

Contacting a Company with an Environmental Critique, Suggestion, or Compliment

So you're not Greta Thunberg. Not everyone can be an 18 year-old world-renowned, Nobel Peace Prize nominee, and environmental activist. But, you can still make a difference.

Next time you interact with a merchant put on your Greta Thunberg hat (the one made from recycled plastic or one that is sustainably produced), and ask yourself, "From an environmental perspective, how could this merchant do better?"

Now, unless the merchant is a single instance business (e.g., a non-chain restaurant) it probably won't do much good to present your ideas to the manager. Instead, commit your ideas to memory. When the opportunity arises, log onto the company website, and send them your suggestions via their "Contact Us" page.

Yeah, right, you say. Companies don't care. Au contraire, mon frere. Companies want one thing: customers (i.e., money). Companies don't want one thing: bad press. In the days of ubiquitous social media it doesn't take a lot of requests to encourage social change.

And, its simple.

Chik-Fil-A, a heavyweight in the fast food industry, uses non-recyclable lids for their drinks. Why? I can't imagine recyclable lids are that much more expensive, if at all. Other fast food places use recyclable lids. I haven't seen any press that indicates recyclable drinks lids are the only thing keeping Chik-Fil-A solvent.

So, I sent them an email.

I logged onto the Chik-Fil-A website. I scrolled to the bottom of the home page, found the Contact Us link (its usual location), and clicked on it. The Contact Us page has a red button named "Contact Us Online". I clicked that button, and started typing. Here's what I wrote.

Hi. Thanks for giving me the opportunity to contact you.

I'd like to see Chik-Fil-A use recyclable lids for its drinks. I suspect the cost isn't that much different from the lids currently in use. Your competitors use recyclable lids. Heck, I'd pay a little more to cut down on the waste dumped into landfills.

I know you are dedicated to limiting your footprint on God's creation. On your website you point out that work shirts are made from recycled plastic. Good job!

On the Giving Back page on your website, under the heading Corporate Social Responsibility, one of your pillars is "Caring for our planet". I admire, and appreciate, that you consider taking care of our Earth so seriously. It seems like recyclable lids is a small ask.

And, if you want to do more...

1. Distribute compostable straws instead of plastic ones
2. Stop using plastic bags
3. Offer recycling stations for your styrofoam cups

You dominate the fast food chicken industry, be a fast food leader in protecting the planet, too!

Thanks for reading,

Mike

Although I have to admit I've sent emails that are not cordial or very Jesus-like (mainly to politicians), I recommend a positive approach when contacting a company. I figure we have a better chance of encouraging change with a positive attitude than by browbeating them. Spend a few minutes perusing the company website. Like Chik-Fil-A, companies want customers to believe they are good corporate citizens. Thank them for their efforts, then hold them to a higher standard.

Of course, simply sending an email may not change a company's approach. I sent an email to Cabela's once, asking them why they sell steel traps. When I didn't get a response I sent another email, telling them I would no longer be supporting their company. Still no response. I've never gone back. When the store comes up in conversation – admittedly rarely – I tell people why I don't patronize their business.

Who knows? Maybe one person sending an email won't make a difference. Despite Greta Thunberg's incredible effort, our planet is still in perilous danger. But, you gotta try. That's what Jesus would do.

Follow-Up:

I received a standard, "we consider environmental concerns in all we do, thank you for your message, now go away" corporate response. A little bit irritated with the tenor of the reply I decided to follow-up. So, I found what I believe is the basic email suffix for the company. I accessed the corporate website, found the page that listed the executive officers, put together what I think is their email addresses, and sent them a friendly – seriously – message. Don't know if they got the message. Haven't heard from anyone. Haven't received an "unable to deliver message" though. Maybe I won't hear anything even if they got the message. Doesn't hurt to try!