



TIPS FOR CREATING A SUCCESSFUL SUSTAINABILITY PLAN

This document provides an overview of the steps required to plan, implement and evaluate a successful sustainability plan for businesses.

The Right Questions	Ask: How might current ecological trends threaten your organization's ability to operate? What opportunities and risks are present? What would it mean if your company did nothing?
Assessing	<p>Conduct a baseline or initial assessment. Consider Life Cycle Analysis (LCA), Waste and Energy Audits, and Carbon Footprint Analysis as primary data collection tools.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ In order to improve, you need to have a clear understanding of the place from which you are starting. This information provides a baseline for measuring progress later, and can help identify the key goals of a sustainability campaign. ➤ Consider how much energy you consume, and how much waste you generate. Ask yourself where your supplies and products are made and by what means are they traveling from their origin to you.
Shifting Attitudes & Thinking	<p>Remember, "<i>Shifts in thinking drive innovation.</i>" Ensure employee buy in and stakeholder education and training before launching your sustainability program.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Be sure that all the people involved in your efforts understand the compelling reasons for pursuing sustainability. ➤ Consider implementing sustainability education programs such as those offered by the Northwest Earth Institute, in order to drive innovation and increase communications leading toward sustainability solutions
Planning	<p>Create a long-term plan. Identify achievable steps and make a timeline.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Your sustainability efforts should have a solid link to your organization's strategic plan. If no solid rationale or link exists for pursuing sustainability along with the other goals in your strategic plan, it will likely be faced by resistance. ➤ Engage the entire community in an exercise where you define where your community would like to be 20 years from now. The vision should be specific and idealistic, but achievable—it should reveal opportunities for improvement. ➤ Incorporate incentives. Remove policy barriers and create incentives.
Evaluating	<p>Monitor & Evaluate! Develop indicators to which you can measure your progress.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Start with "early success" projects to begin implementing your sustainability program, and involve the public in them. ➤ Celebrate successes with public events and recognition, and then take on more difficult goals and projects as public support and confidence builds.



QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- **As a business system, what are our inputs and how do they effect the environment?**
 - ➔ What materials do we use, what products do we buy, how much energy and water do we consume, and how are these products, our employees and our customers transported to us?
- **What are the environmental consequences (both negative and positive) of our production and operations?**
 - ➔ What are the impacts of our processes and activities at our offices and facilities? How does the management of these locations effect the environment? How can we change management techniques to reduce the negative effects on the environment and improve on the positive effects?
- **What are the outputs of our operations and how do they impact the environment?**
 - ➔ What “bi-products” result from our processes? What waste do we produce and where does it go? What happens to our products once they leave us? What is the impact of our products over their life span?
- **What impact do we have on our community?**
 - ➔ What are our relationships and our interdependence with our local community? What do we take from the community and what do we give to it? How does the community benefit from you?
- **What is our impact on our industry?**
 - ➔ Are we in a position to effect change industry wide? How can we lead by example?

COMMON MISTAKES TO AVOID

- Malin Jennings, Senior Vice President with Fleishman-Hillard Sustainability Communications noted that, “One of the biggest mistakes is launching a carbon reduction program without first gaining employee buy-in. If corporate carbon reduction programs are going to work employees must understand and support them.”
- To focus solely on reducing, minimizing and limiting one’s effect on the environment is to approach only one side of the issue. An individual, organization and business should also focus on how they effect the environment positively. What actions do they take that helps maintain a sustainable environment and how can they improve on these behaviors.



RESOURCES

The Northwest Earth Institute (NWEI) is recognized as a national leader in developing innovative programs that empower individuals and organizations to protect the Earth. NWEI currently offers seven discussion guides, any of which can be offered as part of sustainability education initiatives.

<http://www.nwei.org>

The Natural Step Network is founded on the principle that businesses and organizations can reduce their impact on the environment while enhancing their overall efficiency and effectiveness. The Network seeks to align business and government practices with natural cycles that support the web of life.

<http://www.ortns.org/>

Environmental Management Systems (EMS): This website explains the EMS set of process and practices that an organization can use to reduce its resource use and increase its efficiency.

<http://www.epa.gov/ems/>

Business Resources

The Natural Resources Defense Council Greening Advisor is a detailed guide that can help any commercial business or organization to reduce its environmental impacts, often while cutting costs in resource consumption and efficiency. Includes specific information for areas such as air quality, paper, energy, and water use.

www.nrdc.org/enterprise/greeningadvisor/

Business Link is an excellent resource that provides a strategic approach to developing a sustainability plan for your business, as well as specific information on steps you can take to improve your environmental performance.

www.businesslink.gov.uk (click on "Environment & Efficiency")

Government Resources

International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI) provides technical consulting, training, and information services to build capacity, share knowledge, and support local government in the implementation of sustainable development at the local level. Membership in ICLEI gives municipalities' access to valuable auditing software among other tools and services.

www.iclei.org

Cool Cities is a national network, sponsored by the Sierra Club, of 800+ cities that have made commitments to implement energy saving solutions in their city. The site includes great step-by-step resources on how individuals can start an initiative to make their city a "Cool City".

<http://coolcities.us>

Sources:

-*Creating an Effective Plan for Your Sustainability Efforts*, Joel Makower,

<http://www.greenbiz.com/column/2006/11/29/creating-effective-plan-your-sustainability-efforts>

-National Center for Appropriate Technology's Smart Communities Network,

<http://www.smartcommunities.ncat.org/welcome.shtml>