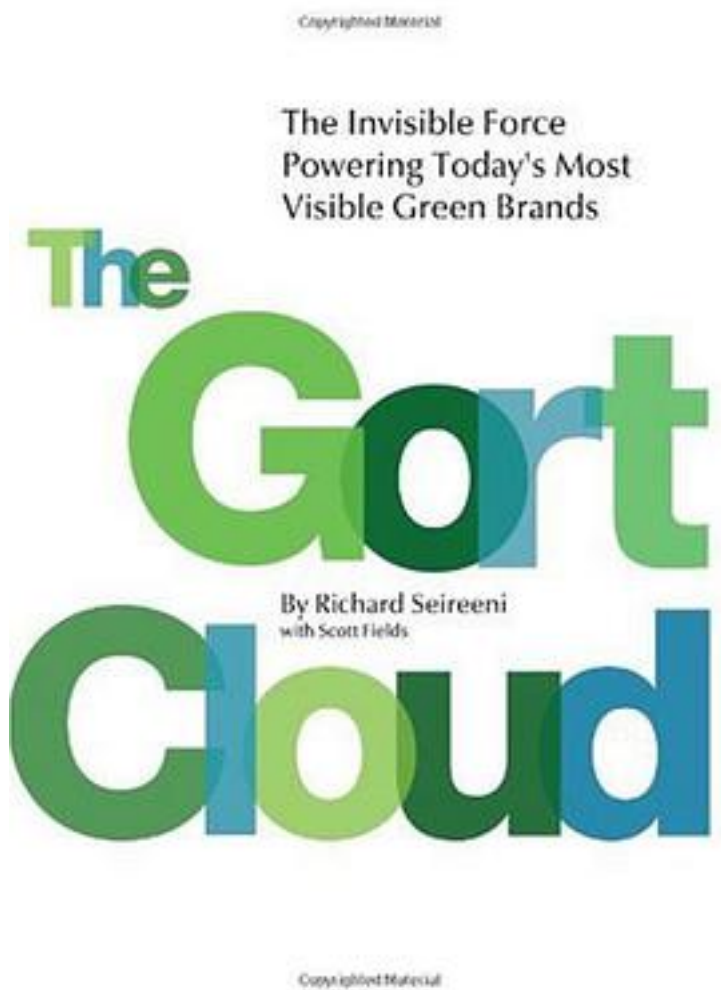


The Gort Cloud



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"Green" has gone mainstream, and for many companies caring for the environment is

not just a philosophy, it is a marketing strategy. So how does a company that is genuinely committed to green principles differentiate itself from its greenwashing competitors? Brand expert Richard Seireeni interviewed more than 30 "eco-capitalists" from a broad range of industries: home improvement, transportation, household products, food and beverage, energy, real estate, finance, and fashion. The collective experience of leaders such as Gary Hirschberg of Stonyfield Farms, Jeffrey Hollander of Seventh Generation, and the grandsons of Dr. Bronner, as well as other green experts, are a rich source of wisdom for green businesses getting off the ground or for any business aiming to improve its environmental performance. The result of these interviews is the "Gort Cloud"—a term coined by the author that describes the vast and largely invisible network of NGOs, trendspotters, advocacy groups, social networks, business alliances, certifying organizations, and other members of the green community that have the power to make or break new green brands. Integrating the Gort Cloud into brand development and marketing strategies is critical to the success of any aspiring green brand. This "green community" can supply technical assistance, venture capital, the first line of core customers, and tremendous *echo effects* in getting the word out quickly and inexpensively. Creating a cause, building credibility, developing a simple and compelling message, identifying core customers and sales channels, deftly playing the green alternative media, and fending off second-to-market competitors are all required to build a green brand. How these skills are put into practice will vary for each business, but Seireeni's research points toward a set of shared characteristics and basic tenets that every business can use to build a credible and successful green brand.

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