

Planet Green lives the green life

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After a challenging episode, Planet Green has hit the global market running and is in no rush to stop. In the past nine months, the company has been recognized on its local news network, has been featured in an array of articles and has made a name for itself in the industry.

With its remanufactured ink jet cartridges and national recycling program, people recognise the Planet Green brand.

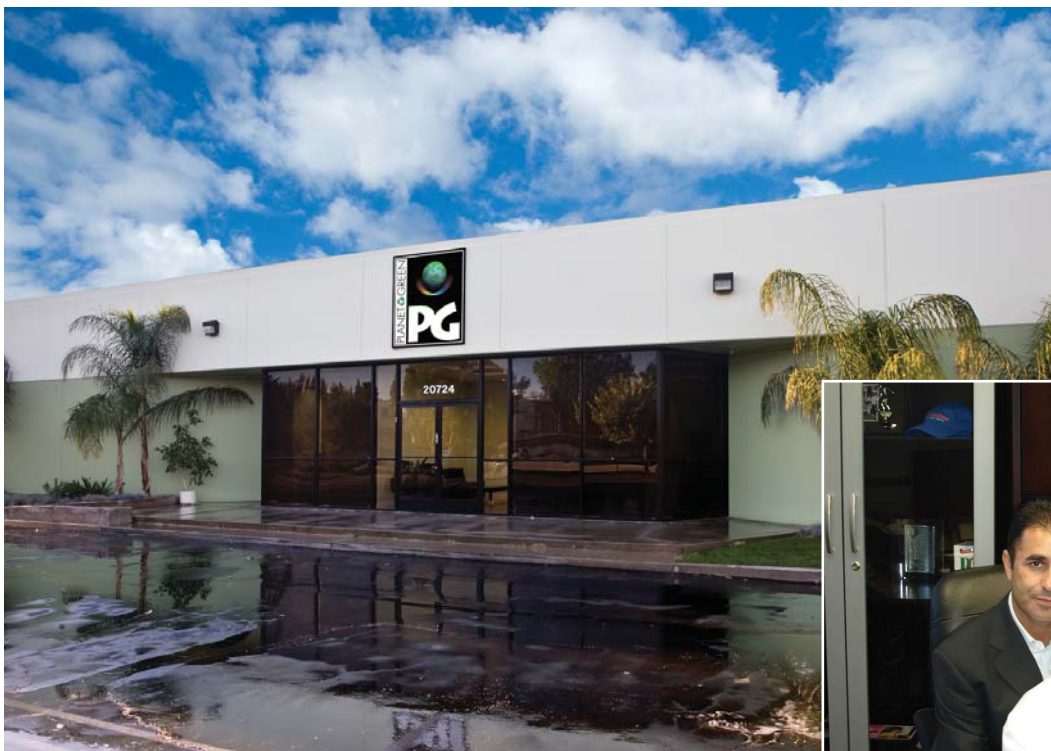
orders in and delivering a quality product. But two years into the operation, Levi lost everything. His facility was broken into and

Fortunately, the news hit the industry, and different people and companies started pitching in. They donated equipment and support to help Planet Green get back up and running.

Although Levi was discouraged and felt very vulnerable: "I went from really starting to get going to back down to the bottom," he did not let this stand in his way. He got back to work, this time determined to make Planet Green an industry name that could weather any storm.

Now, nine years into the business and almost seven years after Planet Green's second start, the company is thriving. Located in Chatsworth, California, "the remanufacturing capital of the world," as Levi said, Planet Green has been making a name for itself both locally and globally.

"2008 has been a coming out: a new building and a



Planet Green moved facilities in late 2006, early 2007. The facility, with custom renovations, is equipped with a foosball table, big-screen TV and a parking lot devoted for staff soccer games. It also houses the operations, sales, production, design, marketing and recycling departments. Photo courtesy of Planet Green

The early days

Planet Green was initially started in 2000. Sean Levi, president and CEO was building his business at an amazing rate, getting

everything he had was stolen or vandalised. Levi was devastated. He had worked so hard, and now had nothing. He had nowhere to turn.



One of Levi's missions is to build Planet Green into a company his six-year-old son, Neil, can one day take over.

new brand. I think the results are due to come, in 2009 and 2010,” Levi said.

“Green” house

Planet Green’s 30,000-square-foot facility houses all aspects of the company: operations, sales, design, production, marketing and recycling. Green is not just part of the name of this ink jet remanufacturing company. Green practices foreshadow every move the company makes, including setting up and operating the facility.

From the energy efficient lights, insulated ceiling sky lights, to the recycling and disposal of waste, the Planet Green team has devoted much time and energy into “greening” the facility. With recycling bins scattered throughout the building, hints of bright green paint in every room, no one forgets the mission of Planet Green. The staff even joke that they have “Green Police”: Roberta Brodsky who leads the recycling program at Planet Green. She walks around the building to make sure that lights are turned off every time the staff exit a room and that people are using the recycling bins properly.

“In terms of waste, we’ve done a lot and still have more to do. Now we’re working on solar panels, which is the next goal,” Brodsky said. The company continues its



With energy efficient lights and insulated ceiling sky lights, the production staff have a “green” environment to produce 150,000 remanufactured ink jet cartridges each month.

efforts in “greening” production. With its proprietary cartridge cleaning machine, the facility has reduced its water consumption by more than 30 percent.

This is a huge feat in the State of California where water is scarce. Green is taken very seriously at Planet Green.

But it’s not all business at the Planet Green facility. Part of the motivation for moving locations was to provide more for the staff, Levi explained. The Planet Green team makes up more than just a company. They make up a family. The PG family works together and plays together. They know each others’ families and seem to thoroughly enjoy each others’ company.

“I always looked for a place we could call home.” And the PG family seem very comfortable in their new home.

Conversations of soccer break out throughout the day. As Levi walks around the floor hearing the banter, he joins in and jokes with his team. Behind the building, Levi has reserved a parking lot for the staff to have soccer games during their breaks. Everyone plays, he said, guys, girls, upper management, everyone. “It boosts morale and it is fun for all of us.” In order to keep the home environment, Levi also put a big-screen TV and a foosball table in the break room, where his six-year-old son, Neil, is often found ▶



Roberta Brodsky, Recycling Program director, gives a local school a tour of the Planet Green facility. She then presents students with tips on how and what they can recycle and reuse to help our planet. Photo courtesy of Planet Green

Planet Green lives the green life *continued*

playing with the staff after a long day of the first grade.

Although the Planet Green family have a lot of fun, the work still gets done. Levi knows his stuff. "I know the flow. I know

Automation is a key trend

Planet Green is currently focusing on automation. "We're looking to implement more within production. There's so much more to do, but that is the direction," Levi

the past year in terms of online visibility and participation when Roberta Brodsky, recycling program director, joined the PG family. "The only way [this department] would be successful was for someone to come in and put their heart into it," Levi said. "I feel Roberta has taken complete charge of the whole department and I am completely happy with the direction."

The recycling program provides a venue for schools, churches, organizations or whomever to recycle used cell phones, ink jet cartridges and/or toner cartridges and get paid for it. Planet Green provides all the materials: pamphlets, collection boxes and shipping labels.

Then depending on what is shipped back to the Planet Green recycling centre, the e-waste is either sent to a legitimate vendor for recycling or if it is a virgin ink jet empty in good condition, Planet Green keeps it to remanufacture and distribute.



Roberta Brodsky and Talin Keshishian – the Green Police – oversee the Planet Green Recycling Program and ensure that the staff are always thinking and acting “green.”

the process. So I have been able to implement it in a way that works best for us and results in a quality product," he said.

Simplicity and consistency

The production floor occupies nearly 90 percent of the facility. With 150,000 ink jet cartridges produced each month, the staff have their hands full. Each person on the floor is responsible for one thing. Whether it's cleaning, filling, welding or testing, each employee is only responsible for that one task. "This way they become experts," Levi explained. "No one on the production floor has been here for less than two and a half years, so they are all pretty much experts in what they do. We truly have captured employees who care about the company. And they have respect for where they are and where they'll be."

Quality and consistency are key words on the production floor. "In order for you to create a quality cartridge, you have to go through A-to-Z. You can't miss a beat—can't miss a letter—or the end result will be failure," Levi said. "It's got to be consistent 100 percent."

said. With a machine shop in Simi Valley, California, Planet Green's engineer designs and develops machines specifically for its needs. "We're able to tailor-make our needs," continued Czarina Constantino-Louie, vice president.

Although PG is expanding its automation, Levi has no plans of layoffs or downsizing. "Automation makes things more efficient. Once you have a system, a good-working system, in place, then you can automate. But for quality you always need people – eyes and ears – there has to be a balance," Constantino-Louie explained.

Recycling and fundraising

The Planet Green recycling program was initiated from the very beginning. Levi knew recycling was a key component for his business and for the earth. But the program really took flight



The Planet Green recycling program has drawn in thousands of recycling partners throughout North America. The program collects, recycles and pays for used cell phones and ink jet cartridges. Photo courtesy of Planet Green

Planet Green also held e-waste events over the past year and hopes to continue doing so. Because they do not accept all e-waste, they hold local events where



The Planet Green team makes up more than just a company. They make up a family - the Planet Green Family.

people can drop off any electronics or peripherals, which are bundled and taken to a legitimate vendor.

In addition to the recycling partnerships and events, Planet Green gives tours of their facility to local schools. Classes can come in, tour the facility and meet the

staff. Brodsky then gives a presentation on what cartridge remanufacturing is and why it is important. By the end of the day, Brodsky says, the students are excited about recycling and want to help.

This not only helps the planet, but it also gives Planet Green more exposure.

Global exposure

Planet Green has tackled quite a bit locally and in the North American industry. However, their goal reaches farther. The company is in the process of aggressively expanding their brand to the European market. It recently partnered with a distributor for the Netherlands and Belgium, Frequent Filler, and is looking for other distributors to do business with around the world. "The European market is more quality conscious than price conscious," Levi explained. "By introducing ourselves that way we have aligned ourselves with companies that follow those same visions and missions," continued Constantino-Louie. "It's a hand and glove relationship."



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