

Business Ethics

THE MAGAZINE

ETHICALLY RESPONSIBLE BUSINESS

VOL. 7, NO. 2
MARCH/APRIL 1993

PEOPLE

Stefan Doering He's Who's Who

WHEN STEFAN DOERING'S FATHER informed him that *Mademoiselle* magazine had tapped him as one of "one hundred obscenely young movers and shakers," he was stunned. But then something occurred to him. "What is my father doing reading *Mademoiselle*?"

When Doering saw a copy for himself, with his name listed next to stars such as Cindy Crawford, Matt Dillon, and Julia Roberts, the twenty-eight-year-old entrepreneur was slightly disappointed. "What bothered me most was, they didn't have my picture in the magazine, but they had Cindy Crawford's."

Doering, owner of a New York-based retail store called Earth General, is joking, of course. But he doesn't kid around when it comes to his business. The California native and former computer networking expert came up with the idea for his store almost by chance. During a routine subway commute two years ago, Doering and a friend spent time lamenting the difficulties of unearthing environmentally safe, everyday consumables in America's largest city. Suddenly, he recalls, "The light bulb went on."

A few months later, Earth General was

born, selling more than 2,000 products, such as non-toxic cleaners and paints, recycled toilet paper and office supplies, energy-efficient light bulbs, and organic gardening supplies. It was that ingenuity that led to his inclusion in the racy *Mademoiselle* list, according to Ruth Mayer of the magazine.

Doering used his talents to full advantage in opening the store. His computer training helped him computerize inventory, and his entrepreneurial background—in college he ran his own housekeeping business—guided him through all the typical obstacles of business start-ups. For inspiration he recalled family adventures in the Sierras and the lessons his parents taught. "At an early age I was brought up keeping nature in mind and making sure we didn't have a negative impact on the environment," he says.

It was that conviction that helped him convince his former employer to begin using recycled paper products and establish a recycling program. He was also active in other environmental ventures, such as helping Sacred Earth Network create an electronic mail station for environmental activists in the former Soviet Union. Eventually, though, his environmental interests triumphed over his computer career, and he decided to pursue something more closely aligned with his beliefs.

The career change has proven successful. Doering plans to add one or two more



Earth General stores in New York in the coming year, and introduce a business-to-business catalog of office supplies. "It's really designed for businesses who want to buy environmental products and don't know where to get them," he says.

He's purposely vague on Earth General's bottom line, but says the store's revenues are up 65 percent this year. He expects that rate to continue for the next couple of years, as he works on plans to expand his retail business to include West Coast stores within the next five years. "I see myself in this for the long haul," he says. If he delivers on that promise, he will be making many a Who's Who list in the future. ✕

—MARK ENGBRETSON