

In Search Of Green Heroes

Why it's worth risking accusations of "sucking up" to kick off our "Green Heroes" Award program with STMicro's Pasquale Pistorio

by Lee H. Goldberg

I don't know about you, but I'd be a little suspicious if I opened up a magazine and saw that it was giving a special award to the CEO of one of its sponsors. Yet that's just what I did this year when I gave our first annual [greenTECHZONE](#) "Green Hero Award" to Pasquale Pistorio, President and Chief Executive Officer of STMicroelectronics. Given the apparent conflict of interest, you're certainly entitled to be skeptical about how and why I decided to honor Mr. Pistorio -- and you're also entitled to an explanation.

I thought up the Green Hero award because we're entering an exciting period where innovative thinking is helping find common ground between business, technology, and environmental issues -- often to the benefit of all parties. I'm also meeting more and more people within the industry who have realized that environmental issues must be included in the business equation, for both the long-term welfare of their company, and their grandchildren. The result is a revolution in everything from the products we make and the manufacturing processes we use to make them. We're also seeing growing numbers of companies adopting new accounting methods and publishing annual "sustainability reports" that attempt to measure the company's net environmental impact along with the traditional P&L statement.

With so many companies and individuals doing so much great work, it seemed to me that [analogZONE](#) should find a way to recognize them much the way we do for the chip designer teams who receive our Product of The Year Awards. Although we already hand out product awards for both [greenTECHZONE](#) and [greenPOWERZONE](#) products, much of the important work being done is not about technology or products, but about business practices, and changing values. That's why I created the "Green Hero Award" to recognize individuals and organizations who are creating a more hopeful future for all of us.

While there were several excellent candidates for the inaugural Award, I finally chose Mr Pistorio in recognition of his work in transforming STMicroelectronics, an \$8 billion electronics manufacturing enterprise, into one of the most environmentally-effective companies on the planet. Equally impressive is the fact that ST has demonstrated that achieving high environmental performance can actually reduce operating costs, improve productivity, and profitability, and greatly improve a company's future prospects.

For those of you unfamiliar with STMicro's 10+-year transformation, it would be worth your while to visit the "[Environmental](#)" area of their web site. There, you'll find corporate environmental reports dating back to 1997, a time when most CEOs couldn't even spell "sustainability," let alone practice it. You should also check out the "[Environmental Decalogue](#)," which was conceived by Mr. Pistorio himself back in 1990 as a set of operating guidelines for the company to govern their operating and business practices. Even after a decade and a half, the document is one of the best examples of how best business practices can be made to coincide with, and benefit from attention to environmental concerns.

I won't go into depth here, but some of the highlights of the Decalogue include a unified set of environmental guidelines that make every ST facility meet the highest global requirements for air, water, and sonic emissions, even if the country the facility is in has less stringent laws. The company also is committed to reducing its consumption of electricity, water, paper, and other raw materials by at least 5% every year for every dollar of revenue that it produces. These policies have resulted in massive investments to re-tool the company over the last decade. Surprisingly, the average pay-back time for these investments has been around 18 months, with pure savings being realized after that.

Thanks to Pistorio's vision and commitment (not to mention the efforts of thousands of his employees), STMicro is a shining example of how technology, business and environmental concerns can be aligned to produce a future that's greener for our children and for our bottom lines. He will be stepping down from his post as CEO early this year and I'm hoping that his successor will continue to keep ST at the cutting edge of technology and environmental performance.

Meanwhile, Mr. Pistorio remains a visionary. When I finally met him for the first time, last year, he hinted at his imminent retirement and also let me know that he was leaving behind one more interesting project for his successors to complete. "A while back, I commissioned some excellent research on polymer photovoltaics," he said. When he saw my puzzled look, he explained "you know, plastic solar panels, one day so cheap we'll use them for roofing material. Of course, I'll be gone from here, and maybe even dead by the time those products see daylight. But," he said, smiling like the Cheshire Cat, "somebody has to plant the oak trees for our grandchildren to enjoy."

That's why I decided to risk being accused of "sucking up" to a sponsor in order to make sure he got the recognition he deserves. And I'm pleased to say that I'd be doing the same darned thing even if I never earned a dime from his company.

Comments? Questions? Suggestions for next year's Green Hero nominees? Write me at: lgoldberg@green-electronics.com