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Phyllis LeBlanc, CEO
and Billie Phillips,
vice president,
marketing

Organics Buyers: Going for the Greens

When you think of people who buy organic foods, do you imagine hippies wearing love beads and living in communes? Think again. This is a well-educated, affluent, health-conscious group that's willing to spend more for healthier products. "Organic consumers focus on making the best choices for their health and the world," says Randy Frank Leeds, publisher of *Organic Gardening* magazine. "They are you and me."

A Healthy Market

Organics buyers are a big market that's growing. The organic food market was worth an estimated \$3.6 billion in 2006, more than double the \$1.5 billion market of 2001, according to Mintel. "There are 35 million 'true greens,' which is a term from the research team Mintel to indicate those who regularly buy green products, including organics," says Wendy Gordon, publisher of *The Green Guide*, a Web site and newsletter for green consumers. "The next lower level are the 'light greens,' who sometimes buy green products, and that group is 200 million."

Of *Organic Gardening* magazine's 200,000 subscribers, 69 percent are women. According to Lori Magill-Cook, executive vice president at ALC, which manages the list for *Organic Gardening*, the median age of the magazine's subscribers is 47, and most of them are married. Their median income is \$72,000. Although this

market spans all ages, "true greens" and "light greens" peak between the ages of 45 and 54, according to Gordon. Readers of *The Green Guide* are mostly college-educated.

According to Magill-Cook, *Organic Gardening* subscribers index higher than the average U.S. population in several areas: they're into arts (130) and hiking and camping (119), and this audience indexes 148 regarding environmental issues. "They're very much into environmental issues and politics," adds Magill-Cook. "They're crafty, meaning they're into gardening and woodworking and making their own items. They're culturally intuitive and are into arts and museums. They're outdoor enthusiasts, and they're health-conscious."

Purchasing Patterns

Organic and green products are still in the minority when it comes to what's available and what people are buying; even among those who identify themselves as the most "green," only about one in four will purchase organic products several times per week, says Gordon. But the category of green goods is growing fast. According to Gordon, there was a 267 percent increase in the use of hybrid vehicles between 2004 and 2005. Energy Star energy-saving appliances also are getting hotter every year.

The healthy sensibilities of organics buyers extend into other product and service areas. These buyers also



Organics buyers are good prospects for environmental causes. For example, fundraisers such as Nature Conservancy and National Arbor Day Foundation have mailed the *Organic Gardening* file.

are likely to purchase natural household cleaning products, eco-tourism, nutritional supplements, organic pet care products, gardening products, natural personal care products and organic clothing.

Cultivating Customers

"Based on my experience, direct mail has proven itself as the best marketing medium to obtain new customers," says Lisa Teele, sales director at The List Experts, which manages the Organic Food for Life file. "E-mail is a good medium for staying in touch with current customers, and upselling

products or services, but not the best way to make an initial sale or develop a new relationship," she adds. Frank Leeds suggests partnering with other green businesses to do co-op marketing to the target audience.

People who buy organics and green products are highly networked and "evangelical," according to Sherry Nusbaum, marketing director of Ogden Publications, which publishes *Mother Earth News*, *Herb Companion* and *Natural Home*. "An advertiser's overall impact far exceeds the buy," she says. "Our studies show that, on average, these individuals have networks that easily exceed 100 people."

Even more important than the medium is the message. "The organic consumer is very savvy," says Frank Leeds. "You have to be sure your message is full of integrity. They understand the issue and will know if you aren't being truthful." According to Frank Leeds, key phrases that resonate with a green audience include: 100 percent

organic; safe for home/family/pets; locally grown; manufactured sustainably; certified; and fairly traded.

If you have a product or service that's healthy for people and the envi-

ronment, craft a compelling message and reach out to the world of green. ■

Linda Formichelli is a freelance writer. She can be reached at linda-eric@lerv.com.

Lists to Test

The following is a sample of lists available to reach this market.

All Natural Organics and Herbs

Buyers: 320,596 12-month buyers of direct-mail sold herbal remedies, healing herbs, and organic gardening products. Price: \$80/M. Call: Venture Direct, (212) 655-5158.

Environmental Nutrition:

83,022 active subscribers to a newsletter offering advice on the latest organic foods, diet foods, alternative medicine and fitness. Price: \$105/M. Call: Specialists Marketing Services, (201) 865-5800.

Gaiam Harmony:

63,388 12-month buyers of organic and untreated nat-

ural fiber clothing, environmentally safe cleaners and other hard-to-find merchandise. This file is available for exchange only. Call: Belardi/Ostroy ALC, (212) 924-1300.

Organic Food for Life:

3.6 million individuals who believe in eating organic foods. Price: \$90/M. Call: The List Experts, (727) 669-2500.

Organic Gardening:

102,940 U.S. subscribers to a publication that acts as a resource on gardening without synthetic fertilizers or pesticides. Price: \$100/M. Call: ALC, (609) 580-2800.