



I N T E R F A C E

July 6, 2006

Mr. Terence Corcoran  
National Post  
1450 Don Mills Road  
Toronto, ON, Canada M3B 3R5

Sent via email to: tcorcoran@nationalpost.com

Dear Mr. Corcoran:

This is in response to the two-part column by Peter Foster which you published June 25, and July 2, 2005. I find myself very much wanting to acquaint your readers with the real Interface, not the one described by Mr. Foster's columns (with which I took exception in more than 70 instances).

On June 20, 2005, as indicated by Mr. Foster, I spoke at the Shared Air Summit in Toronto, one of 13 invited appearances in Canada over the last 12 months. In my remarks, which can be found in their entirety at [www.interfacesustainability.com](http://www.interfacesustainability.com), I reported highlights of my company's progress in reducing its global environmental impacts since we began this initiative ten years ago:

- Waste, reduced nearly 50%, avoiding costs of US \$262 million cumulatively over 10 years, more than paying for the entire sustainability initiative
- Net greenhouse gas emissions, reduced 52% in absolute tonnage, 35% from efficiencies and renewables, 17% from off-sets (Kyoto calls for a 7% reduction by 2012.)
- Non-renewable fossil-derived energy used in worldwide carpet operations, down 43% relative to production units
- Water usage, reduced 66% relative to production units
- Smokestacks, 40% closed
- Effluent pipes, 53% abandoned
- Trees for Travel, more than 52,000 planted to off-set more than 78 million passenger miles of air travel

## **SUSTAINABILITY IN ACTION WORLDWIDE**



- Scrap to the landfill, reduced 80%, and
- 66 million lbs. of material diverted from landfills by ReEntry®, our program to collect and recycle used products
- Our customers can now buy “Cool Carpet®”, meaning there is no net contribution to global warming throughout its life cycle, with independent third party verification.

Since the processes for tracking these metrics are third party verified or open to public scrutiny, I believe they address and put to rest any charges of hypocrisy or “greenwash”, and vindicate the dedicated efforts of the good people of Interface. Your readers may be pleased to know that our operation in Belleville, Ontario, has realized very comparable results and in some cases, better than company averages.

Today these reduced environmental impacts are reflected in every single product we make anywhere in the world, to be sure in some more than others, but to a significant extent in every single one. Over the ten years, the entire production system has been redesigned, affecting all products, not just one here and one there. The target year for neutralizing our total net environment impacts is 2020, a goal selected by the people of Interface, not its Chairman or its CEO.

In another part of my remarks at the Shared Air Summit, I told the audience that our experience at Interface over the last ten years had convinced us of the business case—the hard-headed business case—for sustainability:

Costs down, not up (dispelling the myth that sustainability costs)

Products better than ever in their market appeal

The astonishing goodwill generated in the marketplace

The galvanizing effect on Interface associates

During the last five years, those four advantages—costs , products, goodwill, people—have been the salvation of Interface during the most prolonged recession in our industry’s history, one that saw our primary marketplace shrink by 38% from peak to trough. As a heavily leveraged company with over \$400 million of debt, we might not have made it without the sustainability initiative and, especially, the support of our customers.

Much of Mr. Foster’s article was based on *Mid-Course Correction*, a book I published in 1998—nearly seven years ago—that chronicled Interface’s progress to that date and our



plan for continuing the journey to sustainability. Since 1998, Interface has continued very transparently to report progress—warts and all—on a web site that is regularly updated: [www.interfacesustainability.com](http://www.interfacesustainability.com). The progress reported above, and much more, can be found there; for example, that renewable energy, though down as a percentage from 1996 (12%) to 2004 (11%), is accompanied by a reduction in fossil-derived BTUs per production unit of 29% over the same period, and an increase in greenhouse gas off-sets from nil to 17% of emissions.

It should go without saying that this pattern in energy usage accrues as a huge competitive advantage to Interface, a petro-intensive company, in an era of rising oil prices that could go much higher still; while a deeper analysis of share price movement would have noted the rise from a low of \$1.97 per share to the present \$8.50 per share (a 331% gain for the astute investor over the last 33 months), reflecting recovery from recession.

So, I take issue with Mr. Foster's characterization of me as anti-business. Further, his misleading headline, "I Am a Corporate Sinner", seems to be attributed to me; however, those are not my words. What I have said is that I am a "recovering plunderer," trying to find a *better* way to a *bigger* profit, and that the linear, take-make-waste industrial system, of which we are all a part, is degrading the biosphere upon which every living creature is utterly dependent, just as the economy itself is dependent on it. Rather than anti-business, I am pro-business, proposing a new, more sustainable model for business, especially for my business.

What I am saying (and this has the support of much, if not all, of the scientific community) is that the industrial system that takes and takes and takes from a finite Earth and returns its waste, often poisonous, to accumulate in a finite Earth can not go on and on into the indefinite future. Does not common sense dictate that humankind must find a better way to meet its growing needs—and the sooner the better? It is this better way that 5,000 people are seeking for their company in the tiny world of Interface, and if we influence others to try, then that is wonderful! Other companies are making notable strides in this, too. If any are doing better than Interface, my hat is off to them.

Finally, as for the "useful idiot" insult with which Mr. Foster concluded his column, I will leave that for others to judge after the Interface story is fully told; but it does seem over the top, and I really do not think Lenin was speaking—even by the remotest extension—of this capitalist.

Sincerely,

Ray C. Anderson  
Founder and Chairman  
Interface, Inc.