

A Greener Workplace: Planning and Managing Sustainability

Leader's Guide and Participant Workbook by:
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Background Information – A Green Era

Since the 1970s, popular awareness of environmental issues has soared. By the 1980s, the term ‘sustainability’ was used to describe how to solve the global environmental crisis. The 1990s saw the successful solution of some environmental problems, and the worrying escalation of others.

Since the year 2000, awareness continues to increase in proportion to the scale of the challenge. The philosophy of the green movement is no longer confined to lobby groups but has spread into parliaments and boardrooms around the world.

Organisations, especially in the corporate sector, have rightly been held to account for causing much of the waste and pollution which has led to many of the environmental problems of today. Society now looks to the very same sector to provide the solutions to these environmental issues. Companies now work to deliver sustainability while continuing to provide employment and drive prosperity. This new paradigm of environmental responsibility provides an opportunity for implementing positive changes. Leading organisations have taken up the challenge: instead of leaving sustainability off the list, they promote it to the core of their organisation and achieve exciting results.

Having decided to take the road towards sustainability, the journey now begins. What steps must an organisation take to achieve excellent green credentials? What are the most effective strategies to create change and then sustain momentum? How should responsibilities be shared out amongst the team and along the supply chain? Can the process of enhancing the green credentials of your company create new customers and other benefits? Can the return on investment be measured and monitored?

These issues are explored through this program in the context of group discussion activities, watching a DVD and completing workbook exercises.

Activity 1: Session Starter – 30 mins

Survival of the Greenest

You are playing the role of zookeepers within a part of a zoo. You will be grouped with other participants who co-manage the same part of the zoo with you.

The analogy here is that certain businesses, or departments of businesses, need to either adapt and improve or face decline in the environmentally-conscious marketplace of today.

Part 1:

The new director of the zoo calls a meeting about the future of the zoo. Listen to what the director has to say and get ready to work for your survival!

My group:

Species of animals within my house:

You want to secure the long term future of your job at the zoo but now realise that things are going to have to change for this to be possible. Does your house have a future at the zoo?

Part 2:

In response to the director’s briefing, you have ten minutes to complete the following sections through brainstorming and discussion within your group:

1. Can the environmental footprint of our animal house be improved? If it can, what specific measures can be taken? What specific environmental benefit will their proposed changes deliver?

Environmental footprint aspect which can be improved <i>e.g. waste, energy usage, water consumption, greenhouse gas emissions.</i>	Specific measures to be taken	Environmental benefits delivered by the measures

2. What environmental benefits does our animal house offer (a) within the zoo and (b) in the broader context of global conservation?

(a) Environmental benefit within the zoo (e.g. recycling or usage of ‘waste’ from another part of the zoo).

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(b) Broader global environmental benefits (e.g. raising funds for conservation of endangered species on display in our house).

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3. Our best chance for survival: Do we believe that adapting and improving our current house is our best option or do we think that replacing it with a completely different set of animals will be seen more favourably?

State your survival strategy and your reasons for choosing it

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Part 3: Group Discussion

- What does this game symbolise for organisations and departments within organisations?

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- What are the challenges in adapting to becoming green?

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- Did other groups encounter similar challenges to those we encountered?

.....

- Did common solutions emerge across groups?

.....

- Is this process co-operative or competitive?

.....

Activity 2: Aspects of Greening an Organisation – 20 mins

You are about to see a DVD which includes a range of topics and issues relevant for those greening a business including advice from professionals in the field.

Consider your own part of the business where you currently work, consider this to be your 'target area'. For this exercise it is fine to select as your target area a smaller subsection of the business such as your floor within the office, or your team or your site within the organisation. Avoid targeting a large area or the whole business at this stage – let's walk before we run!

Find a partner; you will complete this exercise in pairs. Your partner can be one of your existing colleagues or someone from a different part of the business, or from a different business altogether.

Complete the first three columns only in the worksheet below, you have 20 minutes to complete this. Discuss your answers with your partner as you go through the activity. If your partner is from the same organisation as you, consider different target areas. If your partner is from a different organisation, identify the similarities and differences between your target areas.

Before the DVD			After the DVD	
<p>1. The aspects of my target area in which I believe we can achieve a sustainability improvement. <i>e.g. reduce resource use, switch to green suppliers, waste minimisation.</i></p>	<p>2. What obstacles do I expect to encounter? What support do I expect to receive and from whom? <i>e.g. obstacle = negative attitudes, support = environmentally aware staff</i></p>	<p>3. Where can I go to get advice, information and other resources to assist this process? <i>e.g. I find helpful information from this source:</i></p>	4.	5.

Activity 3: Managing to Be Green – 40 mins

Before the DVD starts, add the headers into the fourth and fifth columns of the table in activity 2 as follows:

4. What environmental and business benefits will I cite to promote my green strategy?	5. What Case Study examples can I quote which demonstrate that my plan will work?
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Make notes against these last two columns based on what you think during the DVD.

While the DVD plays, consider your answers to the previous activity.

What further ideas do you have from the DVD about how to green your organisation?

After the DVD has finished playing, continue expanding your notes and discuss your answers with your partner.

Activity 4: A Case Study – 30 mins

Bob's Photocopy Room.

Listen to the trainer's description of the scenario:

Bob runs the photocopy room within a large organisation. There are five photocopy machines in the room with a large turnover of copies every day. Users come from all parts of the organisation to make copies and expect the photocopy machines to be working and to be stocked with paper. For disposal of confidential documents, a shredder machine is available. The photocopy machines are all at least four years old.

The business owner has recently had an environmental audit completed which identified the photocopy room as a major user of electricity, consumer of raw materials (paper) and a major source of waste paper. The waste paper, including shredded waste, currently goes to landfill. Small rubbish bins are located inside the photocopy room and Bob empties these out daily into the main rubbish skips outside.

The owner wants to see a 100% reduction in photocopy room waste going to landfill over the next year. He also wants to see a 25% reduction in raw material (blank paper) purchases, and a 25% reduction in electricity consumption in the photocopy room.

A budget has been allocated for improving the sustainability of the photocopy process including allowance for:

- improving the equipment in the room
- changing the supply chain of raw materials (paper)
- installing new waste management equipment

As a return on his investment, the owner wants to see an overall financial saving over the next three years as a result of your proposed changes, compared to if none of your proposed changes were made. Detail at least four suggestions for Bob; use the table below to make your notes.

Bob is not sure how to achieve all this and has come to you for advice. You must propose a set of changes to achieve environmental improvements.

Sustainability Plan for Bob's Photocopy Room

Proposed change	Resource reduction and environmental benefits	Expected spending, if any, to implement change	Financial savings/benefits	% reduction in raw materials, % reduction in waste to landfill
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				

Publicity

Now, design a poster to raise staff awareness of the new systems and encourage their co-operation to achieve these results.

Your poster will be put up in and around the photocopy room and in the staff newsletter, and should include:

- reasons for change
- aims and motivations
- what is new, introduce the new systems
- a 'catchphrase'

Monitoring

What about proving whether you have achieved the % reductions in waste and resource usage? Decide how you can monitor the results. For example, will you need Bob to weigh the waste out and raw material in? What other methods could you use to track these quantities? Can you minimise the repetitive work involved in monitoring by using custom-made technology and systems?

Activity 5: Greening My Business Level #2 – 30 mins

Based on the zoo scenario in activity 1, you are now given the opportunity to develop your formal response to the eco-auditor.

In the same groups as activity 1, select one of the following presentation topics:

- Planning for going green: putting a strong strategy in place
- Challenges in bringing about cultural change
- Green Wash – being able to back up our claims and how to deal with critics
- Importance of collaboration and networking; is co-operation better than competition?
- Designing a green workplace
- Securing the planet for future generations: Beyond Economy vs. Environment

The context is your zoo house, or if your group prefers, your current workplace which you tackled in activity 2.

You will have six to seven minutes for your whole group to present; decide who is going to talk through each part.

Resources

Further research and information can be obtained from the following sources:

Books

Sitarz, Daniel (2008) *Greening Your Business*. USA: Baker and Taylor. ISBN 9781892949462

Websites

<http://www.business.gov/expand/green-business/>

USA Government Guide for Green Business

<http://www.greenyourbusiness.org.au/>

Australia (Central Victoria)

<http://www.growmethemoney.com.au>

Grow Me the Money

This is a one stop shop for small businesses wishing to become green and to save money through improved resource efficiencies. Guidance is provided for members via a website on how to green many aspects of your business.