

Sustainability Champions

Best Practices in Corporate Sustainability

Winners of the 1st annual Sustainability Champions awards demonstrate the profitable side of going green

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Sustainability Champion Awards demonstrate best practices

The president of a regional financial corporation and a clean-tech upstart demonstrate the profitable side of growing green

By Mike Cote

As sustainability becomes mainstream, it becomes a tougher task to honor people, companies and organizations that transcend business as usual.

The Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment and the Colorado Environmental Partnership partnered with Connected Organizations for a Responsible Economy (CORE), and ColoradoBiz – the creator of Planet-Profit Report -- to present the 2010 Sustainability Champion Awards. The program was sponsored by PAETEC, a New York-based telecom company.

This year's winners were comprised of three individuals and three teams that have not only reduced waste and greenhouse gas emissions but in many cases have created substantial cost savings and economic opportunities. A team of judges from the state of Colorado and CORE selected the winners from nearly 100 entries, examining how they met criteria for the environment, economy, society, innovation and education.

A look at two of the winners – one individual and one team entry – offer



strong examples of how business is embracing sustainability – and profiting from it.

Mariner Kemper, CEO, UMB Financial Corp.

Engaging in 'green' practices is good for business, CEO says

UMB CEO Mariner Kemper says one of the best things about winning the 2010 Sustainability Champion Award is that it gives him another platform to talk about sustainability.

“For me, it’s very equally split between being good for business and being good for the planet,” says Kemper, whose company’s banking subsidiaries operate banking centers through Colorado, Missouri, Illinois, Oklahoma, Nebraska and Arizona.

“The planet doesn’t get any bigger, and we add more people to it every year,” he says. “People are living longer lives. If we don’t ultimately start caring more, you can’t argue that it has a negative impact on the lives of our kids and our grandkids.”

UMB’s sustainability efforts break up into four categories, Kemper says: internal practices, community outreach, associate engagement – and generating business through products and services.

“We developed green-oriented products, and we’ve given our associates a bunch of benefits tied to such things,” says Kemper, including the full-cost of light rail and bus commuting for its Colorado employees.

Here’s how Kemper’s efforts measured up according several metrics considered by the judges:

Environment: Kemper has led UMB’s efforts to ensure new branches and upgrades are completed using green practices. In 2007, UMB opened its first “green” building in Stapleton, which included a grass roof as part of its structural design. In 2008, UMB completed a carbon calculator for the company’s entire footprint, which showed a 2 percent overall decrease in

emissions from 2007. Since then, UMB has opened two branches in Missouri and Kansas that are seeking certification for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) and has plans to seek LEED certification on two additional projects.

Economy: UMB’s energy conservation measures have saved the company nearly \$181,000 during 2009. Recycled toner and ink cartridges saved an additional \$8,500 from May to November 2009.

Society: UMB has partnered with the Denver Botanic Gardens for a three-year agreement that supports the gardens’ annual operating budget and a capital campaign that aims to enhance the gardens as a model of sustainability. The “Flourish” campaign is designed to enhance the gardens as a model of sustainability.

Innovation: The company created the UMB Eco Rewards credit card that allows consumers to earn double points on qualified “green” purchases. Points may be allocated as a donation to environmental organizations.

Education: Three years ago, Kemper helped lead the creation of the UMB Green Team to work on initiatives to reduce greenhouse emissions. Employees compete monthly to see who can have the greatest impact.

“My associates are as excited about it as I am,” Kemper says. “It’s important work to care about the planet, to think past your nose, to think past the next quarter, to think past the next year. It’s meaningful work.”

Coolerado Corp., a Rocky Mountain clean-tech company

Coolerado can rightly tout that it’s cool to be green. The Denver-based company manufactures and sells air conditioners that use one fifth or less of the energy required by the most efficient conventional systems.

“If we can get a large percentage of the population to move to this air conditioner, we can save a substantial amount of coal or whatever the source

of power generation is,” said Rick Gillan, whose brothers Lee and Rick also work for the Denver company. “Essentially you can cool a building for the amount of power that you would normally use to just run fans.”

Here’s how the company measured up according to several metrics considered by the judges:

Environment: Laboratory testing by the U.S. Department of Energy indicated that the company’s new system, the Coolerado H80, beat the 2010 standards by 60 percent at peak demand and will use 80 percent less energy overall when compared to traditional cooling systems. The company is the first certified winner of the U.C. Davis Western Cooling Challenge — a challenge to exceed 2010 DOE energy standards by 40 percent.

Economy: In 2009, Coolerado added 33 jobs, growing from 14 employees to 47. The company increased the number of units sold by 350 percent from 2008 to 2009. Its customers included Azatlan Recreation Center, Montbello Library and the Denver Fire Station.

Society: Coolerado hosted the “Green Buildings, Green Jobs” energy event at the Denver Library last summer.

Innovation: Using technology patented by Chief Scientist Varleriy Maisotsenko, Coolerado’s air conditioners deliver fresh, clean air at or below wet bulb temperature, thought to be impossible by many scientists, the company says. (Wet bulb temperature is the lowest temperature an object can be cooled by evaporation.)

Education: Through presentations, such as video tutorials, Coolerado is showing how technology can help solve energy problems.

Unlike conventional air-conditioning systems, Coolerado’s products invite fresh air into the building – a notable change in an era of commercial buildings that feature windows that cannot be opened.

“With a traditional air-conditioning system you seal yourself up. With our system, we’re very good at cooling down air and blowing in 100 percent fresh air,” Gillan said.