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WORK IN PROGRESS
THE SMALL MOVEMENT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

There was a time, sometime in the 1990s, when bigger and better seemed to be a natural, Darwinian kind of progress. Now, a global recession is forcing us to live with less, and as a result we're backing off big. Hummers look a lot less like golden chariots than dinosaurs, the last gas hogs in a hybrid world. Developers burned by an ice-cold real estate market are downsizing their projects and, in the developing world, planning super-small homes for working families. And our mobile phones, ever on the march to miniaturization, are now rolling up various other devices into one small package.

We call it the Small Movement, and it's the new frontier of product development and beyond. In this paper, we examine the global trends that are making our world a smaller, more efficient place to live.

Key Questions

- How is the Small Movement manifesting itself around the world? Which markets are leading the revolution for small?
- How is the Small Movement playing out in various industries, such as the housing and automotive sectors?
- How is the Small Movement affecting business processes? What has compelled these changes?
- What "small" technologies are scientists and engineers getting excited about?
- What is it about the environment and the economy that is attracting people to a small-is-good ethos? Where do brands fit into this conversation?

Key Findings

The Small Movement is working hand in hand with the environmental movement—more is no longer more. Big-ticket gas guzzlers are sitting on lots as fashionable drivers zip by in small—and getting smaller—cars. Homes are getting smaller too. While some builders, especially those in the developing world, are motivated by space constrictions, small-house proponents tout the tiny footprints of these homes, both physical and environmental.

Big-box retailers are downsizing as many consumers find smaller stores more convenient and easier to navigate. How small can they go? Retail kiosks, which are popping up from malls to airports. The packaging surrounding products is also shrinking—smaller in this context means more sustainable and generally reduces costs. Technology also continues to get smaller, and with the advent of Netbooks and increasingly sophisticated mobile phones, we can tote considerable computing power in a handbag. For some, smaller means living with less, or downsizing to a simpler, less cluttered life.

The younger generations are embracing the Small Movement, not just as a fashion statement but also as a life philosophy. And thanks to good design, we can take up fewer square feet, use less battery power and simplify without downsizing our lifestyles. Small may not be new, but it's now and it's beautiful.

There was a time, sometime in the 1990s, when bigger and better seemed to be a natural, Darwinian kind of progress. SUVs blew by once-proud family sedans on the six-lane highway to prosperity. Homebuyers spurned modest abodes for 5,000-square-foot palaces. Our fries, shakes and waistlines became super-sized. Even the baseball players got bigger, with a muscle-bound Mark McGwire busting the Major League home run record.

The global economy was humming along, and big business got bigger too. Between 1990 and 2009, the Fortune 10 companies more than tripled in size. Goldman Sachs was pulling in almost \$90 billion a year, tripling annual revenue in less than a decade. The pharmaceutical industry consolidated. Ma Bell and her kiddies rolled up into one, gobbled-up Cingular and became AT&T, sole provider of iPhone service in the U.S.

Now, a global recession is forcing us to live with less, and as a result we're backing off big. Hummers look a lot less like golden chariots than dinosaurs, the last gas hogs in a hybrid world. Developers burned by an ice-cold real estate market are downsizing their projects and, in the developing world, planning super-small homes for working families. And our mobile phones, ever on the march to miniaturization, are now rolling up dozens of other devices into one small package.

We call it the Small Movement, the new frontier of product development and beyond. In this paper, we examine the global trends that are making our world a smaller, more efficient place to live.

The Walt Disney Company has been singing the virtues of a "Small World" since 1966, but in the 21st century, the song has never been more apropos. It is a small world, after all. And it's getting smaller. In fact, it's getting a little too close for comfort.

Cities are too crowded, exurbs are spreading out beyond our suburbs. With the prospect of a world of 9 billion people by mid-century, according to United Nations estimates, population growth is the source of political and economic unrest, even panic. In the United States, which is expected to gain 1.1 million people annually through immigration alone, illegal immigration continues to stymie the government. In Europe, which has been otherwise wrangling with population loss, newspapers in a few growing nations have printed panicky headlines like "Britain's Population Time Bomb." In the developing world, India is slated to jump China as the world's most populous nation by 2050. Africa, while still wracked by disease and political unrest, is now home to more than 1 billion, according to the UN.

What's more, the traditional world order has been tossed asunder—the haves are quickly becoming the have-alsos, demanding more than ever before. Millions of people have been lifted out of poverty, so there are more middle-

**IT'S A SMALL,
SMALL WORLD**

class consumers achieving higher standards of living—i.e., more stuff. That adds up to more cars, more living space, more energy, and also a bigger ozone gap and smaller icecaps. The Sierra Club's Carl Pope has mourned, "This is the first time in human history that economic growth has become the prerogative of most people on the planet."

So if more people means more stuff, what does this mean for the Small Movement? It's simple. Since the Earth isn't getting any bigger, we all have to learn to live smaller, starting with elbow room.

Consider Japan, one of the world's most densely populated countries. "Small has always been beautiful in Japan, whether you think of the mini-component audio systems the country pioneered in the 1970s, its cultural love affair with miniaturized potted plants known as bonsai or the current rage for small-engine mini cars," writes Hiroko Tashiro in *BusinessWeek*. Indeed, Japanese economies of space have been a curiosity to the West, from capsule hotels to toilet sinks—toilets with a sink basin built right into the tank.

Japanese homes are small by Western standards: 1,000 square feet on average, about half the size of an American home. (Rented homes—usually apartments—are even smaller, at about 500 square feet on average.) Now, the Japanese are cutting it even closer, building "ultra-compact homes" (*kyo-sho-jutaku*, in Japanese) on plots as small as 250-300 square feet. The homes ascend three to five stories and make use of every inch. They're only a small portion of the market but indicate that even the Japanese are having to forgo space in a shrinking world.

This year, India surpassed Japan in population density, so it's no surprise that it too is on deck for the small-space revolution. The Tata Group, originator of the super-small Nano car, is poised to start building super-small apartments for lower-middle-class Indians. "We have realized that there is an opportunity at the bottom of the pyramid," Brotin Banerjee, CEO of Tata Housing Development, told *Time/CNN*. The digs will range from 283 to 465 square feet and cost from \$8,000 to \$13,000. The first development will be outside Mumbai; another is planned for Pakistan, where the biggest of the Awami Villas will measure 720 square feet.

Not long ago, action hero Arnold Schwarzenegger was an unabashed Hummer owner. Not a surprising choice for a man whose "lighter-fluid-dowsed action flicks and protein-packed chest bespoke more of American excess than environmentalism, more violence than vegan," observed *The Washington Post*. But as governor of California, he's remade himself as an environmentalist. And one of the first things he did was give up his Hummer. Recently, Schwarzenegger was seen test-driving the Peapod, Chrysler's 12-foot "neighborhood electric vehicle." A big man in a very small car.

The environmental movement has gone mainstream, and the Small Movement is working hand in hand with it. More is no longer more. Big is no longer better. Consumers trying to shrink their carbon footprints wouldn't be caught

LESS IS MORE
SUSTAINABLE

dead in a McMansion. For this set, big is unfashionable, wrongheaded and behind the curve.

The most obvious example can be found within the car industry. Big-ticket gas guzzlers are sitting on lots as fashionable drivers zip by in small—and getting smaller—cars. Many folks in the market for a mini-car aren't simply recession buyers; they're thinking about their impact on the environment.

Once upon a time, a Toyota Camry was considered a small car. Now Daimler's 8-foot, 8-inch Smart Car makes the 16-foot Camry look bulky. Today "small" means the Smart Car, Ford's Ka (12 feet), Honda's Fit (13 feet) and Tata's Nano (10 feet).

In Japan, this class of car is called kei, and carmakers are looking to it for lessons on how to engineer larger cars. The category, dominated by Suzuki, offers avant-garde styling and uses engineering tricks like flat, under-seat fuel tanks and lighter electric power steering. The cars get more than 42 miles to the gallon.

Small-car sales worldwide will grow to about 38 million by 2012, from 23 million in 2002, according to estimates from Ford researchers. Small cars are even gaining traction in the United States, where highways are still dominated by high-rise family cars. In the six months after its January 2008 launch in the U.S., Daimler sold 10,000 second-generation Smart Cars, which get 41 miles per gallon on the highway. And with taxpayers in possession of General Motors and President Barack Obama in favor of raising fuel standards, small cars may soon be more common on American roads. Total small-car sales in the U.S. are slated to reach 3.4 million by 2012, a 25 percent uptick in a decade, according to Ford.

Homes are getting smaller too. The average size of new homes in the United States shrunk by 11 percent in 2008, the first time that new homes got smaller in 35 years, according to the *Los Angeles Times*. The American Institute of Architects attributes this to both the recession and a new interest in lowering utility costs.

A "small house movement," meanwhile, advocates for downsized, sustainable homes; this usually means no bigger than 1,000 square feet, but some are as tiny as 65 square feet. "The smaller thing you can create, the more sustainable it is," architect Steve Mouzon told *The Wall Street Journal* for an article headlined "The Green House of the Future."

The diametrical opposite of sprawling, Western-style houses, small homes demand a streamlined design. Beds rest in overhead lofts, desks tuck away into walls, and windows run floor to ceiling to give the impression of space. A small home doesn't have to be rustic—designs run the gamut, from Tumbleweed Tiny House Co.'s American bungalows to ultra-modern cubist houses.

While some builders, especially those in the developing world, are motivated by space constrictions, small-house proponents tout the tiny footprints of these homes, both physical and environmental. Small homes can be heated with

potbelly stoves and outfitted with low-voltage electrical systems, so owners can live off the grid. Small-living enthusiasts are still on the fringe, but they share values with environmentalists and anti-consumerists alike. "I think there's a desire to return to a smaller, simpler way of living," said Gregory Johnson, co-founder of the Small House Society in Iowa City, Iowa, in *American Profile* magazine.

In fact, the next trophy home may just be tiny. Luxury designer Nina Tolstrup built a 388-square-foot beach chalet last year, and one of the stars of the Museum of Modern Art home show was a micro-compact home by British architect Richard Horden. "When you build small, you can spend money on higher-quality materials," says Jared Volpe of the blog *smallhousestyle.com*. (Tumbleweed Tiny House Co. says most of its plans cost \$40,000 to \$100,000 to construct.)

The auto industry isn't the only one thinking smaller. Other businesses are taking a second look at their strategies as well. "What we have discovered over the past nine months are growing diseconomies of scale," writes Chris Anderson in *Wired*. "Bigger firms are harder to run on cash flow alone, so they need more debt (oops!). Bigger companies have to place bigger bets but have less and less control over distribution and competition in an increasingly diverse marketplace. Those bets get riskier and the payoffs lower."

In response, the big boys are downsizing, shrinking their operations and their products. With several big-box American chains having succumbed to the recession—notably Linens N' Things and Circuit City—and some survivors closing stores, retailers are rethinking their super-sized formats. Smaller stores are cheaper and less risky, and allow retailers to expand even in the recession. An average Lowe's—at about 117,000 square feet—costs about \$20 million to \$22 million to build, while a smaller store—at 66,000 square feet—can shave close to \$2 million off the cost.

A number of chains are opening scaled-down boutique concept stores. Office-supply retailer OfficeMax opened three such stores, called Ink Paper Scissors in the Seattle area earlier this year. At 2,000 square feet, they're about a ninth the size of a typical OfficeMax, according to *The New York Times*, and focus on basics like printer-cartridge refills. "If you've got the wherewithal, everyone is thinking about smaller sizes," Lee Peterson, vice president for brand and creative services at WD Partners in Columbus, Ohio, told the *Times*. The firm helps retailers design these stores.

Last year, Wal-Mart opened four specialty food stores in Phoenix, and Best Buy created 30 mobile phone stores even as it scaled back some of its larger locations. In Europe, supermarket chains like Carrefour, ALDI and Tesco are all trying out pared-down offerings. "No-frills" chain ALDI is aiming to win over more well-heeled customers who are trying to cut grocery costs. Carrefour hopes its Carrefour City will help the chain gain entry to urban centers, while Tesco Express and Sainsbury's Local emphasize convenience.

Convenience is an easy sell. Overwhelmed by choice and short on time, many harried consumers prefer a more human-scale store over one with endless

BIG BUSINESS GETS SMALLER

aisles. Smaller stores simplify the shopping experience; lines are shorter, and inventories less confusing. “Consumers want stores that are more convenient, less time-consuming and more personal,” Ben Ball, senior vice president at retail consultancy Dechert-Hampe & Company, told *The New York Times* in May. “There is such a thing as too much variety.”

Even smaller and simpler: retail kiosks. Last year, Macy’s expanded on a pilot program, adding vending machines that sell Apple, Sony and Canon electronics. Blockbuster, whose stores average 3,000 to 5,000 square feet, plans to install 3,000 Blockbuster Express units stocked with DVDs by the end of the year and 10,000 by the end of 2010. DVD-kiosk leader Redbox has 15,000 machines in operation around the U.S. and plans to add 5,000 more by the end of the year. Coty and Elizabeth Arden, in partnership with kiosk developers ZoomSystems, have set up kiosks in shopping malls and airports.

Of course, these are not your granddad’s vending machines. Today’s kiosks use a robotic arm to retrieve the products and are slick, high-tech and interactive—some play music or display product demos on flat-screen TVs. Even with all those bells and whistles, the machines are paying out. While traditional shopping mall stores earn about \$330 per square foot, mall kiosks can earn up to \$10,000 per square foot. Airport kiosks earn even more, up to \$40,000 per square foot.

Meanwhile, products on supermarket shelves are getting smaller. Last year, American food manufacturers began “short-sizing,” reducing the size of packaging in response to rising ingredient and transportation costs. Frito-Lay has cut the size of Doritos bags, Hellmann’s and Skippy are churning out smaller jars, and a Häagen-Dazs’ “pint” is now 14 ounces.

The packaging surrounding supermarket products is also shrinking. Smaller means more sustainable and generally reduces costs—not only because fewer materials are used but because more goods can be packed onto trucks. It also makes more shelf space available.

This trend has affected everything from Easter eggs to wine. South African producer Arniston Bay is selling its wine in pouches (in addition to traditional glass bottles), which “have 80 percent less of a carbon footprint and take up 90 percent less landfill compared with a glass bottle,” according to the brand’s Web site. While it remains to be seen whether drinkers take to pouring wine from a pouch, Boisset Family Estates in France and others have also traded in glass bottles for lighter alternatives.

In some cases, consumers are just fed up with having to machete their way through scads of packaging. In the U.K., for example, chocaholics jonesing for a fix were tired of tearing through layers of wrap on Easter eggs, according to *The Guardian*. Companies responded by reducing the amount of packaging; Nestlé said it saved 700 tons of packaging by swapping plastic for cardboard, while Mars said it saved 108 tons. In April, Tesco tried a program that allowed customers to leave unwanted packaging at the register for recycling. Common customer gripes include the superfluous boxes holding toothpaste and the trays and plastic film that “protect” fruit, *The Guardian* reported.

**SMALL IS
CUTTING EDGE**

One category where shrinkage has been embraced by manufacturers and consumers alike is laundry detergents. In the U.S., sales of concentrated detergent jumped 55 percent in 2007. Since launching in Europe in 2007, Unilever's Surf Small & Mighty has sold more than 30 million bottles, driving the brand's growth, according to *BusinessWeek*. Shoppers get to lug home a smaller jug, presumably in their smaller car to their smaller home.

Once upon a time, the ENIAC, the world's first electronic digital computer, weighed 30 tons and took up the length of a grand hallway. Today, we can carry the world in our hands—on our Blackberries, iPhones and ultra-portable Netbooks. Small and mobile is cutting edge.

Consider the lowly desktop computer, leaps and bounds ahead of the ENIAC but now a dusty alternative to the laptop and the Netbook. Laptops have been getting smaller and lighter for some time. Apple's latest entry, the aluminum-cased MacBook Air, weighs just three pounds and is marketed as "ultra-thin" and "ultra-portable."

Netbooks, "virtually a novelty alternative to notebook PCs only a year ago, are the rising stars of the computer industry," according to *The New York Times'* Stephen Williams. They're not as fast as desktops, and behind most laptops, but they are cheap (usually less than \$500), energy-efficient and conveniently small. "Today, netbooks are smaller than a sheet of paper, no thicker than an inch, and weigh 1.5 to 3 pounds," reports *InfoWorld Daily News*.

Producers are piling into the market, including LG, Toshiba and Samsung. They know which way the tide is going—research firm IDC estimates worldwide shipments to reach 26.4 million this year, representing growth of 127 percent over 2008.

Some critics even wonder whether our gadgets have gotten too small. The new iPod Shuffle is so small, its toggling components are located on the proprietary headset wire, not the device itself. This prompted reviews like one in *Wired* titled "This is not an iPod, this is a choking hazard"; in its "pros" list, the magazine lists "Can double as a tie clip," and in the "cons," "It nearly gets lost in the packaging it comes in."

Others think it's our fingers that are too big. At Microsoft, they call it fat finger syndrome. "Chubby digits make it tough to work the screens on computing devices, which get smaller every year," wrote Ashlee Vance in *The New York Times*. The company is working on supersensitive touch-screen technology—the project is dubbed Nanotouch—that it hopes can facilitate the march toward miniature. Back-of-device touch screens, for example, allow users to navigate a screen without covering up the very information they're trying to see.

"We feel the cell phone is not the end-all, be-all of miniaturization," said Patrick Baudisch, a Microsoft engineer. "In my vision, you move away from always having something in your pocket. You want things that allow for fashionable outfits and that blend into the clothes."

Indeed, nanoscientists at the Georgia Institute of Technology have already developed novel brush-like fibers that generate electricity through movement. Weaving them into fabric could allow designers to power “smart clothes,” which would harness body movement to run portable devices. Intelligent textiles could have medical applications as well: Researchers have already developed fibers that can detect blood and signal its presence electronically.

The breadth of nanotechnology and its potential are too wide to cover here. The developing science of manufacturing anything with dimensions less than 100 nanometers has promised applications from producing stronger composite air and space materials, defending against malignant tumors and fighting terrorism, proving that small science has big potential.

A CLOSER LOOK **SMALL IN 140 CHARACTERS OR LESS**

Our shrinking devices, with their downsized screens and minuscule keypads, have in turn shrunk our communications. Where we used to write Dear John letters, we now send a goodbye text. Where once we read *War and Peace*, we now gobble up cell phone novels. So is brevity the soul of wit or the end of intelligent communications on this planet and beyond?

“From orbit: Launch was awesome!! I am feeling great, working hard, & enjoying the magnificent views, the adventure of a lifetime has begun!” So began and ended the first-ever Twitter message from space, courtesy of NASA astronaut Mike Massimino (“Astro_Mike” on Twitter). Perhaps lacking Neil Armstrong’s profundity, Massimino’s message at least demonstrated the millennial reach of small.

Critics complain that micro-blogging technologies like Twitter operate without context, erode literacy and

are “toys for bored celebrities and high school girls,” as Maureen Dowd once wrote. *The New York Times* columnist recently asked Twitter founder Biz Stone: “Was there anything in your childhood that led you to want to destroy civilization as we know it?”

Yet Twitter has proved itself as a tool in promoting democracy around the world. In April, Moldova’s capital was rocked by protests organized via Twitter after young voters suspected the country’s election had been rigged. In June, a similar phenomenon swept Iran, with protesters using Twitter to share news about rallies and crackdowns following their own disputed election. Short is not only sweet, it is also powerful.

Of course, not all of us are leading revolutions, and finding practical uses for Twitter will be an evolution. Hospitals in Michigan and Illinois have recently started using Twitter during select surgeries to educate the

general public and allow surgeons to follow interesting cases; fans all over the world used the service to mourn Michael Jackson; and Twitter has proved to be a successful tool for crowd sourcing. A few months ago, a judge for the MacArthur Foundation grants asked his Twitter followers whether a proposed project had already been done. In 30 seconds, two people had Tweeted back, wrote *The New York Times’* David Pogue, “and they provided links.”

Twitter is also proving a boon for miserable travelers. “As hotels, airlines and other travel companies line up on Twitter to promote their brands, customers who voice their grievances in the form of tweets are getting surprisingly fast responses for everything from bad airplane seats to poor room service,” wrote Michelle Higgins in *The New York Times*. One person who asked for advice on getting seated next to his wife and child on a JetBlue flight received a response from the airline 19 minutes

A CLOSER LOOK **SMALL IN 140 CHARACTERS OR LESS** *(continued)*

later. "It's in their best interest to make people who have a pulpit happy," the custom.er noted.

Marketers in every category are finding ways to make Twitter work for them. ZipCar recently used the micro-blog to expand the reach of an Earth Day party in New York. Starbucks challenged

its 245,000-plus followers on its Twitter page to be the first to post a picture of their new ad on Twitter. And Zappos' CEO keeps connected to the online shoe company's followers, providing frequent updates that range from the Zen-like ("Happiness never decreases by being shared –Buddha")

to the quirky (a link of rapper Snoop Dogg making mashed potatoes with Martha Stewart).

As these examples show, "small" messaging can be an important tool for marketers looking to sustain the brand conversation and connect with consumers in new ways.

SMALL IS MORE **MANAGEABLE**

Wherever you may live, chances are your small corner of the world has—over the past 20 years—gotten bigger. Perhaps you've expanded your family. Perhaps you've upsized your home. Likely you're among the billions of us who have become a global citizen, thanks to digital media. Maybe you've stopped losing sleep over your own drinking water and started worrying about water shortages in Peru or melting Arctic ice. Either way, your small corner has expanded, and you're grasping for control of it.

This is, admittedly, a strange place to end our *Work in Progress*, which began with the assertion that ours is a shrinking world. But in our own corners of the world, we are tackling large problems the only way we can—with baby steps.

Some are starting by following Henry David Thoreau's advice: "Our life is frittered away by detail. Simplify, simplify, simplify!" The home organization business has become a major industry, supporting professional home organizers, closet builders and retail chains like The Container Store.

In the U.S., the average home measures more than double the 1,000 square feet that was typical around World War II. And more space means more stuff. In his book *It's All Too Much*, professional organizer Peter Walsh says, "We, as a nation, are overwhelmed with too much stuff. ... Having more possessions may be more suffocating than liberating."

The feeling has become so common that multiple television programs are now dedicated to helping people dig out, like TLC's *Clean Sweep* and HGTV's *Mission: Organization*. One of Oprah's most popular shows since it first aired in fall 2007 is a two-episode series on hoarders, one of whom had 75 pounds of garbage in her 3,000-square-foot home.

Tiny-home proponents, by contrast, have pared their possessions to fit their lifestyles and say they are happier for it. "I'm not an ascetic," said Jay Shafer, founder of Tumbleweed Tiny House Co., in *American Profile*. "I need my stereo and DVD player, but I don't like having stuff around that I'm not using."

For some, cutting clutter and consumption may simply be a way to get a better grasp on their households. For others, it's a small step toward making the world a better place. Last fall, Pope Benedict XVI denounced "insatiable consumption" as a negative force in the world. In the U.S. and the U.K., counter-consumerist and performer Bill Talen, aka Reverend Billy, has toured major shopping venues to promote his "Church of Life After Shopping."

In a recent *New York Times* column titled "The Joy of Less," writer Pico Iyer examines how the pursuit of happiness has been redefined in the recession and regularly asserts that we're undergoing a cultural shift, defined by the abdication of stuff for spirit. "I'm not sure how much outward details or accomplishments ever really make us happy deep down," he says. Agreed one reader: "I think it's about leaving behind all those things that tend over time to clutter up our lives—employment, culture, family, friends, mortgages, houses, cars, furniture, expectations—in a word, stuff."

So what are we finding really matters? Service, for one. In a world where problems seem too big for any nation, let alone any person, to handle, it helps to have a hand in bettering your own small corner. President Obama, who this year declared Martin Luther King Jr. Day a national day of service, has heralded local volunteerism. Scores of laid-off professionals are searching for ways to donate their skills. Participating in local cleanups, volunteering at food pantries and bringing meals to the homebound are all ways in which folks are trying to exert their positive influence over a difficult world.

Charities are also beginning to show how small donations can make a big difference. Heifer International offers the opportunity to buy livestock for people in a faraway village; a flock of ducks or geese costs are only \$20. Microfinancing organization Kiva.com pools small loans from donors who choose which entrepreneurs to help. DonorsChoose.org also gives people a chance to contribute small amounts to a larger goal, like digital cameras for a classroom in New York City or art materials for special-needs kids in North Carolina.

Some marketers are tapping into this shift already, making simplicity and do-gooding core themes. Trident has tagged its chewing gum "A little piece of happy," suggesting a short, simple path to happiness. Likewise, Target's "Brand New Day" campaign has incorporated a bubbly low-prices message that not only combats the recession blues but focuses on simple, low-cost pleasures like commuting on a \$60 bike, watching a \$13 DVD at home or clipping your kids' hair with a \$15 electric trimmer. Hamburger Helper taps into consumers' desires to do good; its "Show your helping hand" campaign, in concert with Beyonce Knowles and Feeding America, gives consumers a way to feed families hit hard by the economy.

In a world now accustomed to crowd-sourcing and a collective consciousness, it's getting easier for individuals to see how their small actions can coalesce into something larger. Small steps, big rewards.

WHAT IT MEANS

The Small Movement isn't about living with less; it's about getting the most out of life—your home, your budget, your electronics—without contributing to the world's ills. The economy, the environment, population growth are squeezing us from all sides, and something has to give. At the moment, it seems to be size.

We've been super-sizing everything for decades—our meals, our schedules, our homes. Now is the time to take a deep breath and re-evaluate what we want, what we need and what's important. Do we need the three-car garage when two will do? Do we want the Escalade when our family of four fits neatly inside the Fusion?

The answer, surprisingly, is maybe. Tapping into a new culture of restraint is no doubt tricky for marketers that have relied on selling bigger, shinier doodads. The trick now is to show how those products can help relieve stress, streamline decision-making and better consumers' worlds. For example: Mobile applications make life easier and more organized; big-box stores will always provide the lowest prices.

It's unlikely that the world over is going to give up their palatial residences and gas guzzlers on a dime. But the younger generations are embracing the Small Movement, not just as a fashion statement but also as a life philosophy. And thanks to good design, we can take up fewer square feet, use less battery power and simplify without downsizing our lifestyles. Small may not be new, but it's now and it's beautiful.



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