

BEST PRACTICES IN SUSTAINABILITY ENGAGEMENT

Overview

Successful and purposeful engagement of individuals in climate action and sustainability activities is no small task, particularly because these challenges present a number of economic, technological, cultural and psychological barriers. Over the past decades, countless efforts have sought to identify and overcome these obstacles to cultivate a population that is knowledgeable and active. Practitioners have increasingly pushed for critical analyses and knowledge-sharing to advance behavior-change efforts through innovation and improvements in program design.

This document seeks to provide a brief introduction to the best practices employed by community and employee engagement programs focused on sustainability. Topics include the basic elements of successful engagement efforts; lessons learned around measuring program performance; engagement approaches and tools; and finally, strategic communication tactics.

The best practices included here are informed by insights gained from C2ES' action-oriented Make an Impact initiative, which has worked for seven years to develop and deliver credible, climate-focused employee engagement programming. Make an Impact's corporate partners have included Alcoa, Bank of America, CitiBank, Entergy, Novelis, and Time Warner Cable. Additional sources include recent literature and personal interviews conducted during the fall of 2015 with practitioners from the USPS Lean and Green Team initiativeⁱ, Charge Ahead Durham^{ii,iii}, Edith Green-Wendell Wyatt building green team^{iv,v}, and Center for Sustainable Energy/Energy Upgrade California^{vi}.

Elements of Successful Engagement Efforts

Successful engagement programs often incorporate four main elements. These elements include: education, empowerment, a strong call to action, vii and recognition.

- **Educate.** The audience must be aware of a problem and/or the opportunity for action before any engagement can occur. Providing accessible and credible information will help avoid dismissal or skepticism, and ensure understanding.
- **Empower.** Audiences can respond positively to a call to action if they have the capacity and permission to engage. If there are obstacles to action, the program should seek to empower by illuminating options and setting out a clear path forward.
- Issue a call to action. A successful call to action is inviting, clear, and well-communicated.
- **Recognize**. Recognition is a critical element of successful engagement programs. In our feedback-driven culture, people stay more engaged when they have an indication of the impacts of their actions and are given positive reinforcement for changing their behavior.

Measuring Program Performance

Goals

Establishing the right goals for an engagement program will inform the proper strategies and metrics to measure program success. Example goals for sustainability programs might be:

- Collaboration and action among employees on sustainability initiatives
- Establishing strong connections between employees and local sustainability organizations
- Reducing office energy use
- Engagement by employees in company sustainability activities



Metrics

Metrics are critical tools to assess performance of the sustainability engagement program and can help uncover areas for improvement. Defining the metrics for programs can be difficult because the programs are often budget-constrained and designed to increase behaviors that are not easily tracked. For these reasons, careful thought should be given to ensure the metric is both trackable and informative. For example,

- Self-reporting pledge programs present the challenge of not knowing if participants' pledges actually
 resulted in action and the desired environmental benefit. The community-based Charge Ahead
 Durham initiative employed a unique approach to avoid this tracking issue. To receive points in the
 challenge, participants were required to submit a photo of themselves completing a "charge" action.
 Participants uploaded photos to an online system that automatically updated their profile to reflect
 the activity.
- Measuring the effectiveness of a "lights off" poster campaign is difficult because individuals' actions and the status of lights are not monitored by a central, connected system. Here, practitioners might use a survey to learn whether the posters influenced tenants, or they might compare office energy use data to a previous baseline year. The latter option is complicated, as other factors (such as number of tenants and computers, weather, etc.) also influence the total energy used. In this case, the impacts of these factors would have to be removed to ensure the data is comparable. This step is infeasible for most programs. Ultimately, until stronger, more affordable data tracking and analysis systems are available, imperfect measurements are necessary to build a reasonably full picture of how engagement programs perform.

Metrics take different forms. A "leading" metric is input-oriented and may focus on an action or behavior, such as employees using a mug instead of a throwaway cup, while a "lagging" metric is outcome-oriented and would focus on the amount of cup waste generated by an office. In the resource conservation space there is a natural tendency to pursue metrics that are quantitative only. However, there is a strong case for collecting qualitative feedback as well (and indeed this may be all that is possible). Surveying participants about their experiences and ideas can be an extremely valuable piece of data in determining how well a program was executed and how it might be improved in the future.

Targets & Reporting

Once a goal and metric is defined, program decision makers typically create a target. Targets can be useful tools in galvanizing support of key stakeholders and encouraging action by audiences. The target could range from something achievable to a "stretch" target that may not be met. Therefore, it is important for program implementers to know where their target falls on that spectrum. In some cases, such as program pilots where there is no precedent or indication of outcomes, targets may not be promoted or established at all.

During the target-setting process, managing expectations is important. Conferring with stakeholders, communications experts, and practitioners that have delivered similar programs is an essential step to learn what participation is possible and likely.

A final note on measuring program performance centers on the importance of reporting. Communicating outcomes to the program's stakeholders showcases impacts of the effort, promotes a sense of shared purpose, and can increase the likelihood of support for future efforts. This step also creates an opportunity to gather feedback from stakeholders to improve the program.



Table 1. Example Goals, Strategies, Metrics and Targets for Workplace Programs

GOAL	STRATEGY	METRIC	TARGET	
Empower employees	Provide employee guidebook	Creation/delivery of	Create 4 types of guidance	
to collaborate and act	for green teams, articles and a	guidance materials	materials	
on sustainability	kick-off webinar to introduce	# of green teams established	10	
initiatives	the opportunity and invite	# of participating employees	100	
	participation.			
Reduce office energy	Deliver a communications	Creation/delivery of	Posters in each public	
use	campaign with signage at	communication materials	space	
	"Touch points."	Office energy usage data	5% reduction in energy use	
		before and after campaign	compared to previous year	
Engage employees in	Offer and promote a variety of	Employee participation	1% of all employees	
sustainability activities	employee opportunities.		participate in at least one	
-			opportunity	

Engagement Approaches and Tools

Behavior change programs have taken a variety of approaches to engage audiences. From these efforts, researchers have generated several taxonomies that categorize the approaches. The most recent and pertinent taxonomy is offered by the American Council on an Energy Efficient Economy. The families and a brief description are included in the table below.

Table 2. Taxonomy of Reviewed Behavior Programs, ACEEE 2013.

PROGRAM FAMILY	DESCRIPTION	CATEGORIES	
Cognition	Delivers info to audience.	general and targeted communication efforts, social	
		media, classroom education, training	
Calculus	Relies on the audience to make	feedback, games, incentives, home energy audits,	
	economic rational decisions.	installation	
Social interaction	Relies on the interaction among people	social marketing, person-to-person efforts, eco-teams,	
	for their effectiveness.	peer champions, online forums, gifts	

Increasingly, program practitioners are utilizing multiple program families in complementary ways.

For example, a "multi-modal" program may employ a robust social media plan to share information (cognition) and promote participation opportunities in an online challenge (calculus). Or, a program may offer a specialized training series (cognition) to improve the efforts and influence of eco-teams (social interaction). Packaging and integrating components in this way also provides a suite of metrics that can help gauge success. Practitioners with a variety of tools and resources (including key internal/external partners) at their disposal are better able to leverage a multi-modal approach to improve the program's performance. However, a point of caution for program designers is to consider the return on investment of potential approaches. The most successful programs prioritize the activities that can be done well and are worth the time investment.

In nearly all of the program categories above, accessible and sleek engagement tools can be leveraged for better segmentation, personalization, monitoring and responding to participants. An example of the commonly used tools include:

- white-label applications that can be locally customized;
- social media tools that improve message management, tracking capabilities, and sharing ease;
- gamification platforms; and
- intranet sites.



Effective Communications

An effective communications strategy for a behavior change program relies on knowing your audience and meeting them where they are. This facilitates the development of a tailored communication plan. For programs aimed at a large population, it is very possible that the target audience could be segmented into multiple groups. Marking a relatively new focus for sustainability engagement programs, segmentation can help identify different population groups and the right communication channels or techniques and different messages that will motivate them effectively. This may also lead to creating multiple levels of engagement.

An understanding of the audience can be discovered through focus groups, surveys, and interviews with target participants. The Center for Sustainable Energy conducted its audience assessment for the Energy Upgrade California program with particular vigor, employing the following five step approach to gather quantitative and qualitative data to design its messaging strategy:

- 1. Initiation- Establish research objectives; survey and messaging development.
- 2. Discovery- Quantitative fieldwork; deploy and analyze online survey in order to create segmented audiences.
- 3. Message testing- Qualitative fieldwork; evaluate message responses to determine segment-specific traits and patterns.
- 4. Illustration- Qualitative research; conduct ethnographic interviews and focus groups to refine segments and messaging.
- 5. Completion- Utilize findings to convert into effective implementation strategy.

This type of audience data can help target and inform if and when an audience may be receptive to a behavior change/engagement opportunity.

Removing Barriers

Understanding the audience's barriers to engagement is critical to understand when designing an engagement strategy. For example, a common barrier for workplace programs is that employees may worry that participation in an "extra-curricular" will be a detriment to their jobs. To counteract this obstacle, project managers can offer opportunities that don't compete with workers' typical work schedules. Supportive managers and company leadership that promote the call to action can send the message that this is a company-sanctioned activity to alleviate any concerns and communicate a company value.

Messages that Motivate

Understanding the audience can also provide insight into its motivation, which should inform the messaging plan. Behavioral psychologists have identified several messages for sustainability-focused programs that have proven especially empowering.^x These messages:

- reinforce a behavior/value or remove barriers to reaching targets. Based on the finding that "nobody likes losing but everyone likes gaining," sustainability programs can tap into the benefits that will be felt by taking action, and minimize the conversation about losses to keep participants moving toward the goal at hand.
- o create excitement and pride, and build reputation. Appealing to an individual's desire to help others and protect the environment can be a powerful message. This approach marks a divergence from the assumption that monetary concerns are the most (or only) influential drivers.
- o **utilize a visual, storytelling approach, as opposed to "just the facts.**" As the "human brain privileges experience over analysis," appealing to the audience's emotions will lead to stronger responses. Increasingly, practitioners are using stories, narratives, and images of real people taking action to drive make factual information "stick." xi



o are personally identifiable, inclusive, and community-oriented. This approach – which aligns well with social media-focused programs - takes advantage of the fact that "people are social beings who respond to group norms." Making an activity seem normal and common to an individual will make them think twice about breaking that norm, and actions that are enjoyable and create a sense of community will be easier to maintain.

The high-profile marketing firm Futerra has identified additional successful messages: big picture ideas that make connections; technically correct messages that are transparent and trustworthy; cool messages that are mainstream but bravely stand out; and those that showcase heroes to emulate.xii

Communication Channels & Messengers

Successful programs utilize the communication channels that participants want to be reached through or are accustomed to accessing. Naturally, these channels should align with the resources available to the team and the call to action. For example:

- The C2ES Make an Impact initiatives—delivered through employers—disseminate messages through existing company channels. These include employee newsletters, intranet homepages, employee meetings, and signage in common areas. The messages focus on program kickoffs, calls to action, reminders, and finally, reporting of the program's outcome.
- Programs relying on a low-input "viral" dissemination benefit from a well-designed presence on social media platforms, shareable content, and "share" add-ons on any web platform.

The channels described above and those most available to practitioners share a common characteristic: They are very busy, and full of "noise." To ensure that messages are seen by the target audience and influence behavior change, especially habits, communications should be delivered frequently and in different ways.xiii

In addition to using the right communication channels, thought should be given to choosing the right messengers. To motivate behavior change, messengers must be credible in the eyes of the participants. Common messengers include employers, local government offices, and other respected organizations, like non-profits. In addition, engaging influencers—individuals who have significant impact in their communities—is a common strategy to spread the word and achieve goals. There can be multiple influencers that appeal to a professional community, including CEOs, direct managers, local leaders, and especially, well-regarded peers.



APPENDIX: CASE STUDY DESCRIPTIONS

Bank of America Global Energy Pledge

The Global Energy Pledge was an internal employee engagement program that Bank of America implemented in partnership with C2ES in the fall of 2013. The goal was to educate employees in 29 different countries to become environmental stewards at work, at home, and in the communities where they live, with a focus on carbon and energy reduction. The program components included a kickoff "Energy Conservation" webinar, a "Workplace Energy Checklist," conservation podcasts, and the online "Energy Pledge."

The program utilized multiple avenues of internal communications, such as posters, email reminders, and newsletter articles. A Global Environment manager was responsible for delivering the program, and activated "My Environment Ambassadors" and "My Environment Friends" as message multipliers. To incentivize employee participation, a friendly competition was created between global regions, and participating employees were entered into a random prize drawing. Bank of America tracked the number of pledges, calculated carbon savings equivalences, and measured website traffic. The program engaged 3,100 employees, which was 120% of the target participation number. Additionally, participants pledged to save more than 2,500,000 pounds of carbon.

Caesars CodeGreenxiv

Caesars Entertainment Corporation is the world's most diversified casino-entertainment provider with 49 properties, 68,000 employees, and \$23 billion of total assets worldwide. Caesars is also a leader in environmental stewardship. The corporation has nearly 1,500,000 square feet of LEED certified buildings under construction, but its most notable contribution is the CodeGreen Strategy that was introduced in 2007. CodeGreen's goal is to measure, assess, and reduce the corporation's material impacts on the environment. The initiative is well-structured, leveraging employee engagement for success. Each property has a CodeGreen Team composed of nine members from different divisions. Each quarter, Caesars tracks six metric areas on a scorecard: electric, natural gas, water, waster, customer, and employee. Caesars incentivizes employees by giving monetary rewards to those who implement CodeGreen initiatives.

Notably, the program has been successful in engaging employees and reducing turnover. An Employee Opinion Survey revealed that involvement in CodeGreen correlated to higher scores in other key job satisfaction measures like loyalty, discretionary effort, and company pride. Furthermore, significant cost-savings have been realized, with an estimated \$24 million saved as of 2013. The program has also had a tremendous effect on the corporation's environmental impact. From 2007 to 2012, Caesars reduced its electricity consumption by 20 percent and carbon emissions by 12 percent. It also diverted 24 percent of its waste away from landfills. Finally, CodeGreen has helped Caesars build up its brand value and increase consumer loyalty.

Charge Ahead Durham

Charge Ahead Durham (CAD) was a six-month web-based program aimed at engaging Durham households to change behaviors and improve environmental outcomes. The program delivered weekly "charges" for participants to take on; these were everyday actions to save energy and water, keep the environment clean, reduce waste, and establish a stronger personal connection with the natural world. Participants completed charges by uploading pictures of themselves in action, and were rewarded with the chance to win one of three weekly prizes.

CAD utilized mostly web-based communications to engage participants. A survey revealed that 25% of participants heard about CAD through Facebook, 22% through email, and 6% through Twitter. No



participants answered that they heard about CAD through the newspaper, television, or flyers around town, however 25% said they heard through word of mouth.

There was much to learn from this innovative 6-month pilot program, which resulted in 37,104 kWh energy saved, 11,627 gallons of water saved, 890 pounds of waste saved, 56,157 pounds of CO2 saved, and total monetary savings of \$1,448. In proportion breakdowns, 31 percent of participants completed one charge, 22 percent completed two charges, and 9 percent completed three charge, with the trend continuing as the number of charges increases. There appeared to be no favorite charge themes, but participants considered 52 percent of their completed charges to be "new actions" that they had never done before. This reveals that the program was successful in introducing new ways for individuals to be more sustainable.

Edith Green-Wendell Wyatt Federal Building Green Team

The Edith Green-Wendell Wyatt Federal Building in Portland, Oregon houses 12 tenant groups. The EGWW Green Team is collection of representatives from these groups, working to transform the tenants into "LEED platinum employees" and showcase the building to the community. The green team meets once a month during the lunch hour to discuss activities, which can vary from planning events like Earth Day or Recycling Day to preparing informational handouts to disperse throughout the building. Because the building is LEED Platinum certified and thus energy- and water-efficient, the green team focuses on promoting waste reduction, which has resulted in an average of 60% waste diversion. The team is led by a volunteer team leader and notably, the building facilities manager.

As a low-budget, voluntary operation, there are several obstacles around which the green team has learned to operate. To overcome inconsistent and sometimes waning interest, the team utilizes broad communications efforts to try to engage as many participants as possible, including a reminder email before every meeting. Over the years the green team has learned that it is important to take an empathetic, emotion-focused approach in order to get people to break away from their normal routines. Furthermore, the team pursues a variety of engagement strategies, from fair-like events to competitions to make sure there is something for everyone.

Energy Upgrade California

In support of the Energy Upgrade California program, the Center for Sustainable Energy (CSE) conducted research to segment the small business owner population and recommended priorities for targeted outreach. As part of the segmentation strategy, CSE assessed what motivates small business owners in order to create a effective marketing outreach plan. CSE utilized a five-step process: initiation, discovery, message testing, illustration, and completion.

In the first step CSE established research objectives and developed surveys and draft messaging. Next, the discovery phase consisted of quantitative fieldwork, or online survey deployment, in order to create preliminary segments of small business owners. CSE determined five discrete segments that were sorted according to engagement and motivation level, from low to high: cautionaries, reactives, coasters, stewards, and promoters. The third step involved qualitative fieldwork, or testing the effectiveness of messages amongst the segments. Message evaluation resulted in several helpful conclusions, including that saving money was the top need across segments and that empathetic and simplistic messages were effective across segments. Further qualitative research took place in the illustration phase, as ethnographic interviews and focus groups helped refine the segments and messaging. Finally, CSE converted these findings into a strategic and accessible narrative during the completion phase.



GreeNYC^{xv}

Launched in 2007, GreeNYC is the public education arm of New York City's Office of Sustainability. The overall goal of GreeNYC is to change the behaviors and thought processes of citizens. The program also has several long-term sustainability goals: reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 80 percent by 2050, reduce waste disposal by 90 percent by 2030, and ensure New York City has the best air and water quality among all large U.S. cities by 2030.

GreeNYC targets all New Yorkers but specifically "pragmatic householders" and "aspiring greens." The program focuses on simple, singular actions to increase the likelihood of future engagement. It uses multimedia campaigns, partnerships, merchandise, social media pages to spread its message. A notable component of the effort is its strong branding - the "Birdie" mascot. "Birdie" was created to shift away from the typical shaming and fear-inducing approach towards sustainability, and is found on nearly everything produced by GreeNYC. Demonstrating a strong commitment to effective engagement, GreeNYC tracks its environmental impacts and media impressions to measure campaign successes.

Time Warner Cable Go Green Initiative

Time Warner Cable (TWC) is actively working to make the company more sustainable, raise environmental awareness among employees, achieve operational efficiencies, and support local environmental organizations. In 2013, TWC partnered with C2ES to develop a step-by-step guide to help employees launch Green Teams. The TWC Green Team Playbook was introduced in June 2014, and has helped form 21 Green Teams to date.

Building off the Green Team momentum, TWC partnered with C2ES to launch the Carbon Calculator Challenge campaign, a comprehensive employee engagement program designed to support and enhance the TWC Go Green effort and continue growing Green Teams. The online tool helps individuals determine their carbon footprint and commit to take steps to reduce their environmental impact. Pairing the innovative technology of a carbon emissions calculator and pledge list with a people-focused communication campaign led to successful outcomes. Leaders from across the company actively encouraged all to participate; support came from the C-suite leaders all the way to green team members around the US.

Throughout the challenge, program implementers tracked metrics and created actionable educational pieces as needed. During the seven-week Carbon Calculator campaign, employees in over 20 states learned their carbon footprint and made commitments to take energy-saving steps such as going meatless and programming their thermostat. Overall, employees committed to avoid 2.6 million pounds of CO2 emissions, which is equal to recycling over 50 garbage trucks of waste rather than sending it to the landfill. Collectively, the actions added up to more than \$200,000 in saved energy costs. The campaign proved a natural fit in the company's overall commitment to raising environmental awareness, using fewer natural resources, and generating less waste in business.

USPS Lean Green Teams

The United States Postal Service (USPS) Office of Sustainability works towards a triple bottom line: people, planet, and profit. The goal of the Lean Green Team initiative is to establish a team at each USPS facility to reduce waste and promote efficiency. Each team implements low and no-cost projects pertaining to five impact areas: building energy, vehicle fuel, waste, materials, and water. The initiative follows a pyramidal structure, with seven district managers who name champions at both district and area levels.

A unique component of the USPS Lean Green Team is the Green Initiative Tracking Tool (GITT). GITT is a centralized tracking system that compiles leading indicators such as facility participation and number of projects completed by facility, as well as lagging indicators such as sustainability impacts and cost savings.



Because of this system, USPS is able to quantify the substantial impacts of its programs, such as a savings of more than \$52 million in 2012 from green initiatives alone.

Appendix: Taxonomy of Reviewed Behavior Programs, based on taxonomy created by ACEEE, 2013

Taxonomy	Program								
	Edith Wendell Green Teams		Charge Ahead Durham	Bank of America Global Energy Pledge (C2ES)	PlaNYC	Energy Upgrade California	Ceasars CodeGreen	TWC Green Team KickOff (C2ES)	
Cognition			-	111					
general communication	X			X	X		X	X	
targeted communication				X	X	X		X	
social media			X	ŝ.	i i		Š.	- E	
classroom education			-	-					
training		X				X		X	
Calculus									
feedback programs					-				
games	X		X		i i		X		
incentives					X				
home energy audits							2		
installation								Ţ.	
Social interaction	0.0		30.	20.			3.		
human scale	X	X	i i	X				X	
online forms					į.	- 8			
gifts and reciprocity			X				X		
Multi-wodal programs									
	X	X	X		X			X	

Endnotes

ⁱ Jim French and Dianne Shoaf, phone interview by Jaqueline Adelsberg and Amy Morsch, November 18, 2015, Washington D.C.

ii Tobin Freid, phone interview by Jaqueline Adelsberg and Amy Morsch, November 16, 2015, Washington D.C.

iii Paul Namaste, "Final Report: Charge Ahead Durham Program," December 2014.

iv Howard, Schaffer, phone interview by Jaqueline Adelsberg and Amy Morsch, November 6, 2015, Washington D.C.

v Patricia Russell, phone interview by Jaqueline Adelsberg and Amy Morsch, November 9, 2015, Washington D.C.

vi Pamela Wellner, phone interview by Jaqueline Adelsberg and Amy Morsch, November 6, 2015, Washington D.C.

vii Kivi Leroux Miller, The Nonprofit Marketing Guide: High-Impact, Low-Cost Ways to Build Support for Your Good Cause (San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2010), 54-136.

viii Susan Mazur-Stommen and Kate Farley, "ACEEE Field Guide to Utility-Run Behavior Programs," (Washington DC: ACEEE, 2013), http://aceee.org/research-report/b132



- ix Center for Sustainable Energy, "Energy Upgrade California, California Small Business: Energy Decision-Maker Segmentation," presented June 10, 2015, accessed November 9, 2015.
- ^x Sander van der Linden, Edward Maibach, and Anthony Leiserowitz. "Improving Public Engagement With Climate Change: Five 'Best Practice' Insights From Psychological Science," *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 10.6 (2015): 758-63, accessed November 30, 2015, doi: 10.1177/1745691615598516.
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- xiii "The State of Employee Engagement in Sustainability and CSR: Trends in Engaging Employees for Better Business Results, 2009-2014," (Boston: WeSpire, 2014), http://www.wespire.com/resource/the-state-of-employee-engagement-in-sustainability-csr-survey-results/
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