

## Interview

# Global sustainability at Kimberly-Clark: An interview with Mike Lloyd, Director of Environmental Services

**Sue Mizera**

is Managing Director of Young & Rubicam Business Consultants, a division of Young & Rubicam Group, Geneva.

**ABSTRACT** Sue Mizera interviews Mike Lloyd, Director of Environmental Services, Kimberly-Clark about global sustainability at Kimberly-Clark.

*Journal of Brand Management* (2013) 20, 186–190. doi:10.1057/bm.2012.39;  
published online 21 September 2012

**Keywords:** Sustainability; water access; environmental services; Kimberly-Clark; partnerships

**Sue Mizera (SM):** Could you give a little background about your role and responsibilities in Kimberly-Clark?

**Mike Lloyd (ML):** I work on the Kimberly-Clark Global Sustainability team in Roswell, Georgia. My responsibility is to lead environmental programs. I'm involved in Kimberly-Clark's Sustainability 2015 objectives that concern the water footprint of our manufacturing sites, waste management and environmental compliance.

**SM:** How do you contribute to the 2015 goals?

**ML:** My team leads environmental programs and provides technical assistance to our mills. One example is supporting our company wide goal to reduce water for a 25 per cent reduction by 2015. As we researched global water scarcity issues it became clear that some of the communities around our mills face the same stresses. We began to ask ourselves what we could do

and what our role should be. We want strong, healthy, vibrant communities around our workplaces and access to water and sanitation is a key component. The conclusions were obvious: we don't have to search for huge programs when there is a need close to home. We created a program we call Water for Life to provide 200 million gallons of water per year in water stressed regions. We don't only work in these communities, but they're the first place we look.

**SM:** Can you describe the nature of the work you do?

**ML:** Tissue manufacturing requires access to reliable sources of water. Our process takes the water, uses it in our process and then we clean the water before returning to the source. So in addition to optimizing our water use and ensuring the quality of discharge our Water for life program includes three themes; to protect the watersheds or sources of water that we and our neighbors rely upon, increase

**Correspondence:**  
Sue Mizera  
Young & Rubicam Group,  
Bâtiment 43 L, Rue Eugène  
Marziano, 25, Geneva, Acacias  
CH-1227, Switzerland.  
E-mail: Sue.MIZERA@yr.com

consumer awareness to water issues and help them reduce water use, and to provide access to water and sanitation for employees and communities. This means the majority of our work on water outside of our mills is with the communities around us or consumers.

**SM:** Who are some of your partners and how do you go about choosing them?

**ML:** We look for partners that help us go further faster, and provide a more complete solution than we could provide alone. CARE, for example, is a great organization; they have been around a long time and have a great reputation. We explored what they were doing about access to water and sanitation and whether there was a fit for us with them. They're doing things in countries we're interested in; they have projects for access to water and sanitation that were right for us.

Another partner, the Global Water Challenge, a non-profit in Washington, DC, has accelerated our learning on global water issues and has connected us with other organizations that are implementing access to water and sanitation projects.

**SM:** Any other partners?

**ML:** There are two others we work with. Purdue University is a partner. We work with faculty on the Global Engineering Program, we've finished some smaller scale projects with them, we get their students involved in the local community. It's a partnership we like to work with, because we're educating new environmental professionals and having a real impact on our local communities.

We also work with The Nature Conservancy. My contact is new with them, but we're working with them in Brazil on watershed protection near our facility, and that looks like it will be a longer term partnership for our team in Brazil. The reason is, we're an end user of the water they're protecting, so this is important to the business and to the area and so is a good fit.

We are also members of the World Business Council for Sustainable Development. This enables us to understand current and emerging issues and what leading companies are doing to address them.

**SM:** What value do your partnerships bring to you?

**ML:** Our partners help us with background knowledge, applying their experience, stakeholder reengagement. Once we signal our intent they are able to suggest projects that meet our needs and the community needs and help with the right scope and scale.

**SM:** Your background, please. Is it environmental studies? How did you come to this role in Kimberly-Clark?

**ML:** I have been with Kimberly-Clark for over 20 years. I started out in operations and maintenance, and took a degree in environmental engineering, I worked in our UK mills in an environmental and safety role, and came to the United States as environmental coordinator for one of our facilities. I joined the Corporate Environmental Team in 2004 and I've been in environmental leadership positions since then.

**SM:** Going forward, what kind of profile or background do you think will be required for new people coming into this role?

**ML:** My personal opinion, people will have to be grounded in a good science or engineering background. But they clearly need to understand global issues. Being just a great engineer or a great scientist alone is not necessarily enough to be successful. They must have an appreciation for our own technology within Kimberly-Clark, and globally they must have an understanding of different cultures and different needs around the world to develop the programs that will be needed. They need to be good communicators and have an entrepreneurial spirit too.

**SM:** Where does your work fit in Kimberly-Clark? Are you part of the Foundation?

**ML:** We're partners with the Foundation. We work together on what we call Signature

Programs. We lead the water programs separately. The Foundation helps support us in some of our programs.

**SM:** How long have Kimberly-Clark's water access programs been going on?

**ML:** We've supported CARE and Water for People for a couple of years with water and sanitation projects. We turned a number of *ad hoc* projects into a strategic vision and in 2010, we began to ask, What can we do, how can we do it, what partners should we use? In 2011, we put boots on the ground and got things going. We did our first program in Colombia in 2010 and this set our course for 2011.

**SM:** Are your partnerships exclusive?

**ML:** We're not exclusive to the partners we use, but as different people, different organizations have strengths in different regions or have more experience, we want to go with those organizations who are best in a particular region. If someone is good in El Salvador, and they meet our criteria, we'll work with them.

**SM:** How do you prioritize your projects?

**ML:** Each project has to be aligned with our strategy; we are not just putting dots on a map. We look at each project on a case-by-case basis. We rank the projects by sustainability of projects and what's important. It's not that we put some effort and money into a project and get it done so we can check the box and walk away. We've built sustainability into our objectives: we want to make a difference in the world. So the goals we measure are, for example, so many million gallons of water saved per year, and we will measure this cumulatively so by the end of 10 years, there will be a much bigger total. The sustainability of our programs is important to us.

**SM:** Who else is out there to benchmark against?

**ML:** The beverage industry in general has implemented water stewardship programs. We look to Coca-Cola as a benchmark and also PepsiCo. Companies like Grundfos,

the pump manufacturer, are interesting as they are looking at new business models around their technology too. We're aware of other companies working on water and can benchmark through our connections at the WBCSD. An additional benefit of our partnerships is that we do meet others from time to time. The Global Water Challenge will bring people together to solve common issues and as a stakeholder, we get to provide our insights too.

**SM:** Why Kimberly-Clark, why water?

**ML:** The K-C Global Business Plan calls for us to create a better future. Being responsible stewards of the environment and positive contributors to our communities is one way to achieve that goal. Water is an important social issue that impacts our business, our employees and the communities around us including our consumers. We're in the health and hygiene business, we use water, there's pressure on water, it's connected to our business and the communities we serve.

**SM:** How do you work with partners like CARE or the Global Water Challenge with whom you have ongoing relationships? Can you provide some specific examples?

**ML:** We have operations in El Salvador. We know CARE operates in Central America and they have a program called SWASH+, which is about access to water and sanitation in schools. We were able to explain our needs for the community near our mill and it was a fit with the CARE program underway in El Salvador.

**SM:** What do you see as the role of water and sanitation projects for building Kimberly-Clark brands and business?

**ML:** It's about brand recognition by answering needs that are important to consumers and customers in a specific community. We are doing work for brands right now in Spain. Last year, we did a campaign where we put a water saving device in toilet cisterns, saving a liter of water per flush. We know there is an issue

with drought in the summer months in Spain, so we came up with this idea, because it would solve a real problem for our consumers and gave us an opportunity to work with our country marketing team to promote our brand.

**SM:** Are you supporting your projects with PR?

**ML:** We communicate our projects locally so that the local population are aware of the work and why it's important. We also communicate in the Kimberly-Clark Sustainability Report 2011. The campaign in Spain was communicated through retailers and in the area we're doing work. These are still early days and we're still exploring this kind of activity.

**SM:** It is clear what you are looking to do in your current partnerships. What is the next frontier for future partnerships?

**ML:** We set ourselves a target for the amount of water we contribute to society through these programs. This is the first thing we're working on and we're learning how we do this. As I mentioned, this is happening through watershed projects, through working with our brand teams to reduce consumer usage and by providing access to water and sanitation for communities. We want to be in this for the long term. Our vision is we can use our brand teams to make this bigger. Doing a project in a community is a great thing to do, but if we could get our brand teams on this, it's ultimately the right thing for the brand, not just the communities. Then we could get more scale. That's where we want to go. We're still in the exploratory stage.

Also, the Global Water Challenge is helping us determine what is the right thing for us to get involved in and in what region. A week or two ago, we talked to the US State Department about setting up a water partnership in the United States with academia, NGOs and the private sector. We discussed what each partner would get from this relationship. Kimberly-Clark is

known for our brands such as Huggies, Kleenex and Andrex to name a few. Our vision is to create scale through relevant commercial programs with our brand teams when the opportunity and timing are aligned. For now we are taking small steps, making a difference, and learning a lot from our partnerships.

**SM:** Are you looking to any model partnerships or are you inventing them?

**ML:** I think model partnerships are out there, we are still finding our way and it is too early for us to say we have found the model partnership. One of my biggest challenges is to find partnerships to create scale to get the most from our resources. Other organizations or foundations may be working in similar regions, but their programs differ. The Global Water Challenge is working to find us partners with the same vision, to tell us who's doing what, where. The ideal would be to stop attacking these projects as one offs and stop re-inventing the wheel several times over. To date, we haven't been able to scale up. For example: we have a project in India. We have already selected the community we want to work with and we're looking to partner with someone there. It is difficult to find others with interests in the same projects or communities when there is so much need.

**SM:** How big is your team?

**ML:** The Environmental Team is 11 people and we support K-C's global businesses and operations teams with environmental matters. We tackle water regionally, right now with two to three people, including myself.

**SM:** What does it mean to you personally to work in this area for Kimberly-Clark?

**ML:** As I've said, I've worked for Kimberly-Clark for over 20 years now in the United Kingdom and the United States, in various roles, and I've always enjoyed what I do. Working on meaningful activities is a motivator for most people. I have been fortunate to work on issues that impact our business during my time with K-C, but also

now that I have supported water projects, I have seen how our work impacts the lives of our neighbors. In Colombia in 2010, for example, we gave water filtration devices to 400 families who did not have access to clean water and we went back to see the impact of our work. Seeing the difference this made was one of the most satisfying things in my career.

**SM:** Can you elaborate a little more on this?

**ML:** This was a community close to one of our facilities. Our country team was already doing great work there, and they came to us and asked what we as the water team could do to help. So we went down to take a look. Basically people there have a water supply but only for four hours a day. There is no pressure in the system, there are leaks, they don't know when there will be water. They collect water in an open tank in the front yard or in a rain barrel connected to the roof. People have to boil this water or go out and buy water, but they are low-income families.

We looked at what the government was doing, what NGOs were doing, and we realized all those 400 families actually had family members working in the facility. We realized we could make sure they all had

access to clean water almost immediately with a point of use water filtration device. The best way to do this was through a program where the employees would pay a certain amount, co-workers would contribute and Kimberly-Clark would provide the rest. It was a great partnership. It wasn't just us giving money, the families were also contributing to this. Our team in the mill distributed filters and helped with installation instructions and hygiene education for the community.

When you go back, you now see the device in the kitchen of the home. We haven't solved all of the water issues, water-borne diseases are still a big issue, but they now have clean drinking water, they can give you a glass of water. They told me, take a drink: here you go! It was great. No more boiling water, no more wondering when it would be there or is it safe; no more going outside to collect it. It was a great solution.

It's also a way of using the skills our environmental professionals have learned over the years to support Kimberly-Clark and extend and apply them for the community.

**SM:** This really helps capture the state of play in partnerships today. Thank you.