



## Ray Anderson

Founder & Chairman  
Interface, Inc.

The story is now legend: the “spear in the chest” epiphany Ray Anderson experienced when he first read Paul Hawken’s *The Ecology of Commerce* while seeking inspiration for a speech to an Interface task force on the company’s environmental vision. Fourteen years and a sea change later, Interface, Inc., is nearly 50 percent towards the vision of “Mission Zero,” the journey no one would have imagined for the company or the petroleum-intensive industry of carpet manufacturing which has been forever changed by Anderson’s vision. Mission Zero is the company’s promise to eliminate any negative impact it may have on the environment, by the year 2020, through the redesign of processes and products, the pioneering of new technologies, and efforts to reduce or eliminate waste and harmful emissions while increasing the use of renewable materials and sources of energy.

An honors graduate of Georgia Institute of Technology, Ray learned the carpet trade through 14-plus years at various positions at Deering-Milliken and Callaway Mills, and in 1973, set about founding a company to produce the first free-lay carpet tiles in America. Today, he commands the world’s largest producer of commercial floorcoverings. Interface has diversified and globalized its businesses, with sales in 110 countries and manufacturing facilities on four continents.

In 1997, Ray described his vision for his company, then nearly a quarter-century old, that stands true today:

*“If we’re successful, we’ll spend the rest of our days harvesting yesteryear’s carpets and other petrochemically derived products and recycling them into new materials and converting sunlight into energy, with zero scrap going to the landfill and zero emissions into the ecosystem. And we’ll be doing well ... very well ... by doing good. That’s the vision.”*

The once captain of industry has eschewed a luxury car for a Prius and built an off-the-grid home, authored a book chronicling his journey, *Mid-Course Correction*, and become an unlikely screen hero in the 2004 Canadian documentary, *The Corporation* and Leonardo DiCaprio’s *The 11th Hour*. He is a master commentator

on the Sundance Channel's series, *Big Ideas for a Small Planet*, and was named one of Time magazine's Heroes of the Environment in 2007, with a similar honor from Elle Magazine that year. He's a sought-after speaker and advisor on all issues eco, including a stint as co-chair of the President's Council on Sustainable Development during President Clinton's administration.

Anderson has been lauded by government, environmental, and business groups alike. In 2007, Ray was honored as a recipient of the Purpose Prize from Civic Ventures, a think tank and an incubator, generating ideas and inventing programs to help society achieve the greatest return on experience, and by Auburn University with its International Quality of Life Award.

In 1996, he received the Inaugural Millennium Award from Global Green, presented by Mikhail Gorbachev, and won recognition from Forbes Magazine and Ernst & Young, which named him Entrepreneur of the Year. In January, 2001, he received the George and Cynthia Mitchell International Prize for Sustainable Development. He also has been honored by the Georgia Conservancy, Southface Energy Institute, Sustainable Asset Management-Sustainable Performance Group (Switzerland), the U.S. Green Building Council, the National Wildlife Federation, the Design Futures Council, the Children's Health and Environmental Coalition, the Harvard Business School Alumni (Atlanta Chapter), the International Interior Design Association, the Southern Institute for Business & Professional Ethics, the Possible Woman Foundation International, the World Business Academy, LaGrange College, and the Council of Scientific Society Presidents. Interface has been named to CRO magazine's (formerly Business Ethics magazine) 100 Best Corporate Citizens List for three years. In 2006, SustainableBusiness.com named Interface to their SB20 list of Companies Changing the World, and in 2006 GlobeScan ranked Interface #1 in the world for corporate sustainability.

Ray is former board chair for The Georgia Conservancy and serves on the boards of the Ida Cason Callaway Foundation, Rocky Mountain Institute, the David Suzuki Foundation, LaGrange College, Emory University Board of Visitors, the American Society of Interior Designers (ASID) Foundation, Worldwatch Institute, and Melaver, Inc. He is on the advisory boards of the Harvard Medical School Center for Health and the Global Environment and the Upper Chattahoochee Riverkeeper. He holds eight honorary doctorates from Northland College (Public Service), LaGrange College (Business), N.C. State University (Humane Letters), University of Southern Maine (Humane Letters), the University of the South (Civil Law), Colby College (Law), Kendall College (Art), and Emory University (Science).



**Mission Zero:**  
*our promise to eliminate any  
negative impact our companies  
may have on the environment  
by the year 2020.*