
August 2006 to: May 2007
Country: United States

Goals:
Greenpeace demanded that Apple Inc. stop using toxic chemicals, including those on the OSPAR+ list (compiled at the 1998 Oslo-Paris Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic, with the addition of PVC) and any others determined to be possibly dangerous in light of the precautionary principle.

Also, Greenpeace demanded that Apple provide take-back recycling schemes enabling customers to return obsolete products to the company for disposal.

Methods

Methods in 1st segment:

• 006. Group or mass petitions

Methods in 2nd segment:

• 006. Group or mass petitions

Methods in 3rd segment:

• 006. Group or mass petitions

Methods in 4th segment:

• 006. Group or mass petitions

Methods in 5th segment:

• 006. Group or mass petitions

Methods in 6th segment:

• 006. Group or mass petitions

Additional methods (Timing Unknown):
• 005. Declarations of indictment and intention
• 009. Leaflets, pamphlets, and books
• 016. Picketing

Notes on Methods:
Very little information was found regarding specific methods used by Greenpeace during this campaign. The number of signatures acquired on the online petition is unknown. Protests were mentioned by a news source but I could not find more details about them.

Classifications

Classification:
Change
Cluster:
Environment
Group characterization:

• Environmentalists

Leaders, partners, allies, elites

Leaders:
Zeina Alhajj, Greenpeace campaign coordinator
Iza Kruszewska, Greenpeace toxics campaigner

Partners:
Not known

External allies:
Not known

Involvement of social elites:
Not known

Joining/exiting order of social groups

Groups in 1st Segment:
Groups in 2nd Segment:
Groups in 3rd Segment:
Groups in 4th Segment:
Groups in 5th Segment:
Groups in 6th Segment:
Segment Length: 40 days

Opponent, Opponent Responses, and Violence
Opponents:
Apple Inc.

Nonviolent responses of opponent:
Not known

Campaigner violence:
Not known

Repressive Violence:
Not known

Success Outcome

Success in achieving specific demands/goals:
4 points out of 6 points

Survival:
1 point out of 1 points

Growth:
0 points out of 3 points

Notes on outcomes:
Greenpeace expressed disappointment that Apple’s take-back policy would be limited to the United States. It was unclear to what extent the announcements in “A Greener Apple” were attributable to Greenpeace’s campaign, and it was not clear that Apple entirely freed its products of all chemicals on the OSPAR+ list.

Greenpeace published its first “Guide to Greener Electronics” in August 2006 to rank technology companies based on their use of toxic chemicals and their participation in the disposal of their products.

On a scale of 1-10 (with 10 representing the greenest electronics), Apple Inc. received 2.7 points (eleventh out of the fourteen ranked), with poor scores in toxin phase-outs, chemical management, voluntary take-back programs, and transparency. Dell and Nokia were the top-scoring companies, each receiving a 7, while Lenovo received the lowest score of 1.3. This report served to justify Greenpeace’s Toxic Tech campaign.

Through this campaign, Greenpeace made two demands of companies. First, Greenpeace demanded that they stop using toxic chemicals (including those on the OSPAR+ list [compiled at the 1998 Oslo-Paris Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic, with the addition of PVC] and any others determined to be possibly dangerous in light of the precautionary principle.

Also, Greenpeace demanded that companies provide take-back recycling schemes enabling customers to return obsolete products to the company for disposal. Greenpeace presented the two demands together because toxic components can make it impossible for the products to be completely or safely recycled. Greenpeace decided to target Apple because of its public image of innovation and leadership.

Greenpeace framed their Toxic Tech campaign within the context of social justice. Campaigners were motivated by the global trade of electronic waste, which American recycling facilities often ship overseas for unregulated disposal. The individuals who eventually extract the reusable materials tend to wear little protection, and are thus exposed to the product’s toxic components.

Greenpeace used pointed messaging to undermine Apple’s hygienic reputation in order to apply pressure on the company to comply with their demands. Greenpeace shamed Apple, by contrasting its lack of environmental policies with its competitors like Dell and Hewlett Packard (HP).

In fall 2006, Greenpeace launched an online petition to pressure Apple to comply with its demands. Additionally during the
Toxic Tech campaign, Greenpeace held protests at several Apple store locations and conferences to apply pressure visibly. At the time, Apple publicly referenced its history of sustainable initiatives but did not release intentions to improve its standards.

Greenpeace continued to apply pressure to Apple, eventually compiling thousands of online signatures. Based on an internal audit of its recycling and manufacturing practices, Apple CEO Steve Jobs released a public statement on 4 April 2007 titled “A Greener Apple.” In it, he highlighted Apple’s past and current efforts to eliminate toxins and improve take-back programs. Furthermore, Jobs publicly announced Apple’s plans to phase out Brominated Fire Retardants (BFRs) and Polyvinyl Chloride (PVC) from their products by 2008, a more ambitious deadline than other electronics manufacturers including Dell.

Jobs did not concede that Greenpeace had any impact on Apple’s policy, instead implying that Apple already had intentions to comply with Greenpeace’s demands, referencing the company’s policy of confidentiality. Going forward, Apple agreed to release annual reports of their environmentally related efforts and accomplishments.

Following Jobs’ announcements, Greenpeace almost doubled Apple’s score to 5.3 in its July 2007 “Green Guide to Electronics.” Greenpeace, on its website, takes credit for the increased transparency that Jobs’ statement represented as well as the ambitious timelines for phasing out BFRs and PVCs.

This phase out did happen; in its 2010 Guide, Greenpeace praised Apple for not using PVCs or BFRs in their products. Zeina Alhajj, Greenpeace campaign coordinator, considered Apple’s announcements an improvement but criticized Apple’s decision to limit its take-back policy to the United States.

Research Notes

Sources:


Additional Notes:
A December New York Times article highlighted another ranking system for green electronics: the US Electronic Product Environmental Assessment Tool (EPEAT), which is managed by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). EPEAT actually ranked Apple as having some of the most environmentally friendly products, contradicting the verdict of Greenpeace’s Guide. This inconsistency led to a public discourse in January 2007, including Iza Kruszewska, the toxics campaigner for Greenpeace International, which concluded that the two studies could not be compared because of their divergent criteria.

Jobs criticized Greenpeace during Apple’s annual shareholders meeting on 3 May 2007 for basing their campaigns on principles rather than facts. Jobs criticized Greenpeace’s ranking as communicating companies’ intentions rather than actions, but expressed his support for report guided by science. Greenpeace responded to Jobs’ suggestion by releasing ”Missed Call: Apple’s iPhone’s Hazardous Chemicals,” a report conducted by Greenpeace analyzing the components of Apple’s iPhone.

Name of researcher, and date dd/mm/yyyy:
Laura Rigell, 10/02/2013

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