

How to Soften the Credit Crunch by 'Going Green'

By Jean Cannon

We currently face a plethora of dilemmas such as late payments, diminished disposable income and possible unemployment issues as a direct result of the global economic crisis, not to mention reduced turnover and restructuring for many businesses. Facing such difficult times, particularly with the end not yet in sight, it is imperative we implement measures to help us save time and money. Reducing your carbon emissions will make a huge difference to your pocket, both at home and at work. By 'going green', you can do your bit to soften the financial blow and actively participate in working towards a more ecologically stable environment for future generations to come.

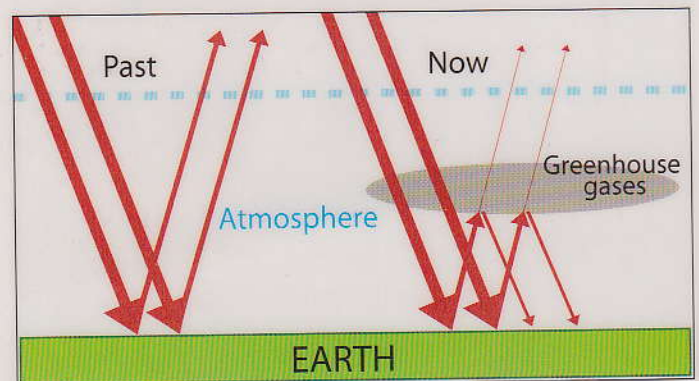
The multitude of hype surrounding global warming and greenhouse emissions has ensured that many people have become confused about the reality of the situation. So let me start by telling it to you straight, in simple terms. Our impact on the environment is risking greater financial chaos and putting our children and grandchildren's future in danger. We need to make urgent changes to our lifestyle and business practices; the longer we leave it, the more it will cost to repair the damage.

The three most wasteful countries in the world are Australia, United States of America and Canada. As Australians, we live way beyond our environmental means, emitting more greenhouse gases per head than any other nation. Many developed countries however, have become more aware of their destructive impact on the environment, enthusiastically incorporating concepts of 'buying local' and 'carbon miles' into their business practices. These, of course, have had a detrimental effect on the import and export industries of Australia and New Zealand and have been used as an anti-competitive tool simply because of our geographical location in the world.

It is now time for Australia to fight back in the war against global warming and show the world we care. We need to step up, go green and be seen green by reducing our carbon footprint and supporting businesses that take initiative in helping the environment.

What exactly is global warming?

In short, global warming is a symptom of atmospheric pollution. Emitting excessive amounts of carbon dioxide (CO₂), methane gas and nitrogen oxide (NO_x), as well as a myriad of other gases into the air has actually changed the chemical composition of the earth's atmosphere. As a result, we now have a man-made layer of polluted atmosphere, otherwise known as greenhouse gases, covering the earth. This polluted blanket acts as insulation, allowing the sun's rays to permeate through, but only letting a reduced amount of reflected rays out.



Researchers have estimated we have between 10 and 20 years before we reach 'tipping point', where we simply do not have the energy or resources to recover. While this is almost inconceivable to imagine, we need to remember we are balancing precariously at the brink of no return.

What are the effects of global warming?

Global warming is responsible for countless crises that have devastated so many lives, homes and businesses. Lately, we have had appalling fires in Victoria and more than half of Queensland flooded - at the same time. The raised sea levels due to ice melts at both poles have drowned island nations. Such extreme weather will only escalate in frequency and force if we do not make serious lifestyle changes urgently. Other grave implications of global warming include ever-increasing food shortages, the

extinction of many species by the end of this century and a huge hit on the global economy, with the likelihood of extending the financial crisis.

So what do we mean by 'going green'?

'Being green' is about living within our environmental means. It is really about looking at what we can do and wasting less. It is also about buying goods and services from people that show they care for the environment. We can still live comfortable lifestyles and run profitable businesses.

For example, my own environmental consultancy is run largely on the Internet, so I use fully wind powered servers, buy green power myself, conserve energy and materials where I can and donate to Trees for Life, an organisation that grows trees in ecologically sustainable plantings. I am also certified to the international standard for environmental management, ISO 14001. This is the only internationally recognised certification or green tick; many others are fraudulent.

Rather than considering global warming as a problem to be ignored or even be sceptical about, we need to view it as an opportunity to save money and build sustainability as we move into a new century with both carbon and financial constraints. ❖

Helpful tips and tricks to help you save money (and the environment)

1. Go for a 'grumpy walk' every day and turn off everything that is not being used. Phone chargers, game consoles, computers and printers add a lot to your power bill.
2. Air dry your clothes. Even in a small apartment there is room for an airing rack.
3. Check your fridge door seals and don't run it less than 4°C.
4. Keep a few beers in the kitchen and turn off the beer fridge except when you are having a party.
5. Plan before you drive instead of doing lots of short trips.
6. Don't leave lights on in empty rooms and passages. Motion detectors and timers are great savers. Use the new compact fluoro bulbs but please put them in the recycle bin not the landfill one and don't break them.

- From *Reduce Your Carbon Footprint* by Jean Cannon

Jean Cannon is an environmental consultant, author, speaker, marine biologist and grandmother. She helps small to medium businesses to go green and reduce carbon, mostly in online groups. Visit www.enviroaction.com.au or call 1300 88 3646.

