

# Design Can Change: Answers for buyers of graphic design

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## Why are you sending this document to me?

I want to tell you about an initiative called *Design Can Change*. It helps designers make the environment a bigger priority while uncovering ways to combat climate change. These are values that come in line with our own, and as such, we have joined the effort. This booklet is intended to give you a quick glimpse into *Design Can Change* and answer some of your questions.

## So, what is this all about?


We have taken the *Design Can Change* pledge, which is a simple framework for bringing sustainable practice to design studios. There's nothing particularly strict about the effort, it's really just a set of guidelines that gets the ball rolling.

Designers around the world who are concerned about climate change are also signing the pledge. If you work with other designers, you will likely hear about it from them as well.

## Why are you doing this?

Climate change is an issue that poses a significant threat to all of us. We've all seen the changes in weather patterns over the past years and the subsequent damage—and from what we've read, this is just the beginning. We don't want to stand back while our home is threatened.

“Climate change is the most severe problem that we are facing today, more serious even than the threat of terrorism.” *Sir David King, UK Government Chief Scientific Advisor, 2004*



“The primary output of today’s production processes is waste. Across all industries, less than 10% of everything that is extracted from the Earth (by weight), becomes usable products. The remaining 90% to 95% becomes waste from production...So while businesses obsess over labour and financial capital efficiency, we have created possibly the most inefficient system of production in human history.”

*Peter Senge and G. Carstedt*

Source: ‘Innovating our way to the next industrial revolution’,

MIT Sloan Management Review, 42:2 [Winter 2001]

Additionally, most designers are well aware that we make a lot of waste. As such, we are in a unique spot to create change. In America alone, designers purchase or specify \$9.1 billion in printing and paper annually. When you create that much demand for such resource-intensive products and services you have an opportunity and responsibility to make a difference.

### How does it work?

It unites designers. Our collective strength can be used to persuade suppliers to make sustainable materials available and to lobby government to institute change.

By working together, we can spread the word amongst the entire design community: sharing knowledge, encouraging a sustainable mindset and making sustainable design resources available.

### Will this increase costs for my organization?

It certainly shouldn't. Sustainable materials are often comparable in costs to traditional materials. Additionally, this effort is about limiting unnecessary waste, not making more of something that would increase costs. We may even save you money.

### Is the quality of my design going to be compromised?

No, it's just a different way of looking at the projects we work together on. Sustainable thinking doesn't demand that we become monks. It just asks us to work smarter and think about our impact more carefully. We will be more targeted in our efforts and focus on your goals more expressly. We have to think strategically instead of traditionally.

### How will this change our working relationship?

In many respects things will stay similar to how they are now. However, we will scrutinize projects to find methods of achieving the greatest result with the smallest environmental impact.

We'd also like to work closely with you to help make sense of all of these changes. We feel this is one more way that we as designers can give you greater value.

### Who is involved?

*Design Can Change* was started by a small design studio in Vancouver. Now, designers around the world are getting involved. It's a grass roots campaign and entirely not-for-profit. There's no governing body involved in the effort, so it's really up to us to ensure that we hold up the values that we have voluntarily committed to.

### Does this mean you are experts in sustainability?

No, we're still just designers. The sustainability expertise of those involved in the effort varies greatly. We all have lots to learn, and we're working together to understand a challenge that few have the definitive answers for.

### Why should I care?

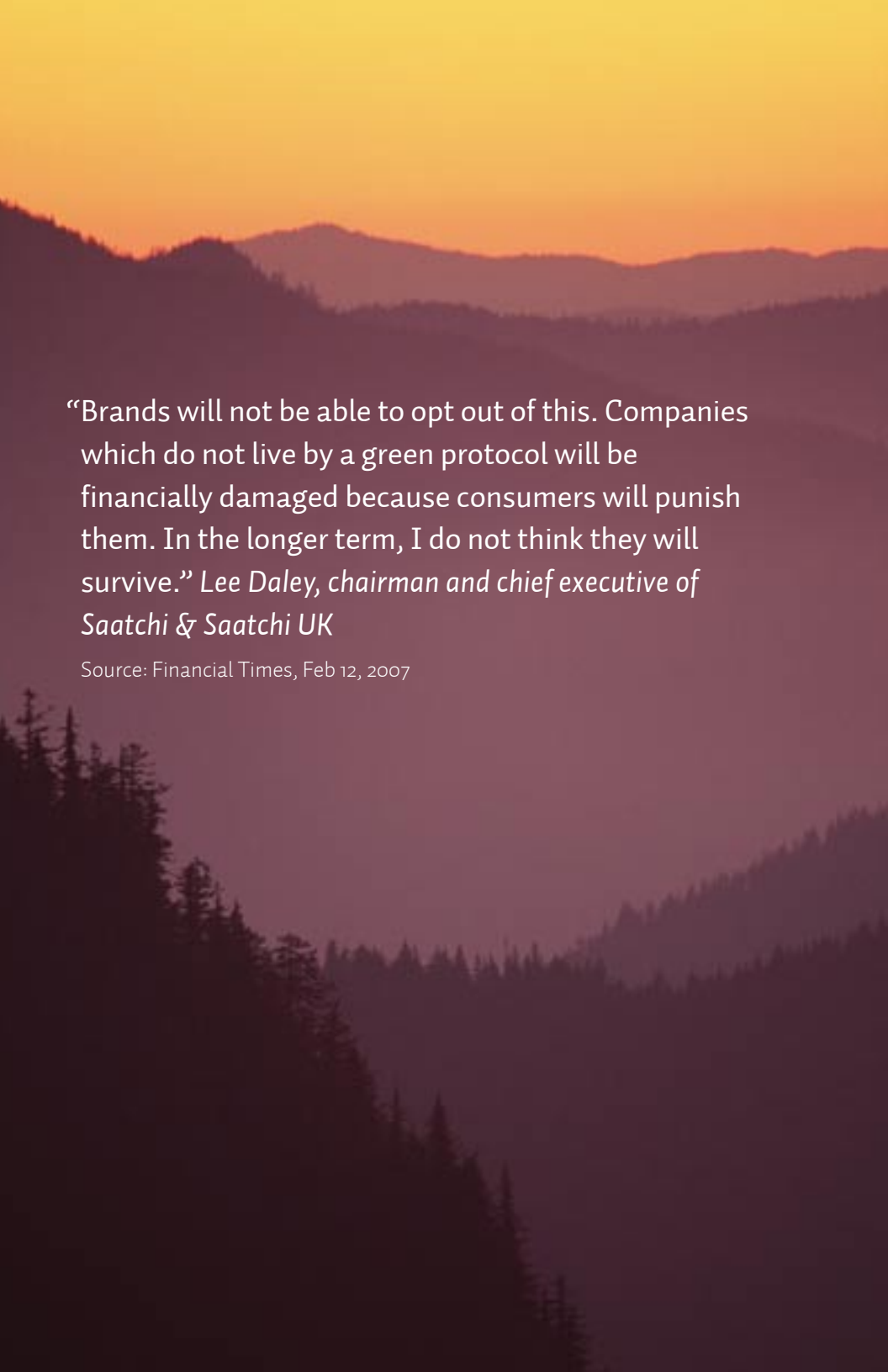
The risk global warming presents is huge and its impacts can be devastating. As the main contributors to this crisis, we all have a major responsibility.

If that's not motivation enough, we should also note that most major brands have added sustainability to their business agendas. They recognize it as a competitive advantage and as a key to continued success. From a position of self-interest alone, you really have to start thinking green.

“Sustainable design is everything good design ought to be, delivering the best (social, environmental and economic) performance or result for the least (social, environmental and economic) cost. It is the strategic use of design to meet and integrate current and future human needs without compromising the environment.” *Beatrice K Otto*

Source: [www.designcouncil.org.uk/sustainability](http://www.designcouncil.org.uk/sustainability)





“Brands will not be able to opt out of this. Companies which do not live by a green protocol will be financially damaged because consumers will punish them. In the longer term, I do not think they will survive.” *Lee Daley, chairman and chief executive of Saatchi & Saatchi UK*

Source: Financial Times, Feb 12, 2007

### **I'm interested. How can I make a difference?**

First of all, we'd ask you to look around your operation and ask questions. Are there aspects of your business that you could change? How could you become more sustainable in your practice?

If you have a chance, visit [www.designcanchange.org](http://www.designcanchange.org) and dig around. The resources section is an excellent place to find links to reading materials.

We also encourage you to get in touch with us. Perhaps we can meet and talk about your design efforts for the next year. If we put our heads together, we're sure to find better ways of doing things.

## Mission

*Design Can Change* is a non-commercial initiative aimed at bringing together the design community and making system-wide change to how our work affects the planet.

## Credits

*Design Can Change* is a smashLAB initiative  
Official imagery sponsor: Getty Images



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