

ers becoming more sensitive to 'greenwashing'

money we've got to market it more."

The building slowdown makes it difficult to pitch any kind of service for new construction. "It's such a price-sensitive market," MacLean said.

The green focus is easier to sell to customers who use the plumbing company's maintenance and repair services, he said. Once he gets into a customer's home or business, he can talk to them about the benefits of water audits and water- and energy-efficient technologies, he said. But he hasn't found a lot of customers willing to spend more to save water.

"When water becomes more costly than it is today, people are going to say, 'I've got to make changes,'" he said. "Right now water is undervalued."

"Consumers are really thinking about the bottom line," Kenyon said. They're looking for win-win situations that allow them to be "altruistic, but also cost-conscious."

CLEANING GREEN

Angela Arthur, owner of the Davis residential and commercial cleaning business California Green Clean, said she buys a line of green cleaning products that cost the same as regular cleaners because they're more diluted. She also uses a lot of white vinegar, which is both cheap and effective.

Despite her efforts to remain cost-competitive with other cleaning businesses, the recession has hit her hard. Many of her clients were state employees who cut

in my business," said Arthur, who started the business in 2007. "I've often said to clients and potential clients, 'I wish it was 2005 or 2006 and the economy was still booming.' But back in those days the green movement hadn't caught on as much."

Arthur said she got the idea of starting a green cleaning business after seeking out a service for her own home.

"I lead a granola-head kind of life," she said. "I don't eat meat. I drive a hybrid. I wanted my housekeeper to clean green, and she was unable to do that."

Arthur said she thinks people are becoming a little more sensitive to "greenwashing," meaning companies marketing themselves as green without really changing business practices.

"We're not just going, 'We're a green business' and just greenwashing," Arthur said. "We're doing things a different way."

Greenwashing concerns might give smaller businesses an advantage, Kenyon said. Sixty-eight percent of the people surveyed by his company said corporate America was trying to green its image, and only 29 percent believed green initiatives by businesses were done for the good of the environment.

"Customers just mistrust big companies," Kenyon said. The financial meltdown has shaken their faith even more.

"When you're talking about a small business making green claims, I would think customers would find that a little more credible than large companies mak-