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Arbor Day Foundation[®]

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**University of Nebraska-Lincoln College of Business
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Executive Summary

As consultants, our team's goals are to provide the Arbor Day Foundation with ideas for future business lines and strengthen the company's outlook moving forward. Our proposal strongly integrates the organization's mission to inspire people to plant, nurture, and celebrate trees. Entering the birch sap water market will accomplish this task and create a plethora of opportunities for the Arbor Day Foundation. Our recommendation to ADF is to enter the birch sap market by creating licensing deals with birch sap water producers and distributors. ADF can assist these companies by offering its strong brand value, marketing expertise, and competitive advantages.

If the company succeeds in the birch sap water market, it could easily expand into different beverage lines, including coconut water, maple water, and other sustainable water sources. After conquering the licensing procedures for birch sap water, expanding will be easy and the experience will transfer almost effortlessly. Engaging in innovative and reliable business ventures will strengthen the Arbor Day Foundation brand name, improve operating revenues, and invite future opportunities.

Our team values the feedback we received from ADF representatives. While gathering information, we recognized that capital intensive business ventures would not be compatible with ADF's organizational goals. Acting as a licensor for birch sap water distributors will minimize costs and help ADF build alliances with companies that share their sustainability values. Our team's research indicates that the health and environmentally conscious markets will act as reliable end consumers after successful partnerships are made. As consultants, we have considered the economic and behavioral consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic from a consumer perspective and believe that a licensing venture is realistic.

Furthermore, existing partners and supporters of the Arbor Day Foundation provide an appropriate starting point for finding a licensing partner. Sapp Life Birch Water is a producer and distributor of birch sap water; however, this firm currently has limited market reach. Target is another Arbor Day Foundation partner that Sapp Life could collaborate with for ease of distribution in the future. The Arbor Day Foundation could use its connections with existing partners to assist and facilitate the expansion of the birch sap water market. Overall, it is our recommendation to enter the birch sap water market by creating licensing deals with birch sap water producers and distributors. This venture will assist the Arbor Day Foundation in inspiring people to plant, nurture, and celebrate trees.



The Challenge

The Arbor Day Foundation uses numerous ventures to generate revenues that support its mission to inspire people to plant, celebrate, and nurture trees. As such, the task the Arbor Day Foundation faces is finding new ventures that are profitable and scalable to continually build and grow funding sources. Diversified sources of funding help provide stability to the Arbor Day Foundation's operations to help our world tackle environmental challenges. The opportunity this task presents is to create a new business venture aligned with the organizational mission that can add to user experiences, provide solutions, and make an impact on the world. Engaging in an innovative business venture would solidify Arbor Day Foundation's brand name, vision, and mission.

Our Solution

To assist the Arbor Day Foundation with this task, our team has created a solution to help the Arbor Day Foundation bring in additional revenue while maintaining the organizational mission. Our solution is birch sap. Birch sap is harvested from birch trees and transformed into various products that can be consumed or used for health and beauty benefits. Examples include birch water, tea, alcohol, syrup, and skincare products. With a changing world population looking to be more health-conscious, the birch sap market is on the rise with over 19% annual growth (Technavio, 2018). By utilizing existing partners of the Arbor Day Foundation, we can build on existing synergies while diversifying into new revenue streams.

Additionally, a business utilizing birch sap fits into the Arbor Day Foundation's mission. As demand grows for the birch sap products, more trees will be planted across the globe. Furthermore, these trees will be cared for and nurtured as birch trees can live for 40-50 years providing birch sap with the proper care. Lastly, creating a product that is derived from trees will help to celebrate trees as consumers and people across the globe can taste, see, and experience the benefits that trees can provide. By tapping into the growing birch sap market, the Arbor Day Foundation can utilize synergies to diversify revenues in a way that builds the organization's mission.

To accomplish this solution, the Arbor Day Foundation will embrace a low capital approach to increase revenues by forming licensing agreements. While licensing agreements have lower revenue potential than other market entry forms, the strategy also has lower risks. The Arbor Day Foundation can provide a powerful image to an existing birch sap producer while also tapping into its resources to provide marketing expertise. By using this approach, the Arbor Day Foundation can avoid large amounts of risk while still generating additional revenues.

Key Metrics

When releasing a new product, it is important to look at metrics to track the efficiency of an investment. The three categories of key metrics when analyzing birch water are customer-oriented, financial-oriented, and Arbor Day Foundation specific. The first customer-oriented metric is the product usage measure, which tracks the amount of usage the product gets over its lifetime. To measure this, you take the total amount of time that people use the product and divide it by the number of users. The next metric is the churn rate, this measures the rate at which customers will stop buying and using birch water over time. For small businesses, the goal is to have a churn rate between 2-3%, and if the market is smaller, then the churn rate is lower.

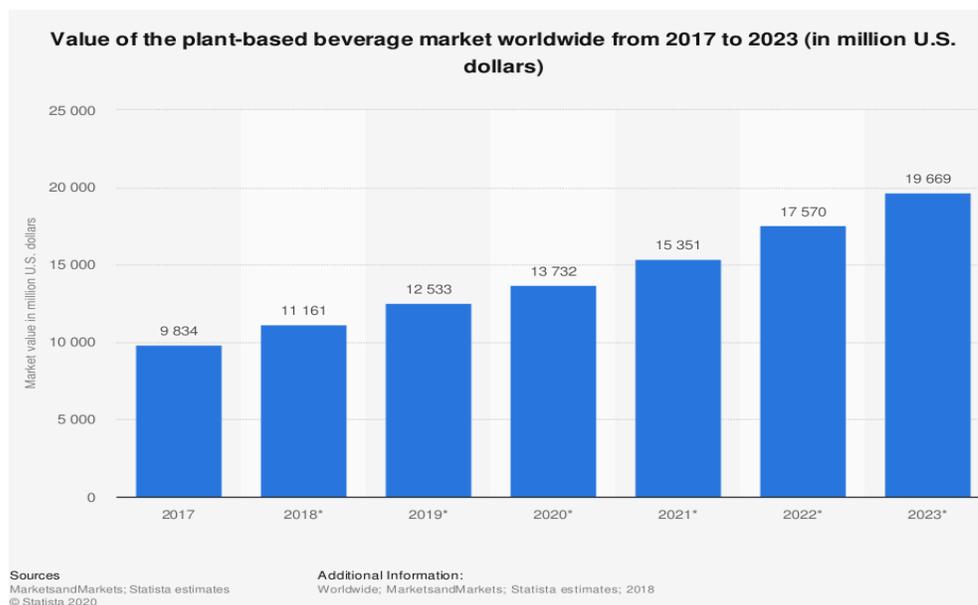
Quality is another important metric because customers want products with superb quality. Allowing customers to fill out surveys will help better the product and improve the way the customers experience the product. The last customer-oriented metric is customer derived value. Customer derived value tracks how much customers value having birch water in their products (Semick, 2020).

The first financial-oriented metric is monthly recurring revenue (MRR). The MRR measures the amount of revenue that the product creates month to month (Semick, 2020). The next business-oriented metric is the average revenue per customer (ARPU); this is the MRR divided by the total number of customer accounts. ARPU is a non-GAAP measure that helps explain the product's revenue generation capabilities (Semick, 2020). Customer acquisition costs (CAC) is an important metric because it breaks down the contributing costs of acquiring customers. These costs include marketing costs, sales team costs, advertising, and other customer attraction expenses. Another expense that is tied into CAC is the salaries of marketing and sales professionals. Other financial metrics include the return on capital, sales revenue, profit margin, and net profit margin.

An Arbor Day Foundation specific metric is the number of trees planted and saved from deforestation. This is an easy metric for the company to count and birch sap market size should be used as a proxy for how well the company is doing. This can be used to help market them as a sustainable company because people are interested in how to prevent deforestation. By tracking this, it can calculate the amount of oxygen produced and how much the carbon footprint was reduced. This metric relates to the “buy one, plant one” system that Arbor Day Foundation already uses. Every product sold will make the world a better place.

Unique Value Proposition

Based on recent health and sustainability trends worldwide, there has been an increased demand from customers for healthy drinks that provide nutritional benefit. According to a Nutritional Insight article titled “Maple water: One to watch amid plant-based waters surge”, consumers' demand for healthy and nutritional drinks have led to increased demand for organic plant-based water drinks (Haigh, 2018). The popularity of these types of drinks can be seen in the graph to the right depicting the projected growth in the plant-based beverage market from 2017 to 2023.



Bedford, 2020



Also, the demand for plant-based drinks can be seen in the recent popularity of coconut water. Coconut water has been successfully marketed as an alternative plant-based health drink, showing a bounty of customers for these goods. According to a Grand Views Research report titled “Global Functional Drinks Market”, the market for these health alternative goods are growing at an exceptional rate, especially in the US and China, where there has been an increase in demand for these products (2018).

The research article “Are Sustainable Consumers Health Conscious? A Segmentation Study of Wine Consumers”, indicates that consumers are “mindful about environmental problems, social responsibility of companies, and ethically produced and sustainably sourced products” (Ghvanidze et al., 2020). While this is true about wine, it can be inferred for birch sap products due to their similarities as a consumable luxury. The main value derived from birch sap water is qualitative stemming from the customer experience individuals receive from the product’s health benefits. According to a Medical Daily article “Coconut Water Is History: Taste The 5 Benefits of Birch Tree Sap” by Lizette Borreli, a senior editor at The Healthy with a focus on expert-backed medical advice, birch sap water can decrease cavities, lower cholesterol, moisturize skin, promote liver and kidney health, has lower calories, and contains essential nutrients (2015).

Additionally, with Arbor Day Foundation’s experience in tree health and sustainability, they can add qualitative value to the product by making sure that birch sap water is sustainably collected from birch trees. This can assure the customers concerned about the environment are making an environmentally ethical choice. Also, Arbor Day Foundation already has positive brand recognition from their sustainably sourced shade grown coffee, which will allow consumers to more easily recognize Arbor Day labeled products as environmentally friendly.

Competitive Advantage

A competitive advantage is a characteristic that makes a company unique, and that no one else can replicate (Gray, 2016). A company should capitalize on the competitive advantage, especially when working on a new product, to get the best outcome. Arbor Day Foundation already has a competitive advantage, by having name recognition. The company has a lot of different products and programs that make them a very recognizable brand.

When working on releasing a new product, such as birch sap, product awareness is one of the most influential parts. There are many companies that already produce, supply, and sell birch waters products. Arbor Day is already ahead of the game by having name recognition, and for being known as a sustainable company. People who enjoy healthy products are also interested in improving the health of the world as a whole. Arbor Day Foundation should capitalize on their competitive advantage while leaning into the birch market. This will make the process more effective.

Channels

To communicate the Arbor Day Foundation value proposition to our target customer segments, we anticipate Arbor Day Foundation working with potential and existing partners to create marketing campaigns to bolster sales and add value. ADF’s marketing expertise and resources will aid in communicating with end consumers and licensing partners. The licensing

channel will allow the Arbor Day Foundation to assist its partners in raising customer awareness by helping more health-conscious consumers become aware of the health benefits of birch sap water. ADF can leverage the connection between consumers who are health conscious and environmentally friendly. Existing Arbor Day Foundation partners, including Target, HyVee, and Sapp Birch Tree Water, provide opportunities for ADF to leverage those relationships to add value. Working with a birch sap water producer like Sapp as well as retailers like Target and HyVee could allow ADF to help Sapp expand its retail network beyond its limits. Sapp is currently limited in its retail network to Whole Foods and health market stores in the northeast region of the U.S. as well as the Los Angeles area of California. We believe that the Arbor Day Foundation can add value to a partner like Sapp by assisting them in expanding their network reach through ADF's marketing expertise and a licensing agreement. While the indirect licensing channel could lead to reduced capturing of potential profits, the risks posed to ADF are significantly lower than other market entry channels.

In determining our recommendation for the proper channel for the Arbor Day Foundation to use, our team also considered more capital intensive methods such as direct ownership of the entire process, becoming a supplier of birch sap by owning the birch trees, or becoming a distributor or retailer by purchasing the processed product. However, the risks and drawbacks of these channels outweighed the potential increase in profit. The capital requirements, upfront costs, employment challenges, and additional risks of managing a larger portion of the process appeared to be too great. Additionally, these strategies did not capitalize on the competitive advantages the Arbor Day Foundation has to offer. It is our recommendation that the best channel to enter the Birch Sap market is to use a licensing arrangement to leverage the existing strengths and partners that the Arbor Day Foundation has established.



Customer Segments

Health Conscious Market

Currently, the bottled water industry has revenues of \$6.9 billion and a profit of \$277 million (Zheng, 2019). Clearly, this industry is successful and has a strong potential of growing in the future. If properly executed, birch water could thrive in this growing industry, specifically among health-conscious consumers. In fact, a key external driver of the bottled water industry is the healthy eating index (Zheng, 2019). Bottled soda manufacturers received a great deal of

criticism for the high sugar and calorie content in their beverages, leading to obesity, diabetes, and other health concerns. Bereft of calories, sugar, caffeine, and other harmful additives, water has become the best alternate drink. Brands often carbonate or add mild flavoring to their water to appeal to consumers.

Prior to this ongoing health crisis, it was projected that per capita soft drink consumption would increase post 2019, threatening the demand for bottled water (Zheng, 2019).



However, our team projects that in a post-pandemic world, individuals will likely become more health conscious and do everything they can to boost their immunity to communicable diseases. Madhukar Pai, Canada Research Chair of Epidemiology & Global Health at the University of Montreal writes, “We don’t have to make the case for investing in health-every country has learnt the hard lesson...Investing in health is investing in the economy” (Pai, 2020). Dr. Daphne Miller, a contributor at the Washington Post, echoes Pai, writing, “...there are some indicators that the pandemic itself, and the massive shutdown it has triggered, is forcing the adoption of more healthful behaviors” (Miller, 2020). Among other things, such as proper diet and exercise, water intake is integral to leading a healthy lifestyle. As a growing business, capitalizing on this trend could be significant for the Arbor Day Foundation. Birch water is an innovative way to enter this market and generate reliable revenue.

Many may not be familiar with birch water and its benefits, given that it is a more obscure and new product. If the Arbor Day Foundation can effectively market the benefits of drinking birch water, the health-conscious market will likely be drawn to the product. Through research, our team has found that there are many health benefits to drinking birch water. Birch water is enriched with vitamins and minerals but does not have the high sugar content that beverages such as coconut water, maple water, and other flavored waters have (Mikula, 2017). Specifically, birch water is rich in manganese, a mineral that is crucial for healthy bone development and maintenance (McGrane, 2019). Furthermore, birch sap water may enhance skin and hair health and have antioxidant properties (McGrane, 2019).

Nutritional Value of 300 ml of Birch Water	
Calories	9
Carbohydrates	3 grams
Sugar	3 grams
Calcium	2% of the Daily Value
Magnesium	95% of the Daily Value
Manganese	130% of the Daily Value
Zinc	3% of the Daily Value

(McGrane, 2019)

Nutritional Value of 330 ml of VitaCoco Water	
Calories	60
Carbohydrates	15 grams
Sugar	15 grams
Calcium	4% of the Daily Value
Magnesium	4% of the Daily Value
Manganese	0% of the Daily Value
Zinc	0% of the Daily Value

(Sam's Club, n.d.)

As the exhibits above indicate, VitaCoco, a leading coconut water brand contains more than six times the number of calories and five times the sugar and carbohydrates that a 300-milliliter bottle of birch water contains. Furthermore, VitaCoco is not nearly as rich in minerals.

Environmentally Conscious Market

The bottled water industry is known for aligning itself with conservation efforts--an industry characteristic which rings true with Arbor Day Foundation's vision. According to the IBIS World Industry Report on the bottled water industry, Nestle SA, the industry leader, has LEED certified manufacturing facilities, and other companies have started making bottles out of plant-based plastics (Zheng, 2019). Environmental issues are challenges that current and future consumers, businesses, and governments must face. ADF's current mission and vision already address these issues. Entering the birch water market and promoting environmental conscientiousness will help solidify ADF's mission. Partnering with distributors who create reusable packaging, mitigate harmful externalities in the production process, and adopt a go green mentality will ensure that ADF's brand stays afloat in this competitive market.

Potential Partnerships

As alluded to during the meetings with our team, ADF would like to avoid making high capital investments, given the intensive manufacturing process that birch water requires. Health and environmentally conscious individuals are the end consumers, but potential partners are the middlemen ADF should consider. Our team recommends that ADF partner with existing distributors in the birch water market and act as a licensor.

According to the ADF Corporate Partner List, the company is already working with a distributor called Sapp Life (Arbor Day Foundation, n.d.). Sapp Life promises consumers healthy, nutrient-rich water that is sourced from forests (Sapp Life Company, n.d.). ADF could build upon the existing relationship they have with Sapp Life and create a licensing arrangement. Preventing deforestation and planting more trees are two organizational goals ADF and Sapp Life share (Sapp Life Company, n.d.). The Sapp Life website states, "Harvesting Säpp actually keeps trees alive by giving them a job when deforestation is trying to take them out. We also plant trees as often as possible" (Sapp Life Company, n.d.). Sibberi, BelSeva, TreeVitalise, and Treo Brands are key distributors that ADF could consider in the future (MarketWatch, 2019).

Although licensing arrangements are not as costly, ADF should be aware of potential liabilities. If one of the companies ADF partners with ends up harming the environment, making a faulty product, or is unable to generate enough revenue, the ADF brand could also be harmed. In order to mitigate this risk, our team recommends that ADF properly vet each of these

distributors before working with them. ADF should conduct in-depth interviews with these distributors, make sure all legal agreements are clear and defined, and review each entity’s business history in detail. Legal counsel and accounting services can always be utilized. ADF should use the tools at their disposal to see if their organizational goals and business model align with those of the distributor.

Cost Structure

Value-driven cost structure

Because birch sap is an alternative to water, it must have some defining characteristic to make consumers purchase this product. In addition, the target market is health conscious and environmentally conscious consumers, who investigate the companies they purchase from (Fisher et al, 2012). In short, costs will be associated with a value-driven structure, with premium pricing, personalized service, and customization of the product. Knowing that this is the case, and electing to use a licensing structure, we can create an outline of potential costs and efficiencies from pursuing this project:

Licensing: Fixed Costs/Variable Costs/Economies of Scale/Economies of Scope

In order to properly outline the potential costs and efficiencies, we have used data and information from “The Costs of Brand Licensing Incurred by the Licensor” by Dr. Christof Binder.

Fixed costs are the majority of expenses by licensing via label making. These include “marketing and sales programs”, acquisition costs, and other costs usually associated with finding and guiding licensees (Binder, 2011). As a label maker, marketing is the most important aspect of your fixed expenses

The Arbor Day Foundation will add value to the birch sap product through marketing. The Arbor Day Foundation is known for supporting a sustainable future by planting trees and supporting other activities that enhance ecosystems in similar ways. In addition, with its success of the shade grown coffee project, the Arbor Day Foundation is perceived as a successful environmentally conscious brand. This brand value can easily translate to label making for the birch sap water industry. Mockups of what the marketing material may look like can be found in figures below.



Because of the licensing structure, variable costs are rather low. Outside of the materials and labor used to make the labels (if ADF is directly involved with that), each additional unit of a birch sap water bears little cost on the Arbor Day Foundation. The economies of scale and

scope are more difficult to assess for licensing. As mentioned before about how average cost continually decreases, there are economies of scale associated with licensing assuming that a royalty is used instead of a flat licensing fee. As for economies of scope, your participation in this field would be limited (as is part of the design of licensing), and there would be little to no economies of scope.

Considering the product, a percentage royalty is the best option. Since the Arbor Day Foundation is contributing valuably with marketing, the best way to reflect the value added and be compensated for it would be through a percentage royalty. In this way, the birch sap water becomes more valuable and gains more revenue per unit. Also, because the Arbor Day Foundation would not be providing technical expertise/recipes in the production of the birch sap water, a flat licensing fee would be unconventional.

Revenue Streams

Our team investigated various ways that Arbor Day Foundation could generate revenue. Through our research, we determined that the most successful way to create revenue would be through licensing agreements with producers and brands of birch sap. The agreements would include Arbor Day Foundation’s expertise in nurturing trees, marketing using the Arbor Day Foundation name, and the partnerships with manufacturing and distribution facilities within the birch sap industry. In exchange, Arbor Day Foundation would receive a royalty on all sales of the birch water and possible derivatives. Now, the amount of royalties received by Arbor Day Foundation will depend on the revenue generated through the sale of birch sap water, which is highly dependent on the price of birch water in the market. Currently, the average market price per one bottled beverage of birch sap water is about \$2.71. This average is determined by looking at the price of birch water from nine different companies as seen in the table below. Based on the average price, the Arbor Day Foundation can expect \$216,800 in revenue, at 10% royalties from sales of 800,000 units of birch water sold from the licensee.

Company	Price	Qty	Per Unit
Sibberi Tree Water	\$ 14.66	6	\$ 2.44
Treo Water	\$ 29.99	12	\$ 2.50
Equinox Harvest Birch Water	\$ 34.99	15	\$ 2.33
Sapp Birch Tree Water	\$ 3.49	1	\$ 3.49
Nature On Tap Ltd: Tapped Birch Water	\$ 32.58	12	\$ 2.72
Alaska Wild Harvest	\$ 4.00	6	\$ 4.00
OselBirch	\$ 14.99	6	\$ 2.50
Average Per Unit Price			\$ 2.85

(Source of Birch Water Prices in References)

Overviewing the possible birch sap derivative products, these products include birch sap skin care products, tea, syrup, and alcohol. These derivative products have been growing due to the multiple health benefits birch sap provides, which is why the sap has grown in popularity in recent years, as consumers have become more health conscious. We researched these various products and determined which ones would be viable derivative products that Arbor Day Foundation could pursue.

Birch sap skin care products would be the next best derivative to birch sap water. As described in recent reports on the birch sap water industry, the industry's growth has been fueled by increasing demand of birch sap cosmetic goods. Birch sap cosmetic goods have risen in popularity in Europe, as Scandinavian cosmetic companies are pivoting to produce birch sap cosmetic products (BusinessWire, 2019). According to Marian Liu in the CNN article "Beyond beauty: Korean makeup provides 'cosmeceuticals'", birch sap cosmetic goods have been growing in popularity in Asia and have been fully adapted into Korean skincare products because birch sap helps reduce skin redness and inflammation (2018). For skin care products, Arbor Day Foundation could utilize the existing licensed producers of birch sap for birch sap water, and utilize that supply to partner with a beauty care brand who would be interested in paying a premium for birch sap to make a skin care product. Arbor Day Foundation would, again, receive a royalty on the sales of this product.

Tea products like chaga tea and birch tea leaves, would be another great alternative revenue source Arbor Day Foundation could pursue, as they naturally grow from the birch trees. Additionally, chaga tea attracts a similar customer segment as birch sap water, as it is another healthy beverage. According to Mary Jane Brown in the Healthline article "What are Chaga Mushrooms and Are They Healthy?", chaga's health benefits stem from its many antioxidants, vitamins and minerals, its ability to regulate cholesterol and blood sugar, and its anticancer benefits (2018). Also, tea is a great alternative product segment to pursue, as the tea market is expected to grow at a cumulative average growth rate of 5%, and see an incremental growth of 12.61 billion dollars between 2018 to 2023, according to the Technavio report "Global Tea Market 2019-2023" (2019). Although non-toxic, chaga mushrooms can harm the birch trees if left on the tree for too long. With proper knowledge of how to harvest the chaga, the birch tree can survive longer, and chaga tea can be produced.

Although alcohol can be created from birch sap, and is currently used in various beers and wines, a significant number of partnerships would need to be created to pursue this revenue stream. Even though there are larger profit margins to be gained from alcohol products, it may not be worth the potential challenges, and does not completely align with Arbor Day Foundation's mission. Additionally, it was determined birch sap syrup is not a viable derivative, as maple syrup dominates the syrup industry currently and significant revenue could not be obtained from competing in this market.

Recommendations and Future Considerations

Thus far, we have discussed various aspects of licensing the Arbor Day Foundation brand for birch sap water, but the most important consideration to make is whether to move forward with this project. Based on our analysis, we believe that this project is worth pursuing, or at the minimum, investigate in depth by talking with current partners and acquiring additional information from internal sources.

One future consideration to this project is licensing the brand to different product lines. The current structure that this report has built and analyzed is robust enough to be applied to many different products, and birch sap water (and birch sap products in general) is a vehicle to demonstrate the pros and cons of such a system. In short, the licensing system can be applied to other sap products or any host of products that would increase the value of trees in general.

Another alternative is the Arbor Day Foundation stamp of approval. Arbor Day Foundation's role would be to explore companies that want to receive recognition as environmentally conscious in their practices in exchange for a fee. If the company is compliant, it could add an "Arbor Day Foundation Approved" logo. The stamp of approval is very similar to the licensing idea but is meant to be more general and better maintain the current structure of the Arbor Day Foundation.

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