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Dear Reader,

Following with our periodical issues featuring articles related to CSR, this month we are pleased to share with you an interview with Joe Laur, Vice President for Content, Greenopolis.com He explains and describes the revolutionary initiative called Greenopolis - the Green City!

Enjoy the reading!

Isabel Rimanoczy
Editor

Quote of the Month

*"Whatever we do will be insignificant,
but it is vitally important that we do it."*

Mahatma Gandhi

LIM NEWS

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Greenopolis: The Birth of the Green Village

An Interview with Joe Laur

LIM News: What is Greenopolis?

JL: It is a new destination web portal, but actually it is a number of other things: A global community, supported by net connections, for people who want to learn about all aspects of sustainability issues. Greenopolis supports individuals to convert the learning from this online community into coherent actions in their lives and communities, and be rewarded for it, both by tangible rewards and the appreciation of the larger community. It's also a movement of millions of people taking the next step, small or incremental, towards a more sustainable lifestyle, living and acting in a more responsible way in the world. So even if the steps taken by an individual seem small they are multiplied by thousands, millions of fellow "citizens", and companies will take note, and tailor their offers and products accordingly, and governments - who are often the last to come along - will see what's happening and put much needed policies in place.

LIM News: You mention rewards; can you explain what you refer to?

JL: The site invites individuals to identify actions they want to take. Then, as people go to the site and report on the changes they are making in their life, they get "green" points for it. The points can be obtained by actions such as engaging others on the site, asking questions in the site's blog for example, as well as reporting "green" changes in lifestyle and behavior. The points accumulate to reward different "badges" which trigger rewards: T-shirts, badges, organic coffee, books, etc. The points can also be aggregated and donated to a school or non-profit group, and then can be exchanged for computers, other educational aids, and so on. Roughly twenty percent of the site's revenues will be engaged in funding the rewards program.

LIM News: That sounds very innovative! I visited the site and read 'Green made fun' - What does that mean?

JL: Well, it happens that people at play are more serious in their engagement! Take a look at sports. The playful side reinforces the willingness and ability to participate. We are creating an engaging, stimulating, enjoyable movement. We hope it's as engaging as a game of tennis, or watching the World Series. This is a game we must win. Every day is for the championship!

LIM News: Where did the idea originate?

JL: It originated in a couple of different places. There were people inside Waste Management who wanted to be more proactive, to reach out to the 20 million households, 10,000 schools, and thousands of businesses, towns and municipalities and create a deeper connection with them, a social network. Also there were some other people involved in Web 2.0 social networks who were considering the creation of a social network not just

for dating or climbing the professional ladder - but to foster green behavior. So one day they got together at a sports event where their kids were playing, and started talking about it. This is how it came together. The idea was further developed until it became what it now known as Greenopolis.

LIM News: How did you get involved?

JL: I was introduced by a professor who mentioned that WM was interested in the SoL Sustainability Consortium.¹ I have been dreaming for a long time about a web function, an ongoing social network that could support the consortium members between face to face meetings. So I offered to bring together business leaders, green gurus, consultants, academics, develop a network faculty...well one conversation led to another, and now I'm the VP of Content, and my role among other things is to ensure the best quality and broadest scope of content on the site, and continuously, expand and grow it.

LIM News: Who is behind Greenopolis?

JL: Right now, with no real promotion, we have nearly 4,000 individual users that discovered it practically by word of mouth, since we haven't launched it yet! We will officially launch it at the end of March 2008. Some of the users are from within WM. We also have a few dozen corporate partners, who state why they care about sustainability, what they are doing and also advertise their products, services, and add their knowledge to the site. We don't have any exclusive partnerships. So the users are from small companies to large ones. It's an open city. We also are inviting NGOs, government agencies and universities.

LIM News: What do academics do?

JL: We have a section called E green U. It is the educational site, where teachers, students and adult learners can find resources such as documents, courses, video, blogs, all educational materials that they may need.

LIM News: What would you say is the overall purpose of Greenopolis?

JL: We have four main purposes: 1) for people to learn; 2) to promote taking action, 3) to have a mechanism to reward for the actions, and 4) the development of a community. It has an online and offline function.

LIM News: What do these online and offline functions look like?

JL: The online function is on the website, there are weblogs that we are soliciting from thought leaders, videos, news feeds, and a weekly radio show through PBS. There is a market place with services and products from companies involved in sustainability efforts. Then we have a free exchange service among individuals and businesses swapping goods no longer needed between individuals, and green intellectual property between businesses, and so on. We also have a playground: games and simulations for environmental education. Finally we have a Foundation, a not for profit organization, providing grants to schools for sustainable education. This will be funded by revenues of the website and

from participating partners. Some of the offline features will include dedicated kiosks in malls that allow people to search for the greenest product and services, automated recycling centers that reward users with online points, "point of sale" carbon offsets, Greenopolis community events and so on. The online world will foster real action in the offline world.

LIM News: Is this a Wikipedia-like site, where people can post without authorization?

JL: Somewhat. Right now 75% of the content is user generated. We are exploring a U Green Tube, to post videos although we will do some basic screening for appropriateness. We think that people post what is right and true, as it has been seen with Wiki. The error rates in these open communities are low.

LIM News: What do you expect to accomplish with this site? What is your vision, your dream, Joe?

JL: To change the world! Millions of people stepping into new behaviors! Imagine a great ship and all passengers move a step to the right, it's a small movement for the individual but collectively it moves the ship. That is what we are envisioning. As people move, the products, services and software will follow them, and eventually even political leaders will catch up!

LIM News: How is this different from other green portals?

JL: Other portals do a few of these functions, yet there is no site that combines all these functions. This is an ambitious one. The software architecture is like a web-based Taj Mahal. We don't allow greenwashing,² but we are open to anybody as long as it's a legitimate cause. We have big funding to make this successful. This is a major initiative from a \$13 billion corporation who wants to create a greener planet. It's a genuine commitment coming from the highest levels of the organization. It's not only the right thing to do, it's smart business. They are creating energy out of waste by capturing methane from landfills and converting it to electricity, LNG and biodiesel. They are restoring landfill space to wildlife habitat - nearly 20 thousand acres so far. Siting windmills on land-fills, creating businesses to eliminate and utilize waste, not just sequester it. One of the reasons I joined the company was because I saw them evolving a creative new future out of both their past skills and the emerging needs of the future.

LIM News: You mentioned greenwashing. Many corporate green initiatives are being scrutinized, to discern if they are "PR" or greenwashing through less responsible behaviors. What is your opinion about it?

JL: I think it's a good scrutiny. We need it, those who are doing good work will be rewarded and those not, exposed. I'm a big fan of scepticism, it's healthy. We cannot afford cynicism though. It's counterproductive to say all are bad. We need to reward the good behaviors. People and organizations can and do change.

LIM News: Who is the audience you're aiming at?

JL: The great middle - light greens, people interested in environmental action but who need the right circumstances to take those steps, and the middle class here in the US, people who would like to do the right thing if they see a convenient enough path, if it doesn't break the budget. Maybe I can change the lamps in my house. Or a few ones? We will also be a resource to the deep greens - who are already doing many environmental friendly things. And we don't specifically go after those who believe that global warming is a left wing hoax, or think that paving the earth would reduce maintenance.


LIM News: Don't you believe in the educational power of the site?

JL: Yes I do, but the fringe is not our main target. Most people know we cannot continue the way we are living and have a viable future. The hard core disbelievers will be dragged along ultimately, even in spite of themselves. You can't stop the tsunami of change that is upon us now.

LIM News: When did this initiative start?

JL: It began 2 years ago with a conversation between a web developer and a WM executive at a soccer game. A social connection. Since then it has evolved and expanded progressively. We have about 20% of our functionality up, by the end of March we will have 60-70% up. By the end of the year we expect to have 100% functionality and half a million people using the site.

LIM News: What support do you need?

JL: People and organizations to visit the site, and participate. Greenopolis is a green city, we need residents, schools, NGOs, politicians, educators, coming with suggestions and input. That will make it a strong shining city on a hill. The strength and passion of people working in community for the common good. 

LIV GREENE INTERACTION

Liv Greene is the avatar or "digital ambassador" of Greenopolis - inviting and helping people explore, learn and take incremental green steps

to help preserve the planet. As a "green" ambassador, teacher, eco-tour guide, and friendly helper, Liv guides Greenopolis members through steps toward sustainable living. She welcomes "green" questions and provides helpful environmental tips, encouraging everyone to think and grow in the spirit of greener living. Liv helps keep eco-friendly solutions fresh in all our minds. Liv "lives" on Greenopolis, has a Myspace page and is linked to AOL Instant Messenger users.

- Myspace page creation and 5,000 friends
- AIM Network promotions:
- Ads on Buddy Lists (5-10 million impressions month of launch)
- AIM Bot hub, (approximately 2,000 clicks per day)
- AIM Newsletter promotion to millions of users
- Ongoing tips and updates (targeting 2 million daily users).

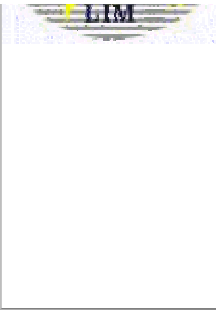
For more information, visit www.greenopolis.org

¹The SoL Sustainability Consortium is a "learning community" of companies committed to accelerating the creation of knowledge needed to achieve a truly sustainable economy.

²"Greenwashing" is the name given to corporate actions that are meant to cover un-sustainable behaviors through a PR campaign.

If you want more triggers for reflection, visit <http://isabelrimanoczy.blogspot.com>.





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