



# The ULS Report™

Helping people Use Less Stuff by conserving resources and reducing waste.

## Using Less Stuff Gets a Little Easier

*Earth friendly. Recyclable. Environmentally safe. Biodegradable. Compostable.* The list of marketing claims and superlatives seems to get bigger and more confusing daily. To help consumers make more informed decisions about products and packages, we have created a program that allows companies to feature the ULS logo on their packages if they can prove that the:

- Product or package reduces waste or energy consumption by at least 20% when compared to previous versions or similar products.
- Related marketing claims meet FTC guidelines for environmental statements.



We're pleased to announce the first three products that have earned the right to use the ULS logo. All three use significantly less packaging than either their previous versions or packaging that is typical in their industries. None contain artificial ingredients, and two are concentrated, delivering more functionality with less material, energy and waste.

### Doctor Drain® Natural Septic Treatment

Over 25 million American households have septic systems. To keep them operating effectively and to reduce the potential for expensive maintenance procedures, it is generally recommended that homeowners treat their systems monthly.

Doctor Drain has been around for years, and has always based its performance on the superior biodegradation capabilities of natural enzymes and bacteria. The company that produces the product, Winston Company of Tulsa, OK, has gone further in its quest to produce the most sustainable septic treatment.



Winston first removed all the extraneous fillers from Doctor Drain so that 8 oz. of the new product does the same job as 24 oz. of the previous version, a triple concentration and material reduction of 67%. This material reduction also reduces the energy needed to transport the product, saving money and reducing greenhouse gas generation.

Winston has also moved from using a rigid plastic container to a lightweight pouch. The combined effect of less product in a lighter container means that 74% less waste now goes to landfills versus the old product.

How big a deal is this? Just by themselves, Walmart customers who buy the new Doctor Drain will reduce consumer packaging waste by over 65 tons. *Get more information at [www.winstoncompany.com](http://www.winstoncompany.com).*

### Perfect Glacier™ Ice Water

This is a new product from Park City Ice Water Company of Park City, Utah. Perfect Glacier Ice Water comes from a source that is "isolated, protected and untouched by modern-man for over 20,000 years."

The new easy-to-hold, flexible container creates 47% less waste than a typical PET bottle. Based on selling 60 million units a year, the result is a reduction of annual waste heading to landfills of approximately 1.5 million pounds, or 750 tons. *For more information, go to [www.parkcityicewater.com](http://www.parkcityicewater.com).*



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## Safonique® Laundry Detergent

Safonique is hypo-allergenic, free of phosphate, chlorine, and dyes. It does not use optical brighteners, yet it uses natural borax to clean as well as other laundry detergents on the market today.

Versus typical detergents in typical HDPE bottles, Safonique's combination of 2X concentration and flexible pouch container reduce primary packaging net discards by 78% and secondary packaging (paperboard cartons) by 50%. Go to [www.safonique.com](http://www.safonique.com) for information.



### Learn More

If you're interested in learning more about our certification program, please go to [www.use-less-stuff.com](http://www.use-less-stuff.com) or call us at 248-726-9729.



## SPRING CLEANING

It's springtime, when a person's fancy turns to...the great outdoors. Many of you have asked us to re-print our Spring cleaning tips from 1996! Glad to oblige.

As usual, most of our tips involve lots of old-fashioned common sense. While all save natural resources, many save financial ones, too. What a deal!

### Let's start at home...

There are plenty of things you can do to save resources in and around your home:

- Turn off your furnace and drain it, if appropriate.
- Try turning down the water heater, since you won't be taking too many hot showers during the summer. On average, your water heater is the single biggest energy user in the house.
- Clean out your refrigerator and wipe the dust off the coils. The less you try to keep cool, the less energy you use. And clean coils mean that the compressor runs more efficiently and lasts longer, too.
- Change or clean the filter on your air conditioner and vacuum the dust from the coils. If you've got central air, consider having the ducts cleaned, too.
- Before resorting to the AC, try cross-ventilating by opening the top and bottom windows on opposite sides of the room. This will set up a nice, free breeze.

- If you're away during the day, keep the drapes closed to keep out sun and heat. Your home will be cooler when you (finally) get home.
- Hold a garage sale. Give what's left to a charitable group such as the Salvation Army or Purple Heart.
- Caulk, paint and seal your house. It will last longer, save energy and save money. (Not to mention look better!)
- Have a pool? Covers retain heat and reduce water loss by 90%.
- Building a deck? Consider plastic lumber made from recycled materials. It'll be low maintenance, sturdy and won't require the use of virgin resources.

### Moving to the garden...

Did you know that up to 15 percent of your town's waste is comprised of lawn clippings, yard debris and other organic matter? So, what you do outside can have a tremendous impact on your community's landfill capacity and disposal/sanitation budget.

- Check and repair leaky hoses, faucets and connections. This is especially important for in-ground irrigation systems.
- Put your sprinklers on timers and water only very early in the day or in the evening. If possible, switch to drip irrigation. You'll reduce water evaporation and run-off.
- Aerate your lawn to increase water penetration and air flow to the roots.
- Control weeds to reduce water consumption. If you can put down a pre-emergent, do so. Better to prevent weeds than to have to pull or kill them.
- Mulch & spread lawn clippings. Compost what's left.
- Tune up and clean the mower; replace the plugs; and use a file to sharpen, rather than replace, the blades.
- Why buy when you can rent or borrow tools? (Don't forget to return them!)
- Use glazed ceramic or plastic pots in cooler climates. Terra cotta looks pretty, but the winter-spring freeze-thaw cycle will probably crack your pots.



# When Perception Isn't Reality

By Robert Lilienfeld, Editor

Ever since the 1960s, when Philip Kotler defined and created the field of marketing as it still exists today, the basic rule of thumb has been simple: *perception is reality*.

It is the job of marketers to build perceptions that both differentiate products and cause them to be preferred. The weapons at their disposal are fear, greed, the need for social acceptance, celebrity endorsements and once in a great while, actual facts. I mention facts last because, in reality, they tend to be the least important.

All of this is fine when selling cosmetics, wine, peanut butter, and insurance policies. The differences between most products in a given category are generally slight, so it's up to the marketing folks and their advertising agencies to differentiate products on emotional, rather than physical, characteristics.

The problem is that this approach is *not* fine when trying to promote the most important consumer need we have today: sustainability. The reason is both simple and dramatic: Positive or negative environmental impacts are based purely on the underlying reality imposed by nature, and not on human perceptions of that reality.

A great example of this dilemma can be seen in the area of flexible packaging. For many years, ULS has been promoting the value of flexible packages over rigid alternatives. Flexible bags and pouches tend to reduce material usage, energy consumption, and waste generation. Further, the gains are generally so significant that they offset much lower (if any) recyclability levels versus materials like glass and metal, or HDPE and PET plastics

However, in their desire to be consumer focused, most manufacturers shy away from flexible packages because their research indicates that consumers perceive recyclability as the primary metric they need when gauging the environmental sustainability of a product or package.

Retailers fall into this trap as well. I know of at least one major retailer that is seriously concerned about sustainability, and at the corporate level understands the value of flexible packages. However, its buyers are still caught up in the recyclability perception, and tend to downgrade the science behind the value of reduced weight packaging.

Since the customer and the consumer are king, marketers and retailers allow the public's (mis)perceptions about the value of recycling to both guide their decision making and outweigh reality. In so doing, the potential for long term environmental degradation is increased.

By the way, this type of thinking is a common human frailty. *Every civilization that has ever existed (and disappeared) has turned to recycling to solve its environmental problems*. The problem was that by the time a typical overpopulated culture realized that it was running out of room, food and water, recycling was not beneficial enough to offset the degradation that had occurred. The result was economic and ecologic collapse.

The economic distress that the world currently finds itself in is based upon a very similar scenario. While the reality and potential consequences of ever-increasing debt have been readily available to anyone willing to examine government statistics, the perception that "it can never happen here" and the desire to disregard the warning signs offset the facts. Ultimately, facts won out over faith.

What can manufacturers do to base sustainable product decisions on reality rather than perceptions? Here are a couple of ideas:

1. Focus first on reducing the use of materials and energy throughout their supply chain, and then on reducing the amount of consumer-related waste. By the way, a novel strategy for reducing waste would be to create packaging that ensures 100% of the product it contains is effectively consumed. *This is because the environmental impact of the product is generally 15-20 times greater than the impact of the package.*
2. Monetize and incentivize the Sustainability Department. Today, most sustainability efforts are considered a cost that marketers can forego when times get tough. If management treated sustainability as a profit center rather than as a cost center, we would see a large-scale shift in product development and marketing efforts toward truly sustainable solutions.



## Reduction Roundup™

### Growing Pains for Compact Fluorescent Bulbs

The recent enthusiasm to switch from incandescent to energy-saving compact fluorescent (CFL) bulbs has created two unintended consequences. The first is an increase in the number of lower quality products on the market. The second is a lack of consumer awareness about how best to use these bulbs. The result has been a growing dissatisfaction with CFLs due to the use of the wrong bulbs in the wrong places at the wrong times.

If you do a little planning and smart shopping, CFLs still make tremendous sense from both an economic and ecologic standpoint. Here's what you should know before purchasing them:

- 1. Quality matters.** Buy brands with which you are familiar or have been recommended by friends or store personnel. Remember, you get what you pay for.
- 2. Read the package before you buy.** Most of these bulbs are not meant to be used in recessed ceiling or wall sockets with reduced air flow. Nor are they meant to be used with dimmers or in locations that are frequently turned off and on. There are bulbs specifically designed for these applications (and yes, they cost more!).
- 3. Ask about light color.** Compact fluorescents tend to produce a cooler light, and may not suit applications where you prefer a warmer look. Test first.
- 4. They need special handling when burnt out or broken.** Because CFLs contain tiny amounts of mercury, they should not be thrown in the trash, but should be recycled. Manufacturers and municipalities are creating CFL-specific recycling programs. Learn more about these programs at [www.earth911.com](http://www.earth911.com).

If you need to clean up a broken bulb, follow this advice from *Popular Mechanics*: Open the windows and let the room air out for 15 to 30 minutes, then remove as much material as possible without a vacuum cleaner. Using disposable gloves, scoop the glass onto a piece of cardboard and wipe the area with a wet paper towel. For smaller pieces of glass and powder, use duct tape to pull up the fragments and wash your hands after cleaning up the debris.

Now you know.

### Sustainable Thinking for the Masses

Walmart, the world's largest retailer, has been focusing its suppliers on the concept of sustainability for a couple of years now. Their hope was that environmentally friendly products would be better for the environment and their customers' wallets. Since Walmart focuses relentlessly on low prices, this strategy makes a great deal of sense.

Interestingly, Walmart is starting to showcase some of these lower economic- and ecologic-impact products with consumers. Their web site ([www.walmart.com](http://www.walmart.com)) contains an area called Save & Live Green. We saw three products that tie in perfectly with our Springtime Tips on page 2:

**Peat Pots** - Vegetables and herbs come in these biodegradable pots made from pressed peat moss. Simply dig a hole and plant the plant, pot and all. \$3.50 each.

**Organic Cotton T-Shirts** - Any type of cotton growing is both water and land intensive. At least these are grown without pesticides or defoliants. Cute graphics. \$4-6.00 each.

**100% Recycled Plastic Hangers** - What better way to take care of your organic cotton t-shirts than with new hangers made from old plastic? At 10 hangers for \$1.25, you can't beat the price.



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