



MEDIA RELEASE

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Improving Sustainability Performance is Key to Enhancing Corporate Brand Image, According to Experts

Washington DC (June 8, 2010) – Improving performance on key sustainability impacts, not just improving communication, is key to enhancing corporate brand image, according to a new poll of global sustainability experts. But even some of the companies most commonly cited as sustainability leaders - such as Walmart and GE - are not seen to be maximizing this potential just yet.

Findings from the 2010 *Sustainability Survey* by GlobeScan and SustainAbility show that while a majority of global thought leaders agree that improving sustainability performance improves overall brand image, significantly fewer believe that ramping up sustainability branding efforts results in improved sustainability performance. In fact, less than half of respondents believe that any of the most common branded sustainability efforts are improving actual sustainability performance.

More than 1,200 experts were surveyed in February and March 2010 on a range of topics related to sustainability, including critical trends and issues, climate change, and the drivers of sustainability leadership. Respondents were drawn from corporate, government, NGO, academic, research, and service organizations, and span more than 80 countries in Asia, Africa, the Middle East, Europe, North and South America, Australia and New Zealand. The *Sustainability Survey* is the largest global poll of the views of sustainability experts.

Some key findings from the survey include:

- Almost nine in ten (88%) experts believe that improving sustainability performance leads to a stronger brand; only two percent of experts disagree.
- Just over half (55%) of experts say that integrating sustainability into a company's brand image results in improved sustainability performance, while two in ten (19%) disagree. Corporate experts are more convinced that integrating sustainability into a company's brand image improves its sustainability performance.
- Four in ten experts (43%) find that sustainable brand claims by companies are mostly "green washing". Experts from the corporate sectors are much less likely to agree that sustainable brand claims are "green washing" than are experts from NGOs or institutions.
- Almost three-quarters of experts (73%) believe that there will be a great deal more sustainable brand initiatives from companies in the coming year.

The survey also suggests that competition and the need for differentiation will continue to mount, as the number of sustainable branding efforts is expected to rise in the coming year. But, skepticism remains high that most of these initiatives are little more than "green washing."

Experts cited public commitments, ambitious targets, robust systems and a track record of improved performance as the attributes of sustainability leaders.

Those programs cited as having the most credibility - Walmart's "Sustainability Index", GE's "Ecomagination," and Interface's "Mission Zero," - demonstrate many of the attributes of transformational leadership: that is, having sustainable products, clear goals/objectives, and evidence of integration into

core business. But still, the research shows that even the best branded initiatives are not doing enough to convince stakeholders, as almost half of respondents rank those three leading initiatives as ineffective.

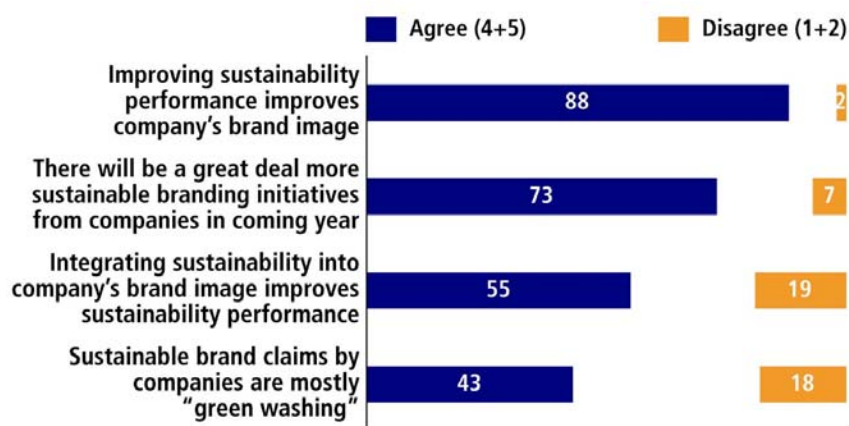
Jeff Erikson, Senior Vice President at SustainAbility, comments “It is clear from our survey results that sustainability is now firmly embedded as a competitive business issue. Those companies that have robust strategies – and that effectively deliver on them – will be advantaged in the marketplace.”

Chris Coulter, Senior Vice President at GlobeScan, adds, “Branding around sustainability is a critical component of corporate leadership today, yet it is extremely difficult to execute well. Companies aspiring to be recognized leaders in sustainability need to find ways to succinctly and uniquely communicate their commitments but must be mindful of the challenges involved in strategic brand positioning.”

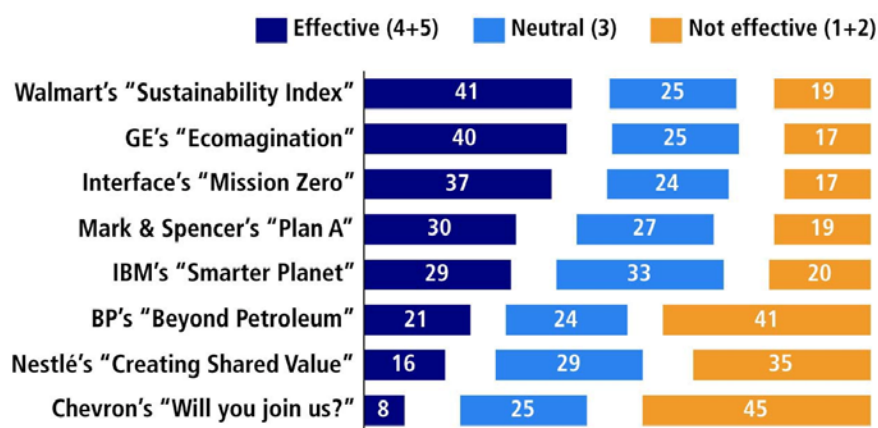
Select findings

All figures in the charts are percentages.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?



Please rate how effective each of the following branded corporate sustainability initiatives have been on improving the company's sustainability performance.*



*Note that thought leaders with particular expertise in social and development issues are more likely than environmentally focused experts to believe that IBM's "Smarter Planet" and Nestlé's "Creating Shared Value" are effective. The reverse is true when it comes to effectiveness ratings of GE's "Ecomagination", Walmart's "Sustainability Index", and Interface's "Mission Zero."

About *The Sustainability Survey Research Program*

The Sustainability Survey research program is a unique, collaborative platform using research-driven expert insights to explore solutions to business' biggest sustainability challenges. The program is designed to assist corporate leaders navigate the challenges and opportunities related to sustainability by leveraging the insights polled from the most influential thought leaders in the sustainable development arena. These quantitative results then inform forward-looking strategic counsel and ongoing trends analysis for companies participating in the membership-based research program.

About GlobeScan

GlobeScan is an international opinion research consultancy. Companies, multilateral institutions, governments, and NGOs trust GlobeScan for its unique expertise in reputation research, sustainability, and issues management. GlobeScan provides global organizations with evidence-based insight and advice to help them build strong brands, manage relations with key stakeholders, and define their strategic positioning. GlobeScan conducts research in over 90 countries, is certified to the ISO 9001:2008 standard for its quality management system, and is a signatory to the UN Global Compact. Established in 1987, GlobeScan is an independent, management-owned company with offices in London, Toronto, and San Francisco. www.GlobeScan.com

About SustainAbility

SustainAbility is a strategy consultancy and think tank working with senior corporate decision makers to achieve transformative leadership on the sustainability agenda. We offer a range of services designed to create financial value at the same time as addressing environmental, social and governance issues in an integrated manner. SustainAbility also undertakes advocacy to contribute to a policy environment and broader public understanding aligned with our ESG goals. www.sustainability.com

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