



### **Striving for Green: The ALTR Promise Not to Greenwash Its Customers**

“Greenwashing,” as a term, only recently become part of American business vernacular in 1989, [according to Merriam-Webster](#). The word describes a corporation’s expressions of environmentalist concerns, especially as a cover for products, policies, or activities which are, in actuality, deleterious to the environment or its exaggeration of its sustainability credentials. Greenwashing is the inverse of [corporate social responsibility](#) (CSR), a self-regulating business model that helps a company be socially accountable to itself, to its employees and to the public. An organization with a CSR practice strives to be aware of the impact it has on its community and on the environment – it attempts to maximize the former, in a positive way, and minimize, or even eradicate, the latter. Some companies currently at the vanguard of CSR practices include Ben & Jerry’s, Patagonia, REI and [Starbucks](#).

Simply put, greenwashing is selling your brand as a champion of carbon neutrality and community engagement when it’s not. Some of the tactics brands use when they greenwash include rebranding, changing the corporate logo or imagery, making vague claims that can’t be measured, fudging consumption figures or simply marketing themselves as “green” when they’re not. The recent past has seen some high-profile instances of greenwashing, such as when the EPA discovered, in 2015, that [many Volkswagens available in the USA had been fitted with a "defeat device"](#) in diesel engines that could detect when the engine was being tested and adjust its performance to improve results; in June 2021 [Earth Island Institute](#) filed a lawsuit against Coca-Cola for false advertising – the company had been advertising itself as an eco-friendly and

sustainable organization, even though Break Free from Plastic had [named Coke the largest plastic polluter four years in a row](#), including 2021.

Greenwashing is also prevalent in the diamond industry. Alluvial diamond mining such as that practiced in the Democratic Republic of Congo, in the Katanga province, is harmful to the environment for a number of reasons, including deforestation, pollution of rivers, exploitation of water resources and the unhealthy, unregulated and dangerous digging conditions miners face every day. One of the world's largest producers has declared it will be carbon neutral by 2030 and claims to be devoted to the protection of the natural world, yet the company recently pled guilty in North America to failing to provide mercury monitoring data pertaining to an open pit diamond mine. According to the United States Geological Survey: "The average grade of the richest diamond kimberlite pipes in Africa is about 1 part diamond in 40 million parts 'ore.' Moreover, because much diamond is not of gem quality, the average stone in an engagement ring is the product of the removal and processing of 200 to 400 million times its volume of rock." Such massive earth displacement results in erosion and the destruction of habitats and damage to the wider ecosystem.

So mined diamonds present major challenges to ethical consumers, but what about lab grown diamonds? A recent [Frost & Sullivan report](#) found mined diamonds use almost seven times as much water and twice the energy per carat produced as lab grown diamonds and produce 4,383 times the amount of waste. It would seem lab grown diamonds are the obvious choice, and at ALTR we of course believe they are, but lab grown diamonds also have a carbon footprint. It's not as simple as, "choose from menu A, rather than menu B, and purchase a diamond with no environmental impact whatsoever."

Though we are working toward environmental sustainability and carbon neutrality, ALTR does rely on carbon fuels to power its machinery, and these fuels of course produce carbon dioxide, the most common greenhouse gas. Our microwave-heat generators require constant energy 24/7 to simulate the natural conditions of extreme heat and pressure or chemical vapor deposition found deep within the mantle of the earth, a minimum of 725K pounds per square inch and 2000 degrees F. Right now, we are only able to power these generators with carbon fuels, but we continue to seek renewable energy sources in an effort to reduce our carbon dioxide emissions.

At ALTR our core value is transparency, and this is why we want to do everything we can to maintain it, and our commitment to transparency means we will never, ever greenwash our customers. We are pleased with the progress we have made in reducing ALTR's overall carbon footprint, to the extent that we are providing digital certification for every ALTR diamond, as opposed to paper, and we continue to look for new ways to be green, to reduce waste and to contribute to the communities where we create our diamonds and where we sell them. And while we can't yet declare we are carbon neutral, let alone carbon negative, our ultimate goal, we can promise our customers we are doing everything we can to get there, and that reducing the environmental impact of our diamonds, and of our entire operation, is top of mind at every level of our organization. We will get there, and we look forward to someday being able to tell

our customers we have achieved carbon neutrality. For now, however, we're gratified to honor our commitment to transparency by simply telling our customers the truth.