






March 4, 2009

Changing world makes green new black

By Jeff Swartz (China Daily)

Updated: 2009-03-04 07:47

 [Comments\(0\)](#)  [Print](#)  [Mail](#)

The United States' new administration has really brought about some radical changes. For example, the US Secretary of State is now setting fashion standards. Who needs China International Fashion Week when Secretary Clinton comes to China to announce that "green is the new black"?

Secretary Clinton's latest visit to China largely focused on fostering a stronger partnership between the two countries to combat global warming.

In message and intent, Clinton was very clear: in order to realize a more sustainable future, the governments of the US and China, as the two biggest carbon emitters, need to engage in meaningful dialogue and purposeful collaboration - and the clock is ticking.

While I don't dispute that calls for sincere discussion are good, this problem is so big and so unwieldy that it's going to take a whole lot more than the governments of these two powerhouses collaborating on policies in order to fix it.

Does such possibility live outside of governmental boundaries?

Without question. There are plenty of innovative Chinese companies who know, as we do, that it is simply good business for them - and for their customers - to radically re-frame their approach to carbon emissions. Businesses can lower costs and create new consumer relationships by embracing environmental values in their products and manufacturing processes. Something as simple as more efficient lighting in our US distribution centers has cut our electricity consumption in those facilities by 40 percent. In one of those centers, we installed a 400 kW solar panel system which generates 60 percent of the energy needed to power that facility - and in this day of fluctuating energy prices, we are grateful not to be beholden entirely to fossil fuels. Despite the pervading perception that a pro-environmental platform costs more, it's actually possible for green-is-the-new-black-brands and businesses to earn their way out of the economic maelstrom by acting responsibly.

Take, for example, the Chinese/German leather manufacturer ISA Tan Tec, who is expanding despite a weakening economy in many of the countries they serve. They have cracked the code on creating a manufacturing process that controls CO2 emissions and are leading the way in turning a dirty business like leather tanning into one with a considerably smaller carbon footprint.

Vanke is China's largest residential property developer, and also one of the leaders in the effort to make China's building industry greener. The company has invested more than 100 million yuan in greener construction techniques, and is on target to construct more than 1 million square meters of green buildings by the end of 2009.

Suntech Power was founded in 2002 with the intent to design intelligent controller photovoltaic systems and the goal of becoming the world's lowest-cost solar producer. Seven years later, Suntech has solar electric applications all over the world and has become the third largest player in the global solar industry.

The list goes on China is home to the world's leading manufacturer of solar water heaters, lays claim to the world's first plug-in hybrid car, and is the third largest ethanol producer in the world. The innovation is there, the resources exist and in the private sector, real progress against the climate crisis is being made.

It's good news that Secretary Clinton came to China and declared green the new black - but for some in China, that's yesterday's news. If her itinerary had included stops at some of the country's leading-edge businesses that are already working toward a more sustainable future, she'd see the opportunity that I do: to collaborate, not only between governments but between businesses, to harness the innovation that already exists and is being successfully employed, and use it to create both a healthier environment and a healthy bottom line.

The author is the CEO of Timberland

(China Daily 03/04/2009 page9)

Unique Visitors per Day (U.S. only): 90,000

Note:

China Daily is the only English-language national newspaper in China. Its readership is highly educated and influential. The China data of unique visitors to China Daily is not available.