



Partic-paction

Engaging Employees & Tenants for Successful Sustainability Initiatives

By Steven Pacifico

The world's top-performing organizations and green buildings understand that employee and tenant engagement is a force that drives performance outcomes. In the best organizations and buildings, engagement is more than a human resource or landlord initiative—it is a strategic foundation for the way they do business. This article is the third and final in a series aimed at helping decision makers, planners, and managers in the process of planning for green building sustainability initiatives. Part 1, “Turning Risks into Opportunities for the Green Building Sector,” outlined why sustainability initiatives are important by demonstrating what decision makers need to know regarding the business case and the importance of factoring in

operational costs into the decision making process. Part 2, “Analyzing, Comparing, and Prioritizing Green Building Initiatives: A Planning Process to Help Your Organization Grow Green,” described a planning process to help managers prioritize risks and costs when developing green building initiatives. Part 3 will focus on how to engage and get employees and tenants participating in green building initiatives in order to maximize your sustainability investments.

Having employees and tenants buy-in around sustainability and climate change initiatives is critical for success. Whether it is ensuring a quality, environmental, and/or health and safety management system is running efficiently or having employees or

tenants engaged on overall green building initiatives, engagement programs play an integral part in sustainability integration and developing a successful advantage. However, if individuals are not engaged and allowed to be accountable, SD initiatives may have limited impact. Recent estimates by a global consultant suggest that every 'engaged' employee is worth about \$4,150 a year in additional profit. Many companies such as Wal-Mart and Interface have discovered the many benefits of employee engagement programs.

Inspiring action and change in people is not easy, but can be facilitated by allowing groups of like-minded individuals to establish mutually-supportive groups, by highlighting the differences individuals can make and by educating the participants so that they can make their own decisions about what issues are important to them. Organizational change

practitioners try to increase the acceptability of sustainable ideas and practices through the design and implementation of programs. Practitioners of this method first try to understand the perceived barriers that people face when behaving in a sustainable manner. Then they use 'tools' developed through social science research that are effective in fostering sustainable behaviours.

The following is a 'tool kit' of resources that the Delphi Group uses to help organizations formulate an engagement strategy around sustainability initiatives. The tool-kit was developed using concepts from community-based social marketing, and is an approach to reduced the perceived barriers to sustainable behaviours and increase the success of any engagement program be it employees within an organization or tenants of an aspiring green building.

Understanding Why People Behave The Way They Do: "The Barriers to Change"

At Delphi we begin any engagement program with a process of learning and understanding the organizational context of your company or building. We typically do this through the use of a survey (called The Sustainability Pulse Tool) to assess the current attitudes, beliefs, and perceived barriers around sustainability and/or climate change initiatives. The final product is a sustainability pulse of your organization with recommendations to help foster sustainable behavior changes. The more time spent on understanding the perceived barriers, context, and needs of your organization, the more successful the outcome of your engagement strategy.

An Employee Engagement Case Study: Teknion's GreenWorks Team

Teknion is an international designer, manufacturer and marketer of office systems and related office furniture products based in Toronto, Ontario. Teknion has been a leader in sustainability for 10 years. They are also a member of the Delphi



Group's EXCEL partnership which is a group of sustainability executives from leading companies who meet to develop and build their capacity to be more effective in delivering tangible and measurable sustainable business performance results.

A part of Teknion's transformation towards sustainability includes the formation of their GreenWorks team comprised of people from across the organization—product development, marketing, manufacturing, finance, customer service, human resources and business leadership, among others—and was initially guided by a steering committee who reported weekly progress to the team's executive sponsor, the President and CEO. Scott Deugo, Senior VP of Design, Marketing and Sustainable Development, was empowered by senior management to develop a program that would lead to environmental awareness and responsibility at Teknion. A GreenWorks team of 40 employees, as described above, was then hand-picked by Deugo for their personal commitment to recycling and other projects. The team's first decision was to create an environmental charter that would guide the company through its sustainability initiatives. The team also challenged itself to engage others in their activities, encouraging and engendering support across the organization.

The GreenWorks team demonstrates many of the employee engagement and behavior change principals that have been transformative for Teknion; such as, empowering leadership and employees to be the stewards of sustainability within Teknion, developing employee champions not just within their environmental business unit but throughout all business units, using social diffusion to help institutionalize sustainability throughout the organization, and

educating and training employees to have the necessary skills to deliver on sustainability.

Program Successes of the GreenWorks Team:

- The successful creation, implementation, and deployment of Teknion's first employee lead Environmental Charter that was disseminated throughout the organization.
- The creation of a GREENGUARD™ Certification of their products to create low off-gassing products for indoor office use.
- ISO 14001 certification of all their facilities.
- Employee recycling and energy efficiency programs. Relative results over a six-year period:

Environmental Impact Area	Relative Result (%)
Carbon	- 45.6%
Electricity	- 22.8 %
Natural Gas	- 43.8 %
Water	- 54.1 %
Waste to Landfill	- 61.6 %
Total Waste Produced	- 4.4 %
Diversion Rate	88.7 %

- The creation of sophisticated software to create auto-nesting, numerically controlled programs to minimize waste.
- Over 60 of Teknion's North American employees earned LEED Accreditation by successfully demonstrating their knowledge of green building design, practices and strategies.
- Teknion is currently embedding Design For Environment Principals (DfE) in every product that it creates moving beyond a linear take, make, waste process to the closed-loop principles of borrow, use, return.
- Using FSC-certified wood in their products.
- Teknion became the first office furniture manufacturer to have all of its major product lines and manufacturing facilities in Canada certified to the Environmental Choice Program.

Building an Engagement Strategy

After learning and understanding your organization, we are better able to formulate an engagement strategy that will work for your organization. The strategy focuses on key goals and objectives, key targeted actions, an implementation plan, indicators and metrics of success, and an evaluation process for improvements. The strategy usually involves a number of behavior change tools developed from community-based social marketing theory including: commitments, prompts, norms/social diffusion, communications, incentives, and removal of organizational and external barriers to sustainability.

Identifying Champions

One of the most effective ways to begin a cultural shift within an organization or building is by identifying key leaders that others within the community trust and will follow by their example. It is important that they buy-in to the initiative in order for this social diffusion technique to be successful.

Education and Training

The process of educating all employees and tenants around your organization's sustainability initiatives is paramount in the success of a program and should include: providing


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direction, building competencies, creating opportunities, and motivating individuals to act. Champions are typically recruited to help in this process.

Implementation

At Delphi we also help with the implementation of engagement strategies by helping to: create buy-in, develop educational materials, work with and train champions, monitor and evaluate the program, and work with the IT department to create functional and effective online resources. The Delphi Group also created an Online Engagement Tool that helps program participants network with each other, find resources to enable behavior change, and monitor results.

Supporting Sustained Behaviour Changes

It is very important to monitor and evaluate the success of an engagement program by ensuring that when problems arise corrective actions are taken. Individuals participating in a sustainability initiative must also be given the appropriate tools, resources, and feedback mechanisms to enable sustained behavior changes. 

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