuels and hydrogen power, and it is a highly visible champion of environmental initiatives. Exxon Mobil (remember

## Global Warming Bill of Rights

- 1** In our offices we use recyclable biodegradable, organic and non-acidic papers and products wherever possible with the aim of achieving a near-zero carbon footprint. We will measure and report our results on our Web site each month to track our progress.
- 2** We encourage our staff to car-pool and provide credits to our employees. This includes temps as well as our internal staff to use public transportation, hybrid cars, and walk or bicycle to work.
- 3** We hire our staff locally wherever possible to minimize the amount of transportation on the road.
- 4** We use teleconferencing wherever possible to minimize travel further.
- 5** We rent only in an environmentally friendly building and use minimal air-conditioning, setting all thermostats at 76° in the summer and 56° in the winter.
- 6** We do not use bottled water due to the cost of transporting and packaging waste generated, but use tap water instead.
- 7** We invest our employees 401(k) savings programs in green stock funds and environmentally conscious companies.
- 8** We buy only renewable wood furniture from companies like Home Depot or Lowe's.
- 9** To prove that we say what we mean, any employee who cannot live up to our corporate and cultural expectations will be asked to seek employment elsewhere.
- 10** We will only serve or bring in food into our office that is in biodegradable packaging or recyclable containers.

the Exxon Valdez fiasco?) claims to be investing more than it earns in profits into new supplies, production facilities and environmentally friendly technologies, while ConocoPhillips has partnered with Tyson Foods to burn clean and renewable biodiesel fuels (think chicken fat).

There is no shortage of consumer product companies getting into green concepts. Patagonia is the phenomenon in outdoor clothing that has a passion for the environment and deals with a like-minded audience. It receives 900

applicants for every job opening it has, and founded the "1% for the Planet Alliance," with 500 member companies. Nike touts its new shoe, which is made with 100% recycled laces and recycled rubber. Every Starbucks has an energy/square foot target it must meet. Blue Sky Cleaners in California holds itself out as using only "organic dry cleaning" that does not use chlorinated hydrocarbons, which destroy the ozone layer. Visa's "GreenCard" calculates the carbon emissions associated with each pur-

chase, which it displays on its credit card monthly statements, and which, it claims, has increased users' charges threefold. CTIUS is an AMEX investment fund of 47 clean technology stocks with a \$.3 trillion market cap and up 31% annually as of last July 2007. Member firms in the fund must provide alternative energy, energy efficient products, air and water purification equipment, eco-friendly agriculture/nutrition products or green power transmission, and other Silicon Valley venture capital firms have invested \$290 million in clean technologies during the 3rd quarter of 2006.

On the lighter side, environmentally friendly weddings are now the thing, from solar-powered musical instruments for the band to recycled gold for the rings. And a dance club in Holland uses the heat generated from springboard-loaded floors to generate electrical power.

### What Staffing Companies Should Be Doing

There has been some fear as to what global warming might mean to industry, including staffing. We have dealt with numerous threats over the years – the Internet, offshoring, huge hikes in workers compensation rates, restrictive legislation and a recession every 10 years or so, just to name a few. We have even received a call from a panicked staffing company owner in Florida a few months ago, who wants us to find a new place to relocate to before it is too late and his city would be under water. As a famous president once said, "The only thing to fear is fear itself." Very few staffing companies have done anything with respect

to global warming, and there is a lot that can be done. Remember the old saying about making lemons into lemonade? And there are very real hidden opportunities for those who can position themselves as environmentally responsible and friendly staffing firms. Those companies that can capture the environmental high ground can be seen as leaders in this area and set themselves apart from the competition, but, as in all things, you need to do this first, before everyone jumps on this new bandwagon.

We will describe how to capitalize on global warming and greening concepts, rebranding your company, building an environmentally friendly firm, being visible and gaining traction in your efforts. This is particularly true of smaller staffing firms with limited resources that can be easily outspent and overwhelmed by the nationals with a lot more dollars and resources to take the lead. If you don't copyright and protect the intellectual property that you have created and staked out you might find yourself looking up at those who have. We will start by creating a hypothetical staffing company with a name that will be synonymous with our mission. We have christened our new company **Geostaffing**®, with the tag line "Geostaffing® – Your Environmentally Responsible Staffing Resource" and have created a logo to match our image. You can build upon this concept to create your own unique niche.

Although **Geostaffing**® can perform any kind of staffing and be green, those who would like to actually be in an environmental staffing market can. Although there are not currently enough positions to sustain a large

number of staffing companies, you can have a desk or two in this sector, and the field is certainly growing. Some typical environmental-related positions are: chief environmental officer, city planners, power conservation personnel, green managers, packaging and transportation specialists, public relations, environmental impact personnel, investment and portfolio managers, environmental engineers, strategic planners, etc. These positions would be for both industry and nonprofit institutions. There are now over 20 colleges and universities offering studies and degrees in environmental studies all over the United States from Washington and Lee in Virginia to Dominican College in California, and these graduates are a new source of placement activity. A sample of the courses offered at these schools include natural sciences (chemistry, biology, botany, physics, geology, oceanography, hydrology), city planning, urban development, economics, accounting, computer programming, mathematical modeling, international studies, religion, philosophy, ethics, natural resources, ecology, forest management, medicine, toxicology, and civil, chemical and environmental engineering.

One of our clients, The Concinnity Group, Inc., has entered the green staffing market and is recruiting energy and sustainability engineers who are ASHRAE members and LEEDS accredited. It is finding that there is a great deal of demand for people who can design green energy-efficient buildings, and there is no shortage of clients requiring such people.

Here is a primer of how you can

become green and set yourself apart from other staffing firms by being green in your marketplace. We start with our company mission statement, which states that our objective is to first provide our clients with the best personnel. But what makes us unique is that we are the first ones to do this in an environmentally conscious and responsible manner. We would then document all the things that we do that make us a green company. We would broadcast our message from our Web site, through ads, blogs, public discussion groups, town hall meetings, media interviews, articles, and viral marketing campaigns. Everyone, from our CEO to the people that we put on assignment, will live up to our standards and be green ambassadors and advocates.

Inside our offices we will have the **Global Warming Bill of Rights** demonstrating why we are Your Environmentally Responsibly Staffing Resource (see sidebar on page 16.)

Outside the office we are promoting our **10 Corporate Initiative Commandments** that we have undertaken to spread our message (see sidebar on page 18.)

### The Rest of the Story

Researching this article, it was interesting to learn that there is another side to the global warming story, which has been largely ignored by the mainstream media. Global warming may not be settled science as being man-made, although it sure appears to be settled in public opinion and politics. Unstoppable Global Warming – Every 1,500 Years, by S. Fred Singer and Dennis Avery, and

# Staffing *in* the Balance

The Politically Incorrect Guide to Global Warming, by Christopher Horner, note over 800 references. Although most agree that global warming does exist, the real questions are whether it is primarily caused by man, what is the likely impact of global warming and what are the tradeoffs of taking various actions, for, as in most things in life, there is rarely a free lunch. As we learned with Watergate, you have to follow the

money and the power. The environmental movement is a multibillion dollar industry with powerful special interests including the news media, academicians, politicians, the United Nations and commercial interests. One of the first companies promoting global warming was none other than Enron.

So, let's start back at the beginning of the story. The foundation of global warming was laid in the 1996 UN's

IPCC report. The study was done by qualified climatologists who said that global warming was real, but temperature variations have existed over long periods, including higher temperatures during the Medieval Warming Period (MWP) (900 to 1300 AD), followed by the Little Ice Age (ending in 1850), but that "no human fingerprints" had been found as causing global warming. The final report was authored by a political-appointed panel that excluded this statement as well as the highs of the MWP period.

It shows temperatures now at their high, which has become the basis of the Kyoto accords, which in turn was popularized by Gore. A 2004 survey noted that only 9.4% of climate scientists agreed that man was primarily responsible for global warming, and just 22.8% agree with the IPCC conclusions. Gore says that 98% of scientists (not climatologists) agree global warming is man-made, although it is not conceivable that 98% of people would agree on anything. China, not the United States, is now the largest source of greenhouse gases and in five years should outpace all of the other nations combined. It has been exempted from Kyoto and will dominate manufacturing at our expense if restrictive CO<sub>2</sub> limits are imposed. The IPCC expects the oceans to rise 11 inches by 2100, vs. Gore's 20 feet estimate, and the claim that 60,000 species are going extinct does not appear supportable by the facts. The best correlation of global warming appears to be with solar activity and not CO<sub>2</sub>. Thus, just as a soda releases gas when it is heated, higher CO<sub>2</sub> levels may be the result of global warming

## Corporate Initiative Commandments

- 1** We shall demonstrate our commitment to our goals by creating environmental alliances with our prospects, clients, the community and our employees.
- 2** We shall not use offshore workers in countries who have lower environmental standards, even if this means turning away business or doing business at a higher cost and reducing our profit.
- 3** We shall be the staffing goods buys, providing a 10% discount on all placements to green clients. We will follow through on the concept espoused by Warren Beatty in "Heaven Can Wait," where he says, "Wouldn't you pay an extra penny to save a dolphin?"
- 4** We shall continue to provide carbon credit trading through our Web site in order to help others meet their environmental goals.
- 5** We shall continue to invest our resources into those sectors that place environmental and green engineers, managers and other personnel. We will refer candidates to other environmentally active companies in those sectors where we don't have such openings.
- 6** We shall seek out and place candidates who have a record of environmental contributions as documented on their resumes and reference checks.
- 7** We shall actively lobby for green causes in our state legislature, volunteer our time and become a beta test site for environmental programs.
- 8** We shall contribute 5% of our corporate profit to worthy environmental causes each year.
- 9** We shall evaluate our employees' environmental record in all promotions.
- 10** We shall create an employee-of-the-month program for that person who comes up with the best environmentally conscious initiative each month.

# Staffing *in* the Balance

instead of its cause. Lastly, man is not always the reason for global warming. Mars's temperature has gone up 1.5° F over the past 20 years without man present, and you might ask if another type of inconvenient truth might exist.

Fear and bad news sells. Recall the recent stories about the dangers of meat, fish, spinach, bread and eggs, asbestos, radon, high-voltage power lines, birth control pills, electric blankets, lead, mercury, hair dyes, diet drinks, plastics bottles, second-hand smoke, coffee, watching TV causing autism, cell phones causing brain cancer, sitting on an airplane causing

blood clots, baby powder and air fresheners causing lung problems, and even birth order affecting future success. Some 30 years ago environmentalists were saying we were headed towards another ice age. The New York Times headlines of May 21, 1975, read "Scientists Ponder Why World's Climate Is Changing: A Major Cooling Is Widely Considered to Be Inevitable," and the August 13, 2007, Newsweek cover story dismissed those who question global warming as hacks paid off by big business. Hollywood exacerbated environmental concerns with movies like "The Day After

Tomorrow." Universities have generated a myriad of environmental computer models. But having designed some of these models, it should be noted that without actual results to check the calculations, the output is just one set of possible scenarios.

The McCain-Lieberman Senate study notes a GDP loss by 2025 of some \$1 trillion with less than 0.05° C reductions by 2050 under Kyoto, while the founder of the U.N. Eco-summit and the U.N. undersecretary said the only hope for the planet is the collapse of industrial civilization. We are also decades away from

substantial power contribution from renewable, environmentally friendly alternative energy sources such as wind power, geothermal and solar. Using crops such as corn to produce ethanol uses more gasoline than it saves. In Mexico, corn tortilla prices have risen 60% in one year, and our prices, from steaks to soft drinks, are rising. In one way or another food production is dependent on grains that are being diverted to make alternative fuels, which again demonstrates there is no free lunch.

We all want to do the right thing

environmentally, but doing something doesn't necessarily mean solving the problem, and we should not confuse pollution with CO<sub>2</sub>. Smog caused by NO<sub>2</sub> is being reduced by catalytic converters on cars; SO<sub>2</sub> generated from coal-fired power plants that comes down as acid rain destroying forests and is being cut via low-sulfur fuels and ozone depleting chlorofluorocarbons is being phased out by using alternative refrigerants and dry cleaning solutions. We should be more efficient the way we live and conduct our lives, and we can save the equivalent

of 100 power plants by simply turning off electrical appliances when not in use and phasing out incandescent lights. But eliminating fossil fuels, even if that could be done, will likely increase the cost of almost everything, drive up inflation, reduce living standards and increase unemployment, while having inconsequential environmental effects.

Mike Neidle started Optimal Management in 1994 ([www.optimal-mgt.com](http://www.optimal-mgt.com)) helping staffing owners to maximize sales, profits and company value. He was senior VP for Snelling and executive VP for Hall Kinion (now part of Kforce). He was an executive for a startup to a Fortune 500 Corp. He has an MBA and a chemical engineering undergraduate degree.