

Press room

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International think-tank announces 2009 Brands with a Conscience awards

Stockholm, Seal Beach, Calif. and Wellington, January 1 (JY&A Media) The Medinge Group (www.medinge.org), an international think-tank on branding and business, today releases its sixth annual Brands with a Conscience list. In the Group's opinion, these diverse organizations show that it is possible for brands to succeed as they contribute to the betterment of society by sustainable, socially responsible and humanistic behaviour.

The international collective of brand practitioners meets annually in August at a secluded location outside Stockholm, Sweden, and collaborate on the list, judging nominees on principles of humanity and ethics, rather than financial worth. The Brands with a Conscience list is shaped around criteria including evidence of the human implications of the brand and considering whether the brand takes risks in line with its beliefs. Evaluations are made based on reputation, self-representation, history, direct experience, contacts with individuals within the organizations, media and analysts and an assessment of the expressed values of sustainability.

Two years ago the group added a unique category commendation, the Colin Morley Award, recognizing exceptional achievement by an NGO. Mr Morley, a member of the Medinge Group, died in the London Underground bombings on July 7, 2005. The award commemorates his visionary work in humanistic branding.

For 2009, the group has singled out the following organizations as Brands with a Conscience:

Chhatra Sagar—an eco-resort in Rajasthan (India)
Ekomarine—environmentally responsible paint (Sweden)
Kiva—microfinance lending (USA)
One—enlightened bottled water (UK)
Ragbag—Fair-Traded fashion accessories from recyclable materials (the Netherlands)
TOMS shoes—developing nations' shoe distribution (USA)

2009 Colin Morley Award

The third Colin Morley Award for a non-governmental organization is given to the American actor and philanthropist Paul Newman in posthumous recognition for an exemplary life of truth-telling and generosity.

Announcing the 2009 Brands with a Conscience, Stanley Moss, CEO of the Medinge Group and chairman of the initiative, remarked, 'This year's Brands with a Conscience winners are all superior brands who exemplify environmentally responsible conduct and community involvement. Three of these winners have a direct interest in water-related issues. And Medinge's selection of Paul Newman for the Colin Morley NGO award acknowledges a hero whose humanistic beliefs accompanied authentic, compassionate action.'

Thomas Gad, Director and Chairman of the Medinge Group commented, 'The 2009 Brands with a Conscience awards show a sensational variety, and not only geographically; we have award winners from all corners of the world, in a variety of business categories. Everything from eco-resorts, environmentally responsible boat paint, microfinance lending, enlightened bottled water, fair-traded fashion accessories from recyclable materials and shoe distribution for developing nations. Once again, for 2009 we honour a person with our Colin Morley NGO award: Paul Newman—a legend not only as an brilliant actor, but also as a business and a brand doing good for the world.'

Ian Ryder, a director of the group added, 'Every year we seem to say that the quality of entrants to the BWAC Awards increases, but the truth is that this year was absolutely outstanding. In every category, from all corners of the globe, each and every one of the finalists would have made worthy winners. All of which says that those who won came from a very select group, and they embody all that is best in our tough test of brand sustainability and conscience.'

'Each of the Brands with a Conscience winners display awareness, responsibility and action. Sustainability here is not limited to a temporary green perspective, but is celebrated as a life-long dedication to future generations,' said Patrick Harris, a Medinge director. 'One Water is a wonderful example of a humanitarian focus, founded on an elegant concept. It is a complete solution, harnessing a commercial opportunity to serve communities in need, utilizing the natural energy of children. Pure genius.'

'This year's nominees have been the most amazing yet,' agreed Jack Yan, Director. 'We received more nominees than ever, and competition was incredibly strong. The bar was set very high, and it was one of the most difficult decision-making process I have been through since the Awards' inception. There was greater advocacy among the Medinge Group's members this year, showing what passions these brands generated. In the end, our winners are organizations that admirably forward the Group's agenda in humanistic branding.'

The 2009 Brands with a Conscience awards will be presented at a private ceremony held at the Management Institute of Paris on February 5, 2009.

The winners in detail

Chhatra Sagar

<http://www.chhatrasagar.com/ABOUT.HTM>

Chhatra Sagar is an eco-friendly tent camp in Rajasthan, India, a lifetime project by direct descendants of the Maharajah of Jodhpur. Established in 2001, this small resort overlooks 365 protected acres, where over 200 varieties of wildlife have returned to the habitat. The sustainability quotient is optimal—all locally sourced food, furnished by indigenous craft, employs 30 local families, sponsors teachers, provides medicine, classroom furniture and brings specialized educators who address subjects ranging from family planning to recycling to soil conservation. The family's personal involvement and constant presence reinforce the commitment.

Ekomarine

<http://ekomarine.se/en.html>

For boating-intensive parts of the world like USA, Australia, UK and Scandinavia, the foul painting of boat hulls is a serious and not-ecological business. Sweden-based Ekomarine's researchers created the Neptune Formula, a naturally-based vegetable-protein alternative, with the added benefit of improving performance by reducing hull friction.

Kiva

<http://www.kiva.org>

Kiva is microfinance with a peer-to-peer platform. Lends modest amounts direct to developing world entrepreneurs. A brilliant combination of technology and humanity, which connects people through lending for the alleviation of poverty. Kiva is the world's first person-to-person micro-lending website, rallies 10,000 bloggers to promote good causes, and upturned the innovation of Zopa's direct lending model, applying it to philanthropy. A branded giving process in an economic and powerful way, never preachy and never sentimental.

One Water

<http://www.onedifference.org/uk/water/>

One sells bottled water in the UK and gives away 100 per cent of all of its profits to water projects in Africa. Profits are used to install PlayPumps, effectively, children's roundabouts that, when played on, pump water to a storage cistern. Active since May 2005, One water is aligned with the Millennium Development Goals of getting clean water to 1 billion people who do not have access to it and helping the 2 billion people who die each year from water-related diseases.

rag-bag

<http://www.ragbag.eu>

rag-bag produces fashionable and colourful bags and wallets made entirely from waste plastics (bags, sheets, etc.) collected by rag pickers from garbage tips in India, Cameroon and Brazil. They are paid a fair price for these waste products and they are trained to manufacture the products. The bags are sold online and in fashionable and fair trade outlets in Australia, Belgium, Germany, Japan, Netherlands, Switzerland, the UK and the USA. Rag pickers earn a better income and learn valuable skills, while waste is reused to create new, valuable and practical products. rag-bag sets a high example for social, economic and environmental sustainability.

TOMS Shoes

<http://www.tomsshoes.com>

For each pair of shoes you buy from this LA-based company, TOMS will donate a pair to needy children in developing nations. Once a year the company does a hands-on 'shoe drop' into communities, and customers participate. The shoes are comfy like slippers, and customers effectively vote with their feet. The website is very transparent, and the thousands of shoes distributed are a more direct good deed than throwing money at a cause.

Paul Newman (Colin Morley Award)

<http://www.newmansown.com>

Paul Newman set up a company in 1982 to make marinades, sauces and dressings from natural ingredients. All the profits and royalties reverted to Newman, who, from the business's inception, gave away every cent to charitable causes. In particular the money supports Hole in the Wall Camps, which bring together children with serious and terminal illnesses for a free summer-camp experience. Paul Newman disdained fame, opposed the star-celebrity system, and gave over \$250 million to these causes in his own lifetime (in per capita terms the most generous individual on earth). Newman's life's work reminds us that an individual can act unselfishly and humanistically, according to his own values and make a real contribution to a better world.

Images

Images for this release may be downloaded from <<http://jyanet.com/090101pr0.htm>>.

2009 Medinge Brands with a Conscience Committee

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About the Medinge Group

Founded in 2002, the Medinge Group first published a brand manifesto of eight statements encapsulating a vision of healthy brands for the future. In 2003, the group authored a collection of essays entitled Beyond Branding, which explored the ways in which brands could add value within alternative business and social models. In 2004, the group established the annual Brands with a Conscience list to recognize organizations who epitomize humanistic behaviour; in 2006, Medinge added a special category of recognition named in honour of its late colleague Colin Morley, which acknowledges excellence by an NGO, in keeping with Colin's humanistic vision. The Medinge Group maintains an online, automated speakers' and experts' bureau accessible through its web site, www.medinge.org. In 2007 Medinge launched an online resource, The Journal of the Medinge Group, a digital anthology of papers and articles written by Medinge members.

POSTED BY JACK YAN AT 06:15

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