



Law of the land

If our blue planet is ever going to go 'green', it will be the lawyers who do it, says advocate and Oryx reporter Melville Brown

Modern man, hooked on a dangerous habit of consumer goods, fast cars and luxury lifestyles seems deaf to suggestions that his actions may have fatal consequences. And when education and persuasion fail, he needs legislation; laws to prevent the dangerous depletion of the planet and penalties to punish where that legislation is breached. It is the lawyers who will draft and enforce this legislation, but lawyers can't rest on their laurels; they need to lead by example.

The CarbonNeutral Company (TCNC), a leading global provider of carbon offset and climate consulting services, is about to show them how, teaming up with consultants Hildebrandt International in a strategic alliance to advise law firms how to measure and reduce their carbon emissions. Law firms have their own peculiar environmental headaches. How to

maintain good records while reducing paper wastage, how to satisfy clients' needs for personal attention while limiting environmentally unfriendly travel, and how to minimise CO2 while providing a safe and comfortable environment in which its staff can work, a particular hurdle in certain harsh climates such as the countries of the GCC (the Gulf Co-operative Council).

While waving goodbye to Mighty Mammon and going back to nature is what the planet probably needs, realistically, that's not going to happen. Instead, "going green" is now big business, and paradoxically it's the business opportunities it offers that may achieve results.

Hildebrandt's Chris Ryan is the co-creator of the strategic alliance with TCNC's client director for the legal sector,

Rani Virdee. "We have decided to 'go green'," says Ryan, "not only because it's the right thing to do from a corporate social responsibility perspective, but also because it has real top- and bottom-line benefits. By proactively measuring your carbon output across categories of indirect spend, such as facilities and travel, let alone utilities, you will see that the investment more than pays for itself." The Prince of Wales made a similar point at a climate change conference in London on May 1, saying: "There really is no time to lose. We know that real economic opportunities can come from the new technologies, business models and financial instruments needed to combat climate change." So, drafting green legislation on recycled paper, in a carbon-efficient office under energy-saving light bulbs may lead to increased profitability for the lawyers, but that's a happy by-product of their efforts to save the planet.

One final thought. There is probably not much that even the considerable combined resources of Hildebrandt and TCNC can do about one clichéd environmentally unfriendly by-product of lawyers across the globe chewing over green issues; all that hot air. ■

The fine print will soon be green

