RAY ANDERSON
Founder and Chairman, Interface, Inc.

Ray Anderson experienced a jolting epiphany when he first read Paul Hawken’s *The Ecology of Commerce* while seeking inspiration for a speech to the company task force on Interface’s environmental vision. Fourteen years 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 that 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 other companies in the industry, and in 1973, set about founding a company to produce the first free-lay carpet tiles in America. In 1997, Ray described the vision for his 24 year old company, and it remains true today: “If we’re successful, we’ll spend the rest of our days harvesting yester-year’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.”

Anderson has traded in a luxury car for a Prius, built an off-the-grid home, authored a book chronicling his journey, *Mid-Course Correction*, and become an unlikely screen hero in both the 2004 Canadian documentary, “The Corporation” and in the 2007 film by Leonardo DiCaprio, “The 11th Hour.” He was 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 is 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 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. 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.