



“I now realize that the sustainability mission had never fully clicked for me before. Planting trees in the rain forest sounded like a fun thing, but I didn’t fully understand the role that the rain forest plays in carbon absorption. It finally clicked for me that Viridian is the company that is paving the way for the future.”

—Glen Crawford, Viridian associate

Leave It Better Than You Found It



Helping Improve 7 Continents in 7 Years

{ BY BETH DOUGLASS SILCOX }



The vision of CEO Michael Fallquist to think globally began with a journey to Brazil. Shovels hit the ground recently in Brazil, where a group of 36 Viridian associates and corporate leaders planted native species trees in an area of the Amazon impacted by deforestation.

The South American trip was the first in Viridian's global sustainability initiative that encompasses "7 Continents in 7 Years." "Our goal is simple: leave each continent better than we found it," says Michael. Along the way, they hope to make a difference while raising awareness of ecological and environmental issues and building a corporate community of responsible global citizens. The initiative is parallel to the company's vision to create a long-term collective impact through small and simple individual choices.

For the company's leaders, the global initiative is just beginning. It is about creating true sustainability through several small initiatives. "We're not saying that we can solve the world's problems," says Cami Boehme, Vice President of Marketing and Brand Communications. "But if we can help in one area, then we can take one step to more sustainable living."

Leave It Better Than You Found It

Where better to start than one of the oldest ecosystems on Earth, home to half the planet's species, and keeper of medicinal secrets that could treat and cure disease—not to mention, the system responsible for replacing atmospheric carbon dioxide with the oxygen that we breathe.



Brazil holds within its borders a little more than half of the world's remaining rain forests. It is one of the most species-rich tracts of tropical rain forest on the planet. Yet more than 190,000 square kilometers of this precious resource in Brazil are gone, and more than 700,000 square kilometers of the greater Amazon are now bare, according to the National Institute for Space Research in 2008. The impact of four decades of clear-cutting Brazilian rain

forest for roads, logging, grazing and crops is easily seen on satellite images from space.

With a problem this size and scope, Viridian understands the limitations of their impact, but Viridian Marketing Manager Emily



The Viridian Foundation: Lasting Impact

Beyond the 7 Continents in 7 Years global sustainability initiative, Viridian intends to make long-term and sustainable impact both locally and in the countries they visit. The Viridian Foundation is the company's nonprofit entity focused on expanding the reach and impact of Viridian's corporate philanthropic goals. The foundation has purchased a several-hundred-acre plot of land in the Amazon region with a commitment to preserve and protect the land, as the company continues its reforestation efforts in the region. Individuals can support this effort by sponsoring a small piece of the Amazon Preservation Project. Future projects may include providing loans to small-business owners in developing nations. Funding for the Viridian Foundation programs comes from donations, participation in sponsored projects, and proceeds from Shop Viridian, an online company store with branded apparel and marketing tools.

“I wasn’t expecting to work so hard. I thought we’d put a few trees in a few holes and cover it up with dirt. But it was real manual labor—digging, fertilizing, planting and actually planning and thinking out each planting, which just shows the authenticity of Viridian’s mission. It’s as real as the blisters on my hands.”

—Henri Aymonier, Viridian associate

Bjorklund says, “Just using our presence to bring awareness to the issue allows our associates to tell the story to other people, and sending that message to enough groups could lead to an even larger impact.”

That’s why Viridian embarked on this six-leg journey to the Amazon. With the help of a local conservationist and forestry engineers, high-ranking sales associates and members of the Viridian corporate team traveled to Manaus, Brazil, a common starting point for Amazon adventures.

By boat and truck they made their way to two jungle lodges, one on the banks of Lake Tracaja and the other on the shores of the Mamori River, chosen because of their proximity to tracts of deforestation. Obviously, it takes an adventurous spirit to replant a portion of the Amazon, but as the leadership knows, the stories of this experience will be told and retold for years. “We want all our associates and customers to know that a Viridian business is not just about the money they are making or saving, even though that is an important part,” Michael says. “It’s important to us that our leaders are inspiring others and telling the whole Viridian story.” And contributing to a collective impact is a large part of that story.

Beyond Brazil

“For a company our size and age, it is unique to commit to enacting change globally each year,” Cami says. “Brazil is just the very tip of this 7 Continents in 7 Years initiative. The projects are going to get bigger and bigger.” With Brazil behind them, Viridian looks to Africa and their need for power. Some 1.6 billion people in developing nations lack access to electricity. “If the developing world continues on the path of relying on fossil fuels, it won’t work. It’s critical to find off-grid solutions for people in these areas,” Cami says.



In Africa, Viridian intends to start a hands-on, renewable energy project that has tangible, meaningful impact on the quality of life for people living there. “It’s something that’s so critical to Viridian and our mission, we want to make sure that every step is taken thoughtfully,” Robert says.

Extensive research is happening now to determine an African locale and the most effective and impactful project to undertake. Viridian crews may install solar panels on hospitals, schools, libraries or individual homes during their next continental service journey. They are also considering inexpensive, renewable energy installations to power an entire village.

“Ultimately, what this journey has done is created a recommitment to our sustainability goals and to our company vision,” Robert says. “To share an experience



.....

“Before I came down I had done some research about the damage deforestation has done. But nothing could’ve prepared me for this adventure.”

—*Ted Terhune, Viridian associate*

.....

like this with our field leaders, who are very energized about the goals of Viridian, has strengthened everyone’s vision.”

Individual choices can make a collective and lasting impact. By offering small, achievable choices to energy consumers and Viridian associates, Viridian plans to expand awareness and associate participation, impacting not only the local communities the company services but also all seven continents on the planet within the next seven years. **SFH**

Power with Purpose

Viridian’s residual fundraising program helps nonprofits.

Fundraising is no easy task for churches and nonprofit organizations. It typically takes loads of time, enthusiasm and hands. Most groups look for the ideal “one and done” way to fund programs, but asking people to exchange hard-earned money for nonessentials is tough in a struggling economy.

That’s why Viridian introduced its Residual Fundraising Program, an opportunity open to qualified 501(c), state-certified nonprofit corporations. The program allows qualified churches, youth sports leagues, libraries, fire departments, and parent/teacher organizations to raise funds without ever asking for money.

Joining is simple and free. Residual fundraising organizations also receive a Viridian website at no cost, and do not have to pay any renewal fees. They not only reap the rewards of lower power costs for their facilities and supporters, but also give people within their organizations the ability to simultaneously save money on electricity and help a nonprofit raise essential funds. “This is an opportunity perfectly suited to fundraising,” says Brian Pickett, Viridian’s Director of the Residual Fundraising Program. “It’s truly ‘an everybody wins’ scenario.”

Residual Fundraising in Action

It was no secret to Pastor Jim Detweiler that HOPE Christian Church parishioners were pinched between shrinking family budgets and escalating utility bills. So when he and his wife, Sharon, stumbled upon Viridian’s Residual Fundraising Program, they immediately saw a way to ease some of the burden. “Our initial motivation was to help people save money,” Jim says. “Viridian was a practical way to meet the need in our community.”

But Viridian quickly became part of a comprehensive outreach of Detweiler’s church and ministry and is now a perpetual fundraiser. “We’ve used it to connect with our community. Even our town has jumped on board... they distribute information through their communication lines because they know how important this is to the community,” Jim says.

This outreach to lower electricity bills also earns HOPE Christian Church funds each time a new customer enrolls in their network and pays their monthly electricity bill. Organizations like HOPE can make up to \$5,000 in bonuses for their first 500 customers, in addition to residual pay of \$2 a month per customer. These residual funds not only make up for the church’s budgetary shortfalls, but they also have a positive impact in the community.

“It’s given us a credible voice in our town,” Jim says. “People know that when they drive by HOPE Christian Church, we’re about helping people, and it’s opened doors to help us share our mission with them.”



©2011 Mark Perlstein