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## Mathes: Sustainability Issue Might Give Edge To Independents

**K**ansas City based Vanguard Packaging recently got a phone inquiry from Walt Disney, a most unlikely potential customer. What would a giant entertainment conglomerate want from an independent box-maker?

The answer, said Vanguard's Mark Mathes, is sustainability. Mathes, the Chairman of the recently formed AICC Environmental and Business Sustainability Committee, addressed fellow independents at last week's AICC's Annual Meeting in Orlando, Florida.

"It's my belief that [sustainability] is possibly the most significant opportunity to capture new business in my career," Mathes said. "Not doing is going to cost you business."

"[Sustainability] makes economic sense," Mathes said. Wal-Mart projected that, if implemented fully, sustainability will save the giant retailer \$3 billion in 2008. "At Vanguard, if we fully implement our goals, we will save in the neighborhood of \$300,000 to \$400,000," he added. "The progress we have already made is already saving us \$100,000."

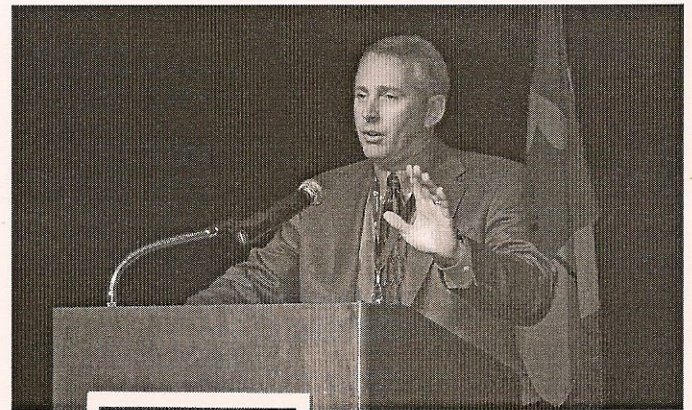
He noted that the U.S. military is now embracing sustainability. "What happened when the U.S. military mandated desegregation?" Mathes asked rhetorically. "It completely changed the country."

The new committee has three major goals, Mathes said:

- gather and disseminate relevant data and information;
- create a clearinghouse for sharing ideas; and
- create a mechanism for sustainability certification.

### At Bentonville

About a month ago, Mathes and several members of the committee traveled to Wal-Mart's headquarters in Bentonville, Arkansas to attend its Sustainability Forum. "Sustainability is a thought-out and designed-in process," Mathes said. "This goes well with the



Mark Mathes

strength of our membership's design facilities, which we feel gives [independents] an edge in this industry.

In Bentonville, these committee members gave out about 250 computer disks of member locations, noting the capability of the 3,500 designers working in AICC member plants.

"AICC has been looking for a way to brand itself for years," Mathes noted. "Sustainability may be one of those ways."

"AICC needs to take a leadership role in determining how sustainability is going to shape our industry," Mathes said. "Possibly a sustainability certification process is the way to do it."