

Serious About

By Barbara Wichmann

SUSTAINABILITY

20 years in the business: Celebrating sustainably!

2015 is a landmark year for my agency, **ARTEMIA Communications**, as we celebrate 20 years in business.

Incredibly, according to the **U.S. Small Business Administration**, only 44 percent of businesses survive the first five years, so we are overjoyed to have reached this threshold.

So, what has changed in 20 years? Well, first of all, we weren't calling ourselves a "digital agency" back then. In 1995, the World Wide Web was in its very nascent stage, fax machines still beeped and buzzed away, and there was no daily onslaught of emails to contend with. Also, there were no smartphones. Ditto for social media; **Facebook** and **LinkedIn** didn't come along until 2004, **Twitter** in 2006.

What hasn't changed is our unerring commitment to sustainability. As proud as we are as an agency to have survived and thrived over the last two decades and weathered many economic highs and lows, including the first dot com boom and bust and the small matter of the worst recession in living history, it is a focus on sustainability that has defined us. So, when deciding how we wanted to mark this special year, I thought it would be pertinent to "celebrate sustainably!" We've spent the last couple of months researching ideas for how we can put this into action. Here are our favorite plans so far:

1. Invest in the environment. In San Francisco, there is an excellent group called **Friends of the Urban Forest** who offer individuals and corporations the opportunity to support them in various ways, including "Adopt-a-Planting,"

where you can fund the purchase of up to 20 trees, and get involved with the planting as well. It's a wonderful way to make a small but immediate impact on your local area and support a great cause. There are lots of similar schemes in other urban areas if you'd like to get planting yourself!

2. Employee "Bright Spark" Sustainability Award. I've written before about the importance of getting each and every employee involved not just to successfully achieve your sustainability goals but to continually identify new initiatives. It's all too easy to lose a good idea in the hubbub of everyday business life but creating a more formal—and fun—way of capturing ideas helps turn those intentions into action. Holding these "awards" on a monthly basis should help keep the momentum going and provide a natural opportunity to report back on how earlier "Bright Spark" ideas are performing.

3. Sustainable "gifts" for your clients. We are grateful to have worked with some amazing and inspiring clients over the years and it's only right that we take the time to thank them properly. We try and avoid branded tchotchkes that all too soon end up in the recycling bin. Instead,

we have been reaching out to our clients and offering free consultations in our areas of expertise, from website assessments to kicking the tires of their marketing plans. This tackles sustainability from an economic perspective while enabling us to give back in a smart, green way.

4. Recycle old electronic office equipment. Not the most exciting way to celebrate a big anniversary you may think, but there is a lot to be said for ridding the office of clutter to re-energize the place. Additionally, it really is good for the environment. According to the **Global eSustainability Initiative** (GeSI), 320 tons of gold and more than 7,500 tons of silver are used to make computers, cell phones, tablets, and other electronic products every year. So it stands to reason that recycling can have a huge impact, and the numbers bear that out. It's also huge business—as there's gold in them thar closets, quite literally! According to the **U.S. Environmental Protection Agency**, recycling one million laptops saves the energy equivalent to the

electricity used by more than 3,500 U.S. homes in a year and for every million cellphones that are recycled, 35,000 pounds of copper, 772 pounds of silver, 75 pounds of gold, and 33 pounds of palladium can be recovered, making sustainability experts call for e-waste to be managed as a resource.

I believe that whichever way you look at it, and however long you have been around, a sustainable mindset is as good for business as it is for the environment. It's about doing more with less, and being more effective as a result. According to the 2013 report *The Big Green Opportunity*, “small businesses at the frontier of capitalizing green opportunities are capturing significant

market and operational advantages.” Here's to another 20 years of living and working sustainably to us all! ♦



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