



Global Nonviolent Action Database

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Greenpeace pressures Dell to create less toxic products 2006-2012

March 2006

2006

to: March 2012

2012

Country: United States

Country: India

Country: Netherlands

Country: Denmark

Location City/State/Province: Round Rock, Texas

Location Description: Protests took place in several cities across the world, but centered at Dell's headquarters in Round Rock Texas, in the Austin metropolitan area

Goals:

Greenpeace aimed to have Dell outline the company's plan to rid its products of polyvinyl chloride (PVC) and brominated flame retardants (BFRs) by 2011. Greenpeace also asked that Dell take a stand and lobby for the ban of PVC and BFRs in a revision of the European Union's RoHS (Restriction of Hazardous Substances in Electronics) Directive.

Methods

Methods in 1st segment:

Methods in 2nd segment:

Methods in 3rd segment:

- 004. Signed public statements › Greenpeace published a ranked list of companies based on their policies around environmental issues.

Methods in 4th segment:

- 002. Letters of opposition or support › Supporters and volunteers sent emails and letters to Dell asking them to make their products less toxic.
- 004. Signed public statements › Greenpeace published a ranked list of companies based on their policies around environmental issues.
- 008. Banners, posters, and displayed communications › Activists dropped banners off of Dell buildings in four countries.

Methods in 5th segment:

- 004. Signed public statements › Greenpeace published a ranked list of companies based on their policies around environmental issues.

Methods in 6th segment:

Classifications

Classification:

Defense

Cluster:

Environment

Human Rights

Group characterization:

- Environmentalists
- Greenpeace USA activists

Leaders, partners, allies, elites

Leaders:

Iza Kruszewska, toxics campaigner at Greenpeace International

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: 1 year

Opponent, Opponent Responses, and Violence

Opponents:

Dell Inc.

Campaigner violence:

No campaigner violence.

Repressive Violence:

No repressive violence.

Success Outcome

Success in achieving specific demands/goals:

3 points out of 6 points

Survival:

1 point out of 1 points

Growth:

2 points out of 3 points

Notes on outcomes:

Although it seems clear that Greenpeace's pressure kept Dell from completely backtracking on its commitments to eliminate toxic PVC and BFRs, Dell failed to fully eliminate those products from its products, removing them only from personal computing products and failing to offer a reasonable timeline for removing the chemicals from the rest of their products.

Greenpeace continues to hold technology companies accountable, including Dell, indicating a good survival of their infrastructure.

The campaign experienced a medium amount of growth, with volunteers joining for several of the actions and a large number of people who sent in emails and calls to Dell, but these volunteers did not stay on to add much to the growth of the campaign.

Environmentalists and human rights activists have long been concerned about the use of toxic chemicals and compounds in electronic equipment. Companies often use compounds such as polyvinyl chloride (PVC) and brominated flame retardants (BFRs) in their electronic equipment to make them safer for the user, but they are very toxic materials that cause human health and environmental issues in areas the electronics are disposed of.

Greenpeace and other environmental groups insist that electronics companies need to be responsible for the entire lifetime of their products, from cradle to grave. By taking out toxic materials such as PVC and BFRs, they make recycling their products significantly easier and safer.

In 2005 Greenpeace started their "Toxic Tech" campaign to "call for real environmental leadership from the electronics industry" and in 2006, Greenpeace published its first Guide to Greener Electronics. The guide has been published every year since and ranks electronics companies on their efforts to reduce emissions of greenhouse gasses, eliminate hazardous substances, take back and recycle their own products, and stop the use of unsustainable materials in their products and packaging.

Amid this public pressure and pressure from peer companies in the electronics industry, Dell was one of the first companies to make a commitment to phase out PVC and BFRs by the end of 2009.

When Dell backtracked on its commitment in November of 2008 by removing reference its timeline altogether, Greenpeace USA started to target Dell to hold the company accountable to its commitments to less toxic products. Greenpeace asked concerned people to send emails to Dell asking them to remove PVC and BFRs from their products.

This email and virtual campaign continued in parallel with publicity from Greenpeace about Dell's rankings in comparison to other technology companies. An international protest in 2010 continued this bad press for Dell.

In March 2010, Greenpeace activists protested outside Dell company buildings in Copenhagen, Denmark, Amsterdam, Netherlands, and Bangalore, India. The protests and banner hangs were supposed to coincide with the end of meetings about environmental sustainability lead by Michael Dell, the company's CEO, but Dell had postponed these talks. The banner drops and protests continued, however.

On 27 May 2010, Greenpeace climbers scaled the company's global headquarters in Round Rock, Texas and hung a banner off the building that said, "Michael, What the Dell? Design Out Toxics." In conjunction with this protest, Greenpeace ran TV ads in Austin, Texas that explained Dell's backtracking on its commitments and asked the residents to call the CEO to ask that the company design products without toxic products.

Michelle Mosmeyer, a staff person for Dell responded to Greenpeace's protest in an email statement saying that the company is "committed to integrating the most environmentally preferable materials into our products, and we're working closely with our suppliers to accomplish this."

In 2010, between the end of May and the beginning of June, over 12,500 people sent protest emails to Dell's CEO, asking him

to make a plan to remove toxic compounds from Dell's products. By 2011, concerned people had sent over 40,000 protest emails to Dell.

In March 2012, Greenpeace released a detailed report on Dell's progress towards eliminating PVC and BFRs from their products. While Dell had released some BFR/PVC-free offerings of products, they had failed to meet their deadline of removing BFRs and PVC from all of their products, and still failed to publish a reasonable timeline for doing so.

Research Notes

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