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GREENING NEWSLETTER

THE SECRET TO TURNING CONSUMERS GREEN

It isn't financial incentives. It isn't more information. It's guilt.

A real-life experiment in engineering green behavior unfolded last year in the nation's capital. Washington, DC, imposed a five-cent tax on every disposable bag, paper or plastic, handed out at any retail outlet in the city that sells food, candy or liquor. But more important than the extra cost was something more subtle: No one got bags automatically anymore. Instead, shoppers had to ask for them—right in front of their fellow customers.

The result? Retail outlets that typically use 68 million disposable bags per quarter handed out 11 million bags in the first quarter of 2010 and fewer than 13 million bags in the second quarter, according to the district's Office of Tax and Revenue. That may help explain why volunteers for the city's annual Potomac River Watershed Cleanup day in mid-April pulled 66% fewer plastic bags from the Anacostia River than they did in 2009.

District Councilman Tommy Wells doesn't believe it is the nominal cost that's keeping shoppers from using bags, but rather the expectation—made clear in a very public way in every transaction—that they could make do without. “It's more important,” he concludes, “to get in their heads than in their pocketbooks.” Studies dating back at least three decades clearly show the power of social norms. We tend to ascribe our actions to more high-minded motives, or to practical concerns about money. But at its core, our behavior often boils down to that old mantra: Monkey see, monkey do.

Researchers are now learning how to harness that instinct to nudge us to go green. It's not easy. Though about two-thirds of Americans tell pollsters they are active in or sympathetic with the environmental movement, it has proved tough to get the average consumer to make even relatively simple changes, like using energy-efficient light bulbs or caulking drafty windows.

Government agencies, private utilities and nonprofit groups have tried changing behavior by giving people more information or by dangling financial incentives, such as rebates. And these approaches work for some households. But psychologists and behavioral economists are increasingly concluding that for the masses, a simpler, cheaper approach may be in order. It can include new laws and taxes, as in DC, but it doesn't have to. The magic ingredient: Peer pressure.

Telltale Towels: Consider two papers published in peer-reviewed journals in 2008.

The first described a study involving those placards in hotel bathrooms that urge guests to reuse towels. Over a three-month period, researchers tested two different placards in a 190-room, midprice chain hotel.

One card was headlined “Help Save the Environment” and urged visitors to “show your respect for nature” by reusing towels. The second read, “Join Your Fellow Guests in Helping to Save the Environment” and noted that 75% of guests participated in the towel-reuse program. The guests who were exposed to the peer pressure—the fact that so many of their fellow travelers were doing it—were 25% more likely to reuse towels. A follow-up study found that tweaking the wording on the placard so it was specific to the guest's room (as in: nearly 75% of guests who stayed here in Room 331 reused their towels) yielded even better compliance.

The second paper described a study involving public-service messages hung on the doorknobs of several hundred middle-class homes. All urged residents to use fans instead of air conditioning, but they gave different reasons for doing so. Some residents learned they could save \$54 a month on their utility bill. Others, that they could prevent the release of 262 pounds of greenhouse gases per month. A third group was told it was the socially responsible thing to do. And a fourth group was informed that 77% of their neighbors already used fans instead of air conditioning, a decision described as “your community's popular choice!”

Meter readings found that those presented with the “everyone's doing it” argument reduced their energy consumption by 10% compared with a control group. No other group reduced energy use by more than 3% compared with the control group. All four of the non-control groups slipped in the long run, conserving less as time went on, but those exposed to peer pressure continued to record the lowest average daily energy use. “People don't recognize how powerful the pull of the crowd is on them,” says Robert Cialdini, a psychologist at Arizona State University and co-author of both the hotel and doorknob studies. “It's a fundamental cue as to what we should be doing.”

Influence Without Borders: Social scientists are just beginning to study whether this type of peer pressure works in Europe and Asia as well as in the US. The answer, so far, is yes.

For instance, researchers at Michigan State University found that paying Chinese farmers to adopt environmentally friendly techniques didn't work as well as telling them that their neighbors were already farming that way. And a recent study in India found that publishing a ranked list of the worst-polluting paper factories prodded the biggest offenders to make dramatic improvements. Promoting a particular behavior as the social norm proves “equally influential across cultures.”

The problem, from a conservationist's perspective, is that much of the environmentally friendly behavior we engage in doesn't help set social norms because it's invisible to others. We have no way of knowing that everyone else on the block has installed a programmable thermostat or insulated the attic



or switched to compact fluorescent light bulbs. What we tend to see, and perhaps envy, is the more profligate behavior: the gleaming Hummer in the driveway, the huge flat-screen TV in the family room, the emerald lawn made lush by daily watering. (One exception: the recycling bin at the curb, which is now ubiquitous in many neighborhoods.)

"I would bet that if you went into a residential neighborhood and put a red, green or yellow light on peoples' mailboxes to show who's an energy hog and who's not, people would start to change their behavior," says Paul Hamilton, a senior VP in Andover, MA, at Schneider Electric, a global energy consulting firm.

Subtle Cues: That system might not sit well with homeowners. But the private and public sectors are both experimenting with more subtle ways to achieve the same result.

Microsoft Corp. has calculated energy-efficiency ratings for 60 million homes in the US, using data including public records about housing stock, weather patterns and utility bills, as well as information provided by residents. The ratings can be viewed free of charge online, at microsoft-hohm.com. Homeowners can input data about their utility bills, appliances and habits to refine their score—or they can simply snoop, comparing their score with those of their friends and neighbors. Visitors to the site can also exchange energy-saving tips.

The Southwest Florida Water Management District tries to leverage peer pressure with TV and radio ads that depict neighbors chatting about their conservation habits. One recent campaign talked up the virtue of watering only every other week in winter. The result: A 19% jump in homes practicing "skip a week" irrigation.



Smiley Faces: Perhaps the most familiar social-mobilization tactic is the Home Energy Report produced by OPower, a consulting firm based in Arlington, VA, that works with nearly three dozen utilities

around the US. The report, packaged with utility bills, graphs a household's energy use, compares it with prior months and years—and matches it against peers. Customers can see at a glance how they rank compared with both the average and the most efficient homes in their neighborhood. Those doing exceptionally well are rewarded with a smiley face on their bill.

Utilities say homes that get the report show a consistent, sustained reduction in energy use of about 2% on average, compared with similar homes that don't receive the reports. Two percent doesn't sound like much, but advocates say that when scaled to millions of homes, it's quite meaningful, especially since the savings are achieved without costly rebates, tax credits or mass-media ad campaigns.

The Competition Trap: Paul Stern, who studies climate change at the National Academy of Sciences, cautions that peer pressure so far has proved effective with "relatively low-impact behaviors" that don't require individuals to make big sacrifices. Mr. Stern argues that financial incentives and saturation marketing are often needed to inspire more significant change, as in last year's "cash for clunkers" program, which induced many people to purchase more fuel-efficient cars.

Efforts to exploit our keeping-up-with-the-Joneses instinct can also backfire if there's too much emphasis on competition. It has become popular on college campuses to stage energy-efficiency contests between dorms, prompting some students to take extreme measures like forgoing hot water. And the

Environmental Protection Agency is now running a National Building Competition modeled on the TV show "The Biggest Loser," with a school, a hotel and a dozen other buildings vying to notch the biggest reductions in energy use. The EPA says it hopes the contest will inspire other building owners.

Such competitions, however, present conservation measures not as the norm, undertaken by average people every day, but as an extreme sport, done by fanatics trying to win a contest. That doesn't trigger our instinct to conform, social scientists say, and thus has little impact on behavior.

Shower Power: It's far more effective, experts say, to model desirable habits as a matter of routine. Psychologist Doug McKenzie-Mohr describes one such study in his book "Fostering Sustainable Behavior." A college gym's shower room displayed a prominent sign urging students to conserve water by turning off the shower while they soaped up. Only 6% did so initially. But when researchers planted an accomplice who shut off his water mid-shower, 49% of students followed suit. When there were two accomplices, compliance jumped to 67%, even though the accomplices didn't discuss their actions or make eye contact with other students.

Traditional conservation campaigns have been "based on the premise that if we simply provide people with information, they will make changes in their lives," Mr. McKenzie-Mohr says. "We know pretty conclusively that's not true." The most powerful aspect of social mobilization, researchers say, is that it tends to work on a subconscious level. Americans routinely tell pollsters that they would conserve energy to save the environment or to save money. Ask them if they'd conserve because their neighbors are doing it, and they scoff. They have it backward. "We can move people to environmentally friendly behavior," says Mr. Cialdini, the psychologist, "by simply telling them what those around them are doing."

Simon, Stephanie, "The Secret to Turning Consumers Green," *The Wall Street Journal*, October 18, 2010

ROOM SERVICE FOR RUNNING SHOES

Not wanting to stuff bulky sneakers into a carry-on bag is a common reason for skipping on-the-road workouts. Now, Westin Hotels & Resorts is launching a free program to lend guests New Balance brand fitness shoes and apparel. But, will road warriors really want to wear communal running socks?

Under the new "gear-lending" program, women will receive Capri pants, a sports bra, shirt, socks and shoes. Men will get a shirt, shorts, socks and shoes. Between uses, Westin says the clothes will undergo the same intense hot-water laundry process used on hotel sheets and towels. Also, the exterior of shoes will be cleaned and the inner soles will be replaced between guests.

Westin's program is part of a larger move by the hotel industry to beef up fitness offerings and cater to the frequent business travelers who tend to use hotel gyms the most. Fairmont Hotels & Resorts recently introduced a gear-lending program with an MP3 player and Adidas shoes and apparel. It, however, is only available to Fairmont's most-loyal guests and, in most cases, requires a small fee.



Hotel companies have also recently put more resources into their gyms, transforming many of them from cramped, windowless spaces jammed with old treadmills into spacious

centers stocked with high-end equipment, flat-screen television sets and free yoga classes. For the outdoors exerciser, hotels increasingly offer not only jogging maps but a “running concierge” who will lead guests on a calorie-burning tour of the city.

Westin says that 72% of its guests use its fitness centers. Fairmont says that 55% of its frequent guests work out regularly when they travel. Among Marriott’s most-frequent guests—those who stay 40 or more nights a year—more than 90% use its fitness centers. These guests are disproportionately important to a hotel’s financial health. The business traveler who stays 40+ nights a year represents about 50% of Marriott’s revenue.

From 2004 to 2010, the number of hotels offering a fitness center jumped to 83% from 63%. At upscale chains, that percentage has reached 100% for most brands, requiring their fitness center to stay open 24/7. Still, a Marriott spokesman said they have no plans to launch a gear-lending program of their own.

In a two-month test of the Westin program in Chicago, an average of one guest a day requested the loaner gear. Westin and New Balance are splitting the cost of providing the gear. New Balance hopes the venture will increase awareness of its growing line of sports apparel.

Helliker, Kevin, “Room Service for Running Shoes,”
The Wall Street Journal, December 14, 2010

SCRAPPY COLLECTORS PROFIT FROM CHINA’S PAPER NEEDS

Unemployed and short on cash, Jerry Leonhardt pulled into a recycling center here in Los Angeles County, his white Chevy pickup packed with used cardboard boxes he had salvaged from behind supermarkets and mini-malls.

Mr. Leonhardt regularly sells used cardboard to the recycling center, which bales it, packs it into containers, and trucks it 10 minutes to the Port of Long Beach, where it is loaded on ships bound for China. Mr. Leonhardt fetches about \$85 per truckload.



Exports of waste paper, the term given to the market for second-hand boxes and other scrap paper, are taking off.

The US has long shipped its discarded paper—cardboard, newspapers, catalogues, phone books and other scraps—to emerging markets like China, which doesn’t yet have enough imports, hearty trees or a strong enough recycling habit to generate ample raw materials to make boxes for its own booming export market.

But now, with a revival in US consumer spending underway, China needs the US’s old boxes in order to make new boxes to ship stuff back to the US. China is also scrambling for American waste paper to box consumer goods sold to its own growing middle class, according to analysts, who say it is far cheaper for China to make boxes locally from waste paper rather than import new boxes directly.

“They simply don’t have enough boxes,” said Bill Moore, a paper industry consultant in Atlanta. The US, meanwhile, has plenty. With more people shopping online, US houses are inundated with boxes, which now represent 15% of the residen-

tial waste stream, up from 5% in 1995.

After falling sharply in 2009, US export prices for old cardboard boxes—the bellwether for the scrap paper market—have been steadily climbing and are passing pre-recession prices. Chinese paper mills are paying \$228 for a baled ton of old corrugated containers—industry jargon for used cardboard boxes—leaving ports around Los Angeles, up 5% from March 2010, and well past the going rate of \$160 per ton in March 2007.

In a sign of growing demand, combined total waste-paper exports out of the two busiest US container ports of Long Beach and Los Angeles rose nearly 25% in 2010. The rebound in export prices of waste paper, or “recovered paper,” was a strong earnings contributor in 2010, Sonoco Products Co., a Hartsville, SC, packaging and recycling company said in February, reporting record sales for 2010.

The company said it is significantly expanding its sale of old cardboard boxes to export markets, although with collection in the US peaking, Sonoco is having to come up with increasingly ingenious ways to get its hands on old boxes—including collecting them from cruise ships.

Nine Dragons Paper (Holdings) Ltd., a Chinese company that is one of the biggest participants in the business of acquiring waste paper from the US and reprocessing it into packaging materials, has also seen strong growth lately. The Hong Kong-listed company reported net profit for the six months through December 31 rose 22% from a year earlier to 1.27 billion yuan, or about \$193 million. Revenue in the period jumped 45% to 12.6 billion yuan.

Corridor Recycling takes in 50-60 tons of cardboard every day. Scrap paper collectors start arriving at Corridor Recycling at 6 am to sell their hauls. After buying it from collectors, Corridor sells it to exporters who arrange to have the scrap paper shipped to developing countries, primarily China. There mills use it to make new boxes to send goods back to the US. China has an insatiable appetite for scrap paper, because they don’t have enough raw materials to make boxes for all of their exports.

Scrap paper exporters say they create jobs, help drive down the US trade deficit, and assist in the Obama administration’s goal of doubling exports by 2014.

Levitz, Jennifer, “Scrappy Collectors Profit From China’s Paper Needs,” The Wall Street Journal, March 30, 2011

SAVING POWER A NEW PRIORITY

As Japan slowly comes to grips with the devastation created by its earthquake and tsunami and ensuing nuclear crisis, a debate is emerging in business and political circles about how to do more with less electricity—or just do less.

After years of debate, Japanese policy makers have finally begun seriously to consider for the first time in six decades instituting daylight-savings time this summer, which would reduce energy demand in the early mornings and evenings. Japanese companies also are weighing reducing hours worked—and wages paid—at offices and factories. As a result, Tokyo households could face higher utility bills and blackouts during the hottest summer months, when air conditioners usually are cranked up to maximum power.

The sudden push to save electricity comes as several power

plants that served the Tokyo area were temporarily or permanently knocked out of service by the March 11 quake, including the damaged Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant that has been leaking radiation.

In response to calls for conserving electricity, many businesses in Tokyo already are operating with dimmed lights, prompting some to post "open for business" signs on front entrances. The Tokyo metropolitan government turned off about half the city's street lights and many elevators in public facilities in the aftermath of the quake. Train service has been suspended on several routes because of the power shortage. Even the wattage of ubiquitous vending machines on nearly every street corner has been turned down.

Tokyo Electric Power Co., or Tepco, hoped to end its rolling blackouts by late April as it races to bring mothballed or underutilized generators—mostly powered by fossil fuels—back on line. Even so, it estimates that the gap between supply and demand during the peak summer months will balloon to one million kilowatts, or about 20% of total usage.

The sudden shortage of electricity in and around Tokyo could trigger a supply-side shock to Japan's economy the likes of which it hasn't experienced since oil prices spiked in the 1970s. BNP Paribas cites the electricity "bottleneck" and supply-chain disruptions in its forecast for negative growth for the next two quarters, which it expects to act as a drag on overall growth and to induce a 0.9% contraction in gross domestic product in fiscal 2011.

An editorial in Japan's largest business daily, called on Japan's two main industry associations to take the lead in organizing "rotating holidays" to reduce demand everywhere from gritty factory floors to fancy department stores.

Due to a 100-year-old historical quirk, the power shortages Tokyo faces can't be remedied by sending more voltage from western Japan, which was largely unaffected by the quake. While Tokyo uses 50-hertz electricity, its western rival Osaka uses 60-hertz power—a discrepancy stemming from Japan's crash industrialization program in the 1890s when Tokyo chose German-made generators and Osaka adopted US generators. The shortfall in eastern Japan is 10 times what substations are capable of converting from east to west.

"Industry will have to change working patterns, and people will just have to get used to the heat," a manufacturing official said.

Neither step would be completely without precedent: before World War II, government officials in Japan worked only until noon during the peak summer months, and under the US occupation period after the World War II, Japan instituted daylight-savings time until 1952. But the issue of daylight savings has been surprisingly contentious in Japan, where some have viewed it as a way to extend the work day or rehash postwar memories.

With Japan's damaged power infrastructure expected to be stretched close to a breaking point as the summer heats up, blue-chip companies such as Sony Corp. and Toshiba Corp. are exploring ways to save energy: They want employees to take multiple weeks off work, and are considering switching work hours to create their own versions of daylight-savings time.

At the same time, the power crunch is boosting interest in new goods that can help cut energy use.

Sony said that it is in talks with its labor union to have all employees take summer leave at the same time. No final decision has been made, but the electronics giant has proposed that its workers in Japan, including engineers and back-office employees, take about two weeks off. To offset this, the company has proposed that its employees work national holidays from July until the end of the year.

Toshiba is considering a similar plan. However, Toshiba's proposal also includes employees working national holidays later in the year to make up for the summer leave. Sony said that it is in talks with its labor union to have all employees take summer leave at the same time. The talks at Sony and Toshiba come as Tokyo Electric Power Co. reduced the amount of power it is supplying to Tokyo and surrounding prefectures, creating the need to save energy around the country.

The government-mandated energy cuts are aimed at preventing widespread power outages after the March 11 earthquake and tsunami knocked out two Tepco-operated nuclear facilities and is now operating with a power-capacity shortfall of 25%.

In addition to the summer leave, Sony has proposed that workers begin work earlier than usual to save energy by taking advantage of the longer daylight hours.

Growing concerns over power shortages are making businesses and households more interested in products and services that could help them save energy. Sharp Corp. said that it has agreed to set up a joint venture with Lixil Corp. to develop energy-efficient systems for homes and offices. The venture combines Sharp's solar panels, light-emitting diode lighting and other energy-saving technology with Lixil Corp.'s expertise in home and office interiors, the two companies said.

Sharp said it had been planning the joint venture prior to the quake, with talks beginning in November. "This is part of our efforts to expand the sales channels for our energy-saving products," said a company spokeswoman.

Still, the fact that most industries in Japan are seeking more effective ways to cut energy consumption means significant business opportunities may be emerging for electronics makers offering power-saving technology.

Seven-Eleven Japan Co., which operates about 13,200 7-Eleven convenience stores across Japan, said it will spend ¥10 billion (\$119.3 million) on energy-saving measures at roughly 6,000 stores in Tokyo Electric Power's service areas. The company plans to install light-emitting diode lights, solar panels and smart sensors, among other steps, to cut the stores' electricity consumption by 25%.

For the long term, Toshiba's technology in the so-called smart grid, an efficient integrated system for distributing electricity, may become useful for quake-struck areas as they rebuild homes, offices and communities, said Mr. Sasaki, the company's president. "As for specific ways to save energy, we have a lot to offer, like inverters and batteries," he said.

Dawson, Chester, "Saving Power Is New Priority,"
The Wall Street Journal, March 28, 2011
Osawa, Juro and Hirayuki Kachi, "Japan Companies Look to Save Energy," The Wall Street Journal, April 15, 2011

"Shoot for the Moon! Even if you miss, you'll land among the stars!"

Rawlings, Robbin, driftwoodcarddesigns.com

RADICAL CONFIDENCE

By Rob Watson

Many years ago, a friend of mine, James Thornton, was lucky enough to have an audience with the Dalai Lama. During this audience, James was allowed to ask a question and so he inquired: "What do we need to solve the world's environmental problems?" (James was a senior attorney with the Natural Resources Defense Council for many years, and now heads up the British environmental nonprofit law firm ClientEarth.)

The response from the Dalai Lama was, "Radical confidence." He went on to say that people need to believe that problems are solvable in order to put the energy into solving them. Given the pervasiveness and the magnitude of these problems, solving them would require "radical confidence."

So, in honor of all of the people who think differently and act practically, I'm naming my column Radical Confidence because people do "impossible" things every day, and that is why we are not still living in caves.

greenbiz.com/blog/2011/04/28/radical-confidence

Earth Day Pitches That Made Us Cringe

By GreenBiz staff

Don't get us wrong. We love that companies are embracing an environmental ethic. We're thrilled that they're glomming on to the third week in April as a chance to preen their green feathers. But like everyone else, we have our limits, especially when it comes to the gusher of Earth Day pitches and come-ons that find their way to us—starting in late March, culminating right about April 22. To be blunt, there are some PR pitches that make our heads explode. Earth Day As Excuse to Announce Anything Green, for starters. Look How Green We Are, Even Though We're Not Being Very Specific, for another. And please, please: Don't get us started on the opener, "Just in time for Earth Day . . ."

With each noteworthy Earth Day announcement, we receive another dozen that are anything from boring to bad. Some make us laugh. Others just make us cringe. For the third year in a row, we present some choice examples of Earth Day pitches that crossed our desks this year, but fell woefully short.



The good folks at Litter-Robot, purveyors of a capsule-like electronic robot litter box that retails for a mere \$349, want all felines to have a greener Earth Day. So, they've offered us human consumers a helpful list of eco-suggestions, such as making a pet bed out of old clothes or making wind chimes from cat food cans. Of course, after shelling out \$349 for a robo-litterbox made from recycled materials,

one might not be able to afford canned cat food, but that's another story.

As a resource-intensive and often unnecessary alternative to municipal water, you would think the bottled-water industry would want to lay low on Earth Day. Far from it. They've decided to go with the flow. The International Bottled Water Association is touting the growth of PET plastic recycling, with a study showing recycling rates skyrocketing from 30.9% in 2010 to 31% in 2011. Crunching the numbers, we've calculated that amounts to 0.1% growth—a drop in the bucket, as it were, considering that 69% of empty bottles still are finding their way into landfills.

In a move that is both misleading and self-promotional, The Neat Company, which makes scanners and accompanying

software, announced that it would make an unspecified donation to the Arbor Day Foundation for every "free *Taming the Paper Monster* e-book that is downloaded" from its website. The "e-book" is even billed as a guide for how to start living a "paper-LESS lifestyle."

Sounds good, but only if you know what Neat means by "e-book" and "paper-LESS." The 13-page PDF is more like a pamphlet, and it's not about how to use less paper, but how to keep less paper around you—conveniently, using Neat's products.

Carbon Solutions America wanted us to know that it is working with Blue Star Jets, a private jet charter brokerage company ("Any Jet. Any Time. Any Place") to develop a carbon offset program. Yes, you read it right. Specifically, Blue Star wants to reduce its carbon footprint by 50,000 tons a year by investing in offsets.

None of this is a bad idea, though it would have been better if they had collected a few more facts. Details about how the offset program for Blue Star will work, how much the company intends to invest and the size of its carbon footprint (to put that 50,000-ton figure into perspective) would have been nice. Oh, and what's the annual carbon footprint of a typical jet? We've read that flying private is four times more carbon intensive than flying commercial. To be fair, the announcement that was e-mailed over a CSA exec's electronic signature doesn't mention Earth Day—in which case, this may be more of an instance of poor timing.

Oh, Caesars, you certainly can't be blamed for trying, but tying Earth Day to gambling pretty much misses the point entirely. As part of a its "Go Green" initiative, Caesars Entertainment Atlantic City will incorporate more local, organic food into its menus and raise money for local environmental groups. That's all fine and good. But the company also offers a "Win. Play. Grow. Sweepstakes" and a "Go Green Play & Earn Promotion," where new customers can sign up for a free Total Rewards card and earn points while gambling. "Play with your card on the day you sign up and earn slot play!" We suspect that the green you'll need to save will be your own.

greenbiz.com/news/2011/04/22/7-earth-day-pitches-made-us-tinge

SNUFFING FLAMES WITH ELECTRICITY

Since the time humans first began to control fire around 400,000 years ago, we have had just a few simple tools to douse the flames. Now, some Harvard University chemists believe they have found a way to bring fire suppression into the digital age by controlling flames with electricity. During a series of experiments to study the chemical nature of fire, scientists were surprised to learn that by applying an electrical field to a burning flame, it easily went out. All they needed to do is wave a wand-like, electrified metal wire near the flame.

Nearly all previous study of flames and electric fields involved those generated by direct current, or DC, instead of alternating current. What they discovered is that by applying an oscillation field, AC voltage, the effects are completely different. The findings were reported at the national meeting of the American Chemical Society.

In their experiments, the researchers used a 600-watt power source—about the same as a modest home-theater stereo—to create an electric field near flames as large as 18" tall. They found the field created an organized "flow" of charged particles inside the flame, and that the flame was literally pushed away

from the burner and put out. It's too early to say how well the effect will scale to larger flames. The chemists have begun collaborating with the US Naval Research Laboratory in Washington, DC, which has facilities devoted to the study of fire.

The most obvious effect is fire suppression. But there are other applications as well. The world still derives about 90% of its energy from burning coal, natural gas and other products. The potential to better control the internal flow of combustion could lead to more efficient energy production, among other benefits. Their hypothesis was that if they could find any new way to control flames in a novel way, there is a real chance to make a real big impact.

Berger, Eric, Houston Chronicle, "Believe it or not, Harvard chemists can snuff flames with electricity," March 28, 2011

CHECK OUT AND IN YOUR WAY

The flight doesn't leave until evening, but the hotel check-out time is noon. What's a guest to do with those aimless hours? Continue to lounge in the room, say savvy travelers. Hotels are increasingly offering guests ways to wiggle out of rigid check-in and check-out policies. Those strategies are likely to come in handy even more as hotels recover from the economic downturn and occupancy rates rise.

Several hotel loyalty programs, including Hilton HHonors and Hyatt Gold Passport, give members an extra few hours after posted check-out times. The promises, however, come with fine print: Late check-out is subject to availability. Holders of American Express Platinum and Centurion cards can get a guaranteed 4 pm check-out when they book a room in a property that is part of AmEx's Fine Hotels & Resorts program.

At least one hotel brand, Capella Hotels and Resorts, has done away with set check-in and check-out times entirely. "Business travelers are very annoyed when they come in in the morning and have to go to a meeting and want to put their stuff down and are told check-in time is 3 pm," says Horst H. Schulze, Capella's chief executive and chairman and a former president of Ritz-Carlton. When Mr. Schulze was developing Capella, he conducted surveys of guests who stayed in suites or on club floors at luxury hotel chains such as the Ritz-Carlton and Four Seasons and found that the industry standard check-in and check-out times—11 am or noon and 3 pm or 4 pm, respectively—were one of these travelers' biggest pet peeves.

The brand accommodates guests who want to arrive and leave on their own schedules by keeping hotels around 200 rooms or less and staggering cleaning staff shifts, says Mr. Schulze. Hotel "personal assistants" contact each guest to learn their expected arrival and departure times.

On a recent morning at Capella's largest hotel, the five-month-old Setai Fifth Avenue in New York, Guia Llamas perused a spreadsheet printout of the day's 40 arriving and 60 departing guests. Ms. Llamas, the hotel's director of front office, noted that 10 guests were expected to be early arrivals, checking in before 11:30 am. The night before, the housekeeping staff was informed about the relatively high number of early arrivals and two employees who had been scheduled to start work at 8:30 am were told to arrive instead at 7 am.

Once the first guests checked out at 7 am, that room was cleaned and readied by 9 am, the expected time for the earliest arrival. The 214-room hotel is able to fulfill guests' desired schedules "95% of the time," says Guenter Richter, the Setai's managing director.

There are challenges to offering late check-outs. Starwood Hotels & Resorts, whose brands include Sheraton, Westin and W, offers gold and platinum members of its Starwood Preferred Guest loyalty program a guaranteed 4 pm check-out at 75% of its hotels. Most of the rest are convention properties which can have hundreds of guests checking in or out at the same time. Or they are resorts where guests want to linger on departure day, but check in immediately. An arriving guest wants to "unpack, get into their bathing suit and jump into the pool," says Chris Holdren, senior vice president of Starwood Preferred Guest. Starwood also extends the guaranteed 4 pm check-out to holders of the Starwood Preferred Guest-branded American Express card.

Travelers can also ask if there's an extra room available in the hotel where they can nap or shower. Most properties are also happy to let guests book a spa treatment or relax by the pool even after giving up their room key.

Petersen, Andrea, "Check Out and In Your Way," The Wall Street Journal, April 7, 2011

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ALLY MEMBER Procter & Gamble Professional is the division of P&G that develops cleaning products for businesses, bringing the same level of innovation and commitment to cleaning outside the home that P&G does inside the home. P&G Professional offers a full line of products for the hospitality industry, including trusted brands such as Tide, Downy, Mr. Clean, Spic and Span, Comet and Swiffer.



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FOOD DYES' FAVOR FADES AS POSSIBLE LINKS TO HYPERACTIVITY EMERGE

Push a cart down a supermarket aisle, and you'll pass a kaleidoscope of color. The use of artificial dyes by foodmakers is up by half since 1990, and it's not limited to candy. The list of foods made pretty by chemicals now includes pickles, bagels and port-wine cheese balls. "Americans are really turned on by a bright-red strawberry juice, and they think it's natural," said Kantha Shelke, co-president of the food research firm Corvus Blue. "Or cheese—cheese is naturally a pale color, but most young kids will not eat cheese unless it's a bright, almost fluorescent orange."

Foodmakers have used dyes since ancient times to make food more appealing to the eye. But the practice has so invaded the modern psyche that artificial dyes are being used even on some pet foods. Dogs see limited color, but apparently their owners don't like buying dull, gray chow.

The controversy surrounding artificial food dyes dates back to the 1970s, when a California pediatrician began recommending the elimination of dyes and preservatives in the diets of children with behavior problems.

Now, federal regulators are reexamining artificial ingredients they have long deemed to be safe, prompted by scientific studies suggesting that color additives might be linked to hyperactivity in children and other health effects. An advisory panel to the Food and Drug Administration recently began meeting to discuss the science behind artificial dyes and whether the government ought to restrict their use.

"There are sometimes nine different dyes in a food product," said Laura Anderko of Georgetown University Medical Center, who serves on the Children's Health Protection Advisory Committee for the Environmental Protection Agency. "Moms and dads will say, 'Here's a fruit roll-up—that must be healthy.' But it's filled with dyes. And emerging science suggests it's harmful to children."

Two recent studies sponsored by the British government found that children given foods made with some artificial dyes and a food preservative, sodium benzoate, showed an increase in hyperactivity. The study sampled children in the general population, not just those known to show hyperactive behavior. The studies remain controversial, with some scientists skeptical about the links that can be drawn.

"At first glance, a study may appear to show an association, but when you consider other important factors that could be responsible for the results, such as gender, maternal education level, pretrial diet and other factors, it becomes impossible to affirm that the change in behavior was due to food colors," said Keith Ayoob, director of the nutrition clinic at the Rose F. Kennedy Children's Evaluation and Rehabilitation Center at Albert Einstein College of Medicine.

In 2009, after the studies on hyperactivity, the British government urged foodmakers to stop using six dyes. The European Parliament required foods containing the tested dyes to carry a label warning that products "may have an adverse effect on activity and attention in children." The government continues to allow the use of several other artificial dyes. To avoid warning labels on their products in Europe, many foodmakers—including US-based companies such as Kellogg and Mars International—replaced the six dyes with other dyes, including some natural ones made from fruits and vegetables.

"Companies in Europe are managing perfectly well—people get used to a slightly different color," said Michael Jacobson, executive director of Center for Science in the Public Interest, which has petitioned the FDA to ban artificial dyes and, as a first step, require a warning label. The Center for Science in the Public Interest points to studies suggesting that some of the dyes are also suspected carcinogens. In 1990, the FDA banned Red No. 3 in cosmetics, medicines and some other products because it was linked to cancer in mice, but permitted its continued use in foods.

Food industry officials say artificial dyes are safe and contend that the British studies and others are inconclusive. Manufacturers also note that the dyes are heavily regulated by the

FDA, which requires approval before they can be used commercially, unlike many other ingredients used in foods. "All of the major safety bodies globally have reviewed the available science and have determined that there is no demonstrable link between artificial food colors and hyperactivity among children," said a statement from the Grocery Manufacturers Association, which represents foodmakers, packagers and retailers.

Still, some US companies are beginning to make the switch away from artificial dyes, driven in part by consumer demands for healthier food. Frito-Lay is promoting its decision to get rid of artificial colors and flavors in more than 60 of its snack products, substituting ingredients such as beet juice and carrots for Red No. 40, one of the artificial dyes. "We're always looking for new ways to give consumers what they're looking for, which includes providing a wider range of products made with natural ingredients," said Jeff Dahncke, a spokesman for Pepsico, which owns Frito-Lay. But the company said it has no plans to mess with the chemically enhanced orange of its Doritos or Cheetos, two of its top-selling brands.

In a signal of where the food coloring industry is headed, one major color supplier, Sensient Colors, announced last year that it was spending \$16 million to create the largest natural color manufacturing plant in North America. "The trend towards natural colors is accelerating, and this new manufacturing plant will further promote the conversion to natural colors by large food and beverage manufacturers," Kenneth P. Manning, chairman and chief executive of Sensient Technologies, said at the time.

In this country, the use of dyes took off with the popularity of processed foods after World War II, said Shelke, the food scientist. Manufacturers originally made processed foods for the military, Shelke said, and after the war, they turned their sights on the consumer market. But housewives buying products for their families were more discerning than soldiers, she said. "The manufacturers wanted to make sure the food would look good," she said. "They made tomato juice and realized that it turned brown," Shelke said. "So the first thing they did was to put color in it."

Natural colors tend to fade over time and can be inconsistent, so the industry developed chemical dyes that were stable. But their overuse, she said, "has distorted the American concept of what a food looks like."

Layton, Lyndsey, "American favor for food dyes fades," *Washington Post*, reprinted in the *Houston Post*, March 26, 2011
Gleason, Stephanie, "Artificial Food Dyes Scrutinized by FDA," *The Wall Street Journal*, March 29, 2011

LIGHTS OUT, LIGHTS IN

Lightbulb sockets are sprouting alien light forms as the incandescent bulb faces a government-mandated wattage diet. Under the Energy Independence and Security Act, incandescent bulbs must trim their energy use—measured in watts—by 25 to 30%.

Starting January 1, 2012, that bright bulb that once used 100 watts of power must produce the same amount of light at no more than 72 watts. In 2013, the 75-watt bulb will be cut to 53 watts, followed by the 60-watt and 40-watt in 2014. The standards went into effect January 1, 2011 in California.

The most dramatic changes are in light-emitting diode bulbs, the technology most experts see as the future of lighting. The

newest LED downlights use a fraction of the energy—10 to 12 watts versus 65 to 75 watts for incandescents. They work with most dimming switches and produce light comparable to incandescent bulbs. These are probably the most successful LED lighting products so far because technology that adds red into the color spectrum makes the light better than that cast by compact fluorescent lights or other LEDs. And they are expected to last as long as 50,000 hours. They are ideal for buildings and homes with high ceilings where changing bulbs in recessed can lights can be a challenge. However, they cost \$80 to \$100.

Expect prices to drop quickly and quality to improve as rapidly. A year ago, an LED bulb equivalent to a 60-watt incandescent cost about \$60. Now, they average about \$30. The next generation, which could arrive by late summer, will cost significantly less.

The electrical bill savings helps to offset the cost, but consumers can also expect to save on cooling when switching to LEDs. More than 90% of an incandescent bulb's energy is converted to heat. People generally underestimate how much heat is produced by bulbs.

Though LED technology is making strides, lighting experts are watching developments in durability. Circuits that control the bulbs can fail, and light quality can diminish over time. That's where consumers can appreciate a good warranty. Heat also can be an enemy of LED bulbs, so check the suggested operating range and don't place them over a heat source such as a stove or in a fixture in direct sun.

LED bulbs for traditional sockets right now include a base that's not aesthetically pleasing. "You certainly don't want to walk into a room and see that big white transformer with a little bulb sticking out of it, says Charles Neal of Visual Comfort Houston says. For now, he's using old-style shades—candle followers—that sit beneath the bulb and high the eyesore. He prefers cold cathode lighting to the light cast by LEDs and CFLs. Many manufacturers have resorted to frosted glass to conceal bulbs, particularly in outdoor fixtures.

We all look forward to what evolving technology will bring for the minimalist modern fixtures designed using sustainable and salvaged materials. Perhaps someday lights may be embedded in paint or wallpaper, and there will be no wires or bulbs!

Lehmann, Tracy Hobson, "Lights Out, Lights In," The Houston Chronicle, January 29, 2011

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HOW TO DRAIN A WATER HEATER

To extend the life of a hot water heater, drain the tank annually to remove sediment that may have built up inside it. The sediment makes the water heater less efficient.

Turn off the Water Supply: If it is an electric water heater, turn off the power at the breaker-box. If it is a gas heater, turn the thermostat to the "pilot" setting. Connect a hose to the drain valve located close to the thermostat, but don't open the valve yet. Turn off the cold-water supply that feeds the water-heater.

Drain the Hot Water: Open up at least one of the hot-water faucets in a sink or tub. This will prevent a vacuum from forming in the lines. Go back to the water heater, and open the drain valve to drain the hot water out of the tank. Make sure the far end of the hose is draining where the hot water won't do harm. (If you've turned down the water heater a day or so prior to draining, you'll have saved the energy used to heat the water, and the water may be cool enough to water landscaping without harm.)

Flush out the Remaining Sediment: Once the water stops flowing out of the far end of the hose, turn the water supply back on. This will help flush out any remaining sediment left behind in the heater. Once the water runs clear from the end of the hose, close the DRAIN valve. Don't forget to turn the sink or tub hot-water faucet off.

The heating element could possibly blow if there is no water in the tank. Some tanks may need to be completely full in order to prevent damage. When in doubt, always read the warnings and instructions on the tank label carefully because each tank may vary!

Test the Pressure-Release Valve: Turn the power-supply to the water heater back on at the breaker box (or the thermostat) after the tank has filled with water. Once the water temperature has been brought back up, test the pressure-relief valve according to the manufacturer's instructions. This safety device is designed to prevent excess pressure build-up or overheating inside the tank. If it's faulty, you may need to have it replaced by a licensed plumber.

<http://www.diynetwork.com/how-to/how-to-drain-a-water-heater/index.html>

FINAL WORDS . . .

"There is always music amongst the trees in the garden, but our hearts must be very quiet to hear it."

Minnie Aumonier