Creating a sustainable business: how to achieve staff buy-in

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Introduction

- Overview of presentation
  - The context for change
  - Engaging employees – why?
  - Engaging employees – how?
- My engagement with responsible tourism/ sustainable development
  - Working Visions Global
    - www.workingvisionsglobal.com
  - ICRT at Leedsmet
    - www.icrtourism.org
Context: the pressures on businesses to become more sustainable are growing:

- Consumers
- Government
- Cost considerations

Your Business
“Of all the no-brainers in all the executive suites in the entire world, winning the engagement of your employees must come near the top of the list.”

> Stefan Stern writing in the FT, 31st January 2008
Engaging employees – why?

- General reasons for engaging employees:
  - Increased motivation
  - Reduced staff turnover
  - Increased customer satisfaction
  - Etc....
To say that most organisational changes fail is an overstatement...

- Most organisational changes are neither complete failures or complete successes
- It is clear though that the chances of success are increased when we are able to get our employees on board.
- In fact, employee engagement is the foundation for successful change initiatives.
Simon Hayward from Oliver Wyman Leadership Development explains: “Employee engagement is the basis of success for any organization...Successful organizational change relies on changes in behaviour from engaged and motivated employees. A strategy may look great on paper but will never deliver results without employee buy-in.”
“Of all the no-brainers in all the executive suites in the entire world, winning the engagement of your employees must come near the top of the list. And yet, survey data seem to indicate that managers are failing spectacularly to achieve that aim.”

- Stefan Stern writing in the FT, 31st January 2008
Much of the literature on engaging employees for sustainability recognises a number of key principles.

There is no one, single approach that applies to all organisations in all circumstances...

A very useful model for change management more generally is that by John Kotter (see for example www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newPPM_82.htm)
Sustainability must become a core value

- Forget sustainability as an add-on, as an optional extra. The business needs to be pervaded by a notion of responsibility to the environment, to its staff and to society in a broader sense.

  - See, for example, Hollender and Breen’s (2010): “The Responsibility Revolution” – in the future those companies will win that take their responsibility to society seriously.
Catherin Golds, Head of NQA, explains: “My experience as an environmental assessor and my current role as head of an environmental certification body has given me access to hundreds of organizations where there is a desire to improve environmental impacts. I can confidently say the companies that do this best are those where everyone from the CEO to the most junior member of staff is involved and committed to it.”
Owners/managers are critical to create a more sustainable firm. They need to provide the resources and strategic leadership. A purely bottom-up approach is unlikely to succeed.

Green Teams and Sustainability Champions
"In my view the successful companies of the future will be those that integrate business and employees' personal values. The best people want to do work that contributes to society with a company whose values they share, where their actions count and their views matter."

Jeroen van der Veer, Committee of Managing Directors (Shell)
Aligning Business and Employee Values

- Embed sustainability into all job roles
- Communicate the core message
  - Induction
  - Ongoing training
  - Notice boards and newsletters
  - Walk the talk
- Applying what has been learnt at home as well as at work
Communicate

- The sustainability message has to be clear, consistent and regularly communicated

- Communication is a two way process: Set up a suggestion system
Training

- Training not only provides guidance on what to do, but also raises awareness.
- Opportunities to gain environmental knowledge are often regarded as a job benefit.
- The core business values/mission should be explained to staff in a formal induction process.
It is important to incentivise engagement and commitment.

- If sales teams meet sales targets why shouldn’t green teams meet sustainability targets?

Epstein and Roy (1997): environmental performance should be incorporated into the overall performance evaluation system.
Summary

- Make change a priority
  - Sustainability cannot be an add-on, it needs to be embedded in all aspects of the organisation.
- Engage everyone
  - Involve, Communicate, Incentivise, Train
- And finally...
A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step...
Further information:

- Green Hotelier
  - [www.greenhotelier.org](http://www.greenhotelier.org)
- Responsible Hospitality Partnership
  - [www.rhpltd.net](http://www.rhpltd.net)
- The Travel Foundation
  - [www.thetravelfoundation.org](http://www.thetravelfoundation.org)
- International Centre for Responsible Tourism
  - [www.icrtourism.org](http://www.icrtourism.org)
- Hawkins and Bohdanowicz (2011)
  Responsible Hospitality: Theory and Practice