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Sustainability is the new norm today for businesses of all shapes and sizes, which realize that greening their operations and products not only benefits the planet, but also the bottom line. While this trend toward environmentally-friendly business practices has gained considerable steam in recent years, one element of the process has lagged behind: the marketing of those products and services.

As a response to this deficit, Hanger Network has created the EcoHanger, the environmentally sustainable alternative to wire and plastic hangers that also serves as an impactful and targeted advertising channel. Each year in the U.S., more than 8.5 billion wire and plastic hangers end up in landfills, unable to be reused. Most wire and plastic hangers, which are rarely recycled or reused, are made from metal and petroleum-based products, using non-regulated labor, and amass a large carbon footprint in their journey from China, where they are manufactured, to the United States.

In contrast, EcoHangers are made from 100 percent recycled material and are 100 percent recyclable. The paperboard body of the EcoHanger is made from 100 percent post-consumer waste, while the plastic hook is produced from recycled plastic soda and water bottle caps, a resource that had never previously been captured and reused. In fact, it has been estimated that the number of caps thrown away each year could fill a football stadium. Additionally, Hanger Network uses vegetable dye for the ink printed on EcoHangers, and non-toxic glues in the production process.

The public will often balk at the prospect of a green product or service if they believe it involves a trade-off in quality. With EcoHangers, such worries are unwarranted. Switching to EcoHangers is an easy way for people to make a big difference for the environment without sacrificing quality. Proven to be stronger than wire hangers in laboratory strength tests, EcoHangers can remain in a consumer's closet well after being picked up from a dry cleaner.

As an advertising medium, the EcoHanger offers a unique way for marketers and advertisers to remove waste from their media plans, just as it removes waste from U.S. landfills. Primarily distributed through a proprietary network of over 35,000 dry cleaners nationwide, the EcoHanger is an efficient and targeted media vehicle because it exposes consumers to advertising at key points during the day – early in the morning and late at night. Each year, 30% of adult-directed advertising ends up wasted, reaching unintended audiences. In contrast, because EcoHanger distribution is scalable, advertisers have the opportunity to reach their intended audience every time.

The power of the EcoHanger's scalability is well illustrated by a program run by MillerCoors earlier this year. To promote its new MGD 64 light beer that was premiering in Seattle and Portland, MillerCoors rolled out MGD 64-branded EcoHangers that were distributed only in dry cleaners within a close geographic proximity to retailers carrying the product. This kind of effort helps to drive consumers into stores to purchase the product, making the EcoHanger a valuable tool for both retailers and consumer product brands.

In addition to distribution at dry cleaners, EcoHangers can be found at selected retailers – JC Penney and Hershey's stores, for example – where they provide added value at point of purchase by extending the brand message. Recently, EcoHangers made their first appearance on a cruise ship, appearing in all guest cabins and staterooms of Crystal Cruises. Overall, some of the country's top blue-chip brands have achieved success using EcoHangers in their marketing plans, including: CBS, Levi's, Revlon, Joseph Abboud, Staples, Unilever, and Johnson & Johnson.

EcoHangers are manufactured by Standard Packaging in the United States, in EPA and OSHA regulated factories, providing employment for hundreds in Lexington, KY. Because of their supplier/partners, EcoHangers have a strong ripple effect of job and wealth creation across the recycled paper supply chain. Partners whose businesses have grown as a result of their association with EcoHangers include recycled paper giant Graphic Packaging International, Roberts PolyPro, and Standard Packaging, all of which are involved in the production and distribution of EcoHangers.

Through EcoHangers, Hanger Network has developed an innovative business model to become what is arguably the largest green marketing channel in the country. It is truly a company that understands the meaning of "good for the environment, good for business."