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on

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Stephan Mohr & Gerhard Seiler: Green Product Development

"Green product development" refers to the broad topic area of addressing environmental concerns in development and even ideation of new products. This comprises many approaches for different objectives, and an attempt is made to present an organizing framework. Topics differ primarily by urgency and by nature of concern addressed. E.g., on the short time horizon the European REACH directive aims to ensure consumer safety with respect to acute and chronic toxins and needs immediate action - at a risk of disrupting supply or risking litigation if not implemented. On the long time horizon, reducing carbon emissions in the production process in order to mitigate climate change may eventually be enforced by legislation - but actually offers a potential to provide cash paybacks much earlier by reducing energy consumption in the supply chain and reducing risk exposure to changing raw material prices. And, most of all, green products are a source of innovation: The environmental benefit may enable a tangible cost saving for a customer (a TCO or Total Cost of Ownership benefit), or it might provide a differentiating factor that still is valuable from a marketing perspective. In both cases, green products provide a competitive advantage. In any case, the environmental implications of doing business are today no longer an afterthought, but an integral element of any viable long-term strategy.