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Pioneer of sustainable carpet production wins first Sustainability Leadership Award

Ray C. Anderson, CEO of Interface Inc., the world's largest commercial carpet maker, has won the first "Sustainability Leadership Award". Under Anderson's guidance, Interface has made great strides towards becoming a completely sustainable business that is functioning like a closed-loop eco-system. The award is sponsored by Zurich-based SAM Sustainable Asset Management/Sustainable Performance Group (SPG) and was presented at the second annual Zurich Sustainability Symposium on 24 & 25 September 2001.

Anderson began his drive to make Interface sustainable in 1994 after reading "The Ecology of Commerce" by Paul Hawken. Hawken claimed that only business with its vast financial and innovative resources could deliver the technologies and products that would allow us to live comfortably in a sound environment. Since then, Interface has been working hard to reach a position where it could satisfy its raw material needs by harvesting and recycling carpet and other petrochemical products, while eliminating waste and harmful emissions from its operations. Interface also tries to harness solar energy wherever possible. The company's ultimate goal is to make its products without needing to take a fresh drop of oil from the earth. Interestingly, Anderson emphasizes that the company's progress towards sustainability did not require the injection of vast amounts of fresh capital into research but rather a shift in thinking and focus. That is why he is convinced that becoming a sustainable business is not only the right thing to do, but the smart thing, too.

The Sustainability Leadership Award is endowed with 50'000 Swiss Francs and has been devised by SAM/SPG to honour individuals whose questioning of orthodox thinking and determination to make alternative approaches work have led to concrete results in corporate sustainability. In resonance with Hawken's view, SAM/SPG considers such pioneers as vital for society to make headway on the road to sustainability. In assessing candidates the independent jury has considered the following criteria:

- Demonstrated leadership in sustainability
- Proven impact of initiative on or within the private sector
- Strong, convincing personality with future scope
- Innovativeness of pursued ideas, projects or institutions
- Significance for followers and multiplying effects
- Potential for communication

The award will henceforth be presented annually to one outstanding personality.