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GREEN CERTIFICATION

New 'ULS' logo program rewards source reduction

Published in Packaging World Magazine, April 2009, p. 61

Certification from Use Less Stuff recognizes products and packages that have reduced materials or energy by at least 20%.

A fitting homage to Earth Day, April 22, this month marks the launch of a new green certification program for products and packages that have proven that they Use Less Stuff™—at least 20% less stuff, to be exact. The new ULS logo program is the creation of Robert Lilienfeld, an acknowledged expert on source reduction and editor of the monthly newsletter The **ULS Report™** (www.use-less-stuff.com). Using simple, straightforward “consumer speak,” the ULS logo is designed to clearly and easily articulate to consumers the value of waste prevention.



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To become certified, brand owners must be able to prove two things. First, they have to be able to show through Life Cycle Inventory (LCI) data that their product or package reduces waste by at least 20% compared to their previous product or compared to the industry standard for that product. Second, they must be able to prove that their claims



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meet the **Federal Trade Commission's** (FTC, www.ftc.gov) Green Guides for environmental marketing statements.

“What I am looking for is a 20-percent reduction in packaging through net discards, a 20-percent reduction in energy consumption during processing or transportation, or a 20-percent increase in functionality,” explains Lilienfeld. “So it really is about

using less stuff—less product, less package, or less energy.”

Data validates green claims

In an exclusive interview with Packaging World, Lilienfeld explained that the logo program is designed to address some of the realities of sustainable product and package design that retailers, brand owners, and consumers still struggle to understand. The first concept is that sustainability is a journey, not an absolute.

To address this aspect of sustainability, the program requires that participants must have their product and/or packaging recertified once a year to ensure that it still provides a 20% source reduction compared to competitive products in its category. “What you want is for people to continually try and get better,” says Lilienfeld.

He adds that the requirement for a 20% reduction was chosen “because it’s a reasonable amount, and it’s a significant one,” he says. “So it’s not so huge that it’s a giant hurdle, but it’s not so small that everybody can get there.”

Another misconception, held by product marketers in particular, is that sustainability is just another consumer variable that can be manipulated. “From a marketing perspective, it’s all about perception,” Lilienfeld says. “The problem is that environmental issues are all about reality.

"Nature doesn't care about perception. What nature cares about is the buildup of waste—whether it's product waste or energy waste or pollution. Those are the things that create changes in the ecology. Whether or not you or I choose one package or product over another because the marketer tells us it's better, nature isn't keeping score that way. Nature is keeping score by having to deal with the increased impact of CO2 or waste."

Hence, ULS certification is based on scientific LCI data gathered by a third party and reviewed by Lilienfeld and his advisory board of five scientists. The cost of certification and the timeline for the process vary depending upon whether the brand owner can supply the LCI data upfront or if it must be developed through the ULS program. Either way, Lilienfeld says the cost is very reasonable, and the rates are the same for all companies, regardless of their size.

Early adopters

So far, three consumer products have been ULS-certified. In the coming weeks, new packaging for these products will be introduced on store shelves bearing the square, purple-and-peach-colored ULS emblem that signifies a commitment to source reduction.

For Perfect Glacier IceWater of Park City, UT, an update of the graphics for its GlacierPak™ pouch packaging provided the ideal opportunity to add ULS certification. Since it was launched in 2003, Perfect Glacier, formerly Park City

IceWater, has been packaged in a proprietary, three-layer composite film pouch, supplied by **Ampac** (www.ampaconline.com) and several offshore companies. As Perfect Glacier CFO Dan Beveloqua explains, the inside layer of the gravure-printed GlacierPak is molecularly altered to eliminate toxic leaching and to provide an oxygen barrier that is 20 times that of a standard PET bottle, resulting in a five-year shelf life.

"The source of water that we draw from is a subterranean melted glacier that has been untouched for more than 20,000 years," says Beveloqua. "It is the most pristine source of water being packaged today. So we thought, 'Let's put the purest water that has ever been discovered into an environmentally designed package.' That became the basis for our business model and our business line."



The package's greatest environmental advantage is its source reduction versus PET or glass: According to LCI data, the pouch uses 50% less material than a PET bottle. In terms of energy savings, one truckload of empty GlacierPak packages is equal to 27 truckloads of PET or glass bottles. And, at the end of use, the pouch takes up 96% less space than PET, 77% of which ends up in landfills.

Product and pouch make a difference

For Winston Co. of Tulsa, OK, the switch to a 3X-concentrated formula for its Doctor Drain® septic tank treatment, along with a move from a plastic bottle to a flexible pouch package, "was more genuine than genius," says Winston president Neal Zahn. The company made the changes after listening to feedback from consumers and retailers, and revisiting its corporate mission. "Clearly, household chemical and plumbing products of the future need to be more effective as well as more sustainable, with a low environmental toxicity," Zahn says.

Zahn adds that after reformulating the product for greater concentration and solubility (consumers now need only half the water to flush the product) the company "teetered" between using a flexible pouch and a post-consumer recycled carton. The pouch was selected, he explains, because "flexible packaging was truly a much more sustainable choice."

Introduced in March, the 8-oz proprietary film pouch, coupled with the 3X-concentrated formula, results in a product with a 67% reduction in weight and a 75% reduction in packaging discards, according to data compiled by Lilienfeld.

When it comes to the value of the certification program, Zahn is hopeful: "The multiple criteria to gain ULS certification assured us that this organization is committed to making a difference."

Coincidentally, the third ULS-certified product also involves a product reformulated for greater concentration and re-packaged in a flexible pouch from a plastic bottle. Safonique is a natural, enzyme-, phosphate-, and residue-free laundry detergent from Safonique, LLC, Thomasville, GA, that now comes in a 2X-concentrated formula.



As Safonique president Patricia Boswell tells PW, the company has always had a focus on sustainability, and with the ULS logo, "people will really start to understand that it's not just the product's natural ingredients, it's also the packaging—it's the whole picture," she says. "My company has always looked at being better for the consumer."

The new, 50-oz pouch, supplied by **Performance Packaging** (www.performance-packaging.com), is constructed of 48-ga PET/60-ga nylon/5.6-mil linear low-density polyethylene and is reverse gravure-printed in eight colors.

Boswell says Safonique switched from a 100-oz bottle to a pouch because of the large number of bottles that end up in landfills after use. She notes that the pouches take up less space in a landfill and are economical, flexible, and easy for the consumer to manage.

According to Lilienfeld, Safonique's combination of a 2X concentration and the flexible pouch container reduce secondary packaging (paperboard cartons) by 50% and primary packaging net discards by 78%.

Like its fellow ULS-certified brands, Perfect Glacier and Doctor Drain, Safonique provides an excellent example of how integrated product and packaging are when considering sustainability. Says Lilienfeld, "There is no good material, there is no bad material. It's all about delivering the most product with 100% integrity."

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