Green Impact

GREEN TEAMS

Engaging Employees in Sustainability

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GREEN TEAMS:
Engaging Employees in Sustainability

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Green teams are self-organized, grassroots and cross-functional groups of employees who voluntarily come together to educate, inspire and empower employees around sustainability. They identify and implement specific solutions to help their organization operate in a more environmentally sustainable fashion. Most green teams initially focus on greening operations at the office, addressing such issues as recycling in the office, composting food waste, reducing the use of disposable take-out containers and eliminating plastic water bottles.

This focus on operations is evolving and some green teams are beginning to focus their efforts on integrating sustainability into employees' personal lives, while others are aligning their efforts to support broader corporate sustainability objectives.

The business value of integrating sustainability into these three levels includes: cost savings by integrating energy efficiency into the workplace and products and services; attracting and retaining the best and brightest talent who want to work for companies with an authentic green commitment; and increased market share and revenues resulting from a stronger brand and new, innovative green products and services.

This report provides a summary of the emerging trends and outlines 10 best practices for green teams:

- Start with the visible and tangible: focus on internal operations
- Get senior management involved, but don't lose the grassroots energy
- Engage employees to capture ideas
- Communicate and share best practices
- Engage employees with their bellies: The low carbon diet campaign
- Engage employees in their personal lives
- Engage customers to be part of the solution
- Use art to raise awareness
- Create a toolkit to support and guide green teams
- Align green teams with corporate sustainability goals

It is a resource for companies and organizations just getting started and for those who want to take their existing program to its next level. It is based on interviews with green team leaders, as well as a review of the latest literature and reports on employee engagement and green teams.

If you need additional assistance in developing an employee engagement strategy or implementing a new green initiative, please contact Green Impact. You can learn more about us at www.greenimpact.com and at our blog Shades of Green.

INTRODUCTION

Keeping employees engaged, happy and productive has always been a priority for leading companies and organizations.

Today, as green becomes more mainstream, a growing number of employees want to work for a company committed to sustainability and seek a work setting where the green practices they value at home are being implemented at the office.

In a survey, commissioned by *National Geographic* magazine in February, 2008, more than 80 percent of U.S. workers polled said they believe it is important to work for a company or organization that makes the environment a top priority. In 2009, many graduating Harvard MBAs signed an "MBA oath" showing their interest in working for companies that "strive to create sustainable economic, social and environmental prosperity worldwide."

Green teams—self-organized, grassroots and cross-functional groups of employees who voluntarily come together to educate and build awareness about sustainability issues and to implement programs that encourage employees to take action—are increasing in popularity as a tool for both keeping employees engaged and showing your commitment to sustainability.

Most green teams initially focus on greening operations at the office. This focus on operations is evolving and some green teams are beginning to focus their efforts on integrating sustainability into employees' personal lives, while others are aligning their efforts to support broader corporate sustainability objectives.

This paper provides an overview of some of the best practices companies are using to support and guide green teams, without squashing their grassroots passion and energy. It is divided into four key sections:

- Making the business case for green teams;
- Getting started;
- Four emerging trends; and
- Green team best practices.

MAKING THE BUSINESS CASE FOR GREEN TEAMS

One of the key challenges consistently raised is making the business case for investing resources to support green teams. Companies are just beginning to quantify the benefits from green teams, therefore at this point, the business case is more intuitive and anecdotal in nature.

Based on a review of case studies and interviews with green team leaders, the business value of green teams includes:

- **Cost savings**: Carrie Freeman, a Corporate Sustainability Strategist at Intel, commented, "When it comes to looking at ways to reduce our footprint, we very much see a direct correlation between reducing our costs and engaging our employees." Be it changing light bulbs, turning off the lights or getting your employees to innovate greener solutions in their jobs, engaging your employees to identify easy, low cost efficiency initiatives can result in significant cost savings. For example, Intercontinental Hotels invested $400,000 to change light bulbs on their properties and saved $1.2 million over four months.
- **Attract/retain best talent:** A green team, when part of a broader sustainability strategy, can give employees an outlet for their personal interests, help raise moral, improve loyalty and help attract and retain the best and brightest talent, who are attracted to companies with an authentic green commitment. Losing and replacing a good employee costs companies between 70% and 200% of an employee's annual salary, according to *Engaged!*, a new book on employee engagement. And when the economy begins to heat up, the best talent may be looking for greener pastures. Libby Reder, Head of Environmental Initiatives at eBay, believes their Green Team is an important reason why some employees stay at eBay, and according to their recruiters, it also helps them attract the best talent.
- **Strengthen brand and increase market share:** Companies can bolster their brand and potentially increase market share by walking the talk and supporting green teams as a strategy for getting their employees and customers behind sustainability. They can also use employees to identify new opportunities to improve their practices and achieve their sustainability goals. "The engaged workforce will find more opportunities to get lean and identify more opportunities to innovate and create products and services that lower customers' environmental impacts. All of this work will improve the top and bottom lines," comments sustainable business expert Andrew Winston, in his recent book *Green Recovery*.

The National Environmental Education Foundation's (NEEF) recent report *The Engaged Organization: Corporate Employee Environmental Education Survey and Case Study Findings* stresses, "By engaging employees, companies can spark innovative changes in everyday business processes that save money and reduce environmental and social impacts while also inspiring employees to make sustainable choices at home and in their communities."

FIGURE 1: BUSINESS CASE FOR GREEN TEAMS

According to a case study by BSR on Intel's green teams, "It may seem like a distraction in these times of financial instability to focus on employees' passion for sustainability, but efforts toward employee engagement will strengthen a company's employee base—which will be a crucial element in recovering from the recession. And maintaining employee loyalty and high productivity will help companies position themselves for success as the economy revives."

According to eBay's volunteer Green Team leader in Omaha, "Having a Green Team gives people something to believe in; something that is a tangible, visible representation that we are a company that cares."

GETTING STARTED

A green team often starts off with a few passionate employees going to HR and creating a green employee network or club. They go through a company's formal process to charter a team and give the group an official status within a company. These groups typically are not linked to corporate sustainability priorities and self-organize to work on issues they are interested in. Funding and executive support can come from a combination of facilities, the corporate sustainability officer (CSO), environmental health and safety (EHS), human resources (HR) or the corporate foundation.

Another mechanism for creating a green team is for the CSO or EHS department to formally sponsor a team and act as a hub by providing priorities, structure and resources. Leading companies are supporting their green teams by providing Web 2.0 tools to encourage communications and dialogue, convening the teams to share best practices, creating tool kits to get them started and training them on how to be sustainability change agents.

Some companies have dedicated paid staff to support their green team, while others have a voluntary leader. In some cases, the volunteer leader is on the corporate social responsibility (CSR) team.

A hybrid structure is evolving where a "corporate green team" is created to bring representatives from key departments together to help implement and support strategic corporate sustainability initiatives. They also act a cross-functional umbrella group to screen ideas that are suggested by green teams, identify resources to support new initiatives and help to link green team activities with corporate sustainability objectives.

FOUR EMERGING TRENDS

Four key trends emerge as one reviews the best practices of existing green teams:

- **Focus on internal operations**: Many green teams initially focus on ways to improve internal operations, addressing such issues as energy and water use, recycling in the office, composting food waste, reducing the use of disposable take-out containers and eliminating plastic water bottles, without a formal link to corporate CSR priorities.

- **Reduce employee footprint at home:** Some companies, such as Wal-Mart, have focused on providing employees tools and resources for being more sustainable in their own lives. Other companies such as Hewlett Packard, Genentech and Yahoo! provide resources and tips for employees to be greener at home. The theory here is that if you can get employees excited and engaged in their personal lives, it will translate into bringing a sustainability lens to their day-to-day work.

FIGURE 2: FOUR EMERGING GREEN TEAM TRENDS

- **Bring consumers into the equation:** A few companies, including eBay and Intuit, are linking their consumers to green practices and helping them reduce their footprints, strengthening relationships with customers.
- **Link to corporate sustainability goals**: Larger companies, such as Intel, Genentech, eBay and Yahoo!, are working to maintain the grassroots energy of green teams, while at the same time linking their efforts to broader corporate sustainability goals. In addition to their informal green teams, Intel has created three Sustainability Action Teams to help engage employees on key corporate sustainability objectives, such as reducing energy consumption. And while the informal teams still have the latitude to pursue their interests, they are encouraged to help educate employees and raise awareness on key strategic issues.

BEST PRACTICES

Based on a review of existing literature and interviews, Table 1 summarizes a range of practices that are used most often by green teams and Appendix A highlights the best practices and lesson learned from specific companies. The 10 most innovative best practices are detailed below.

Start With the Visible and Tangible: Focus on Internal Operations

Some argue that small changes in the workplace, such as eliminating water bottles, are trivial, compared to corporate initiatives that focus on more strategic issues. Kevin Moss, Head of Corporate Social Responsibility at BT Americas disagrees.

At BSR 2009 recently he stressed, "Allow the trivial things to happen." He used to think it was a waste of time to have staff focus on issues like eliminating paper cups and water bottles, but he now realizes that for many employees, these small actions are important because they are visible and tangible.

TABLE 1: BEST PRACTICES FOR GREEN TEAMS

Getting Started

- Secure a commitment to action from senior management
- Build a cross-functional core group
- Get input from employees on potential projects–focus on visible and tangible issues
- Develop a proposal for senior management–make the business case for the project

Educate/Raise Awareness

- Guest speakers/speaker series
- Movie nights focusing on sustainability topics
- Annual eco-party/fair
- Contests and friendly competitions
- Celebrate success
- Recognize and reward participation (contributions to non-profits, fun green prizes, recognize in newsletter)
- Employee education/training
- Highlight best practices in the newsletter
- Web 2.0 tools: green team web sites, blogs, discussion forums, intranet, Twitter
- Host a green vendor fair

Implement Programs/Campaigns

- Reduce carbon footprint with web-based activism (i.e., Carbonrally)
- Work with IT to change printing defaults to duplex printing
- Replace bottled water with filtered-water systems
- Community supported agriculture (CSA)
- Food composting program
- Low carbon diet campaign
- Start a community garden
- Enterprise-wide use of compostable utensils, cups, and plates in the cafeteria
- Identify commute and alternative transportation programs
- E-waste recycling campaign
- Provide customers tools and resources for going green
- Personal Sustainability Projects (PSPs)
- Chuck-the-cup campaign (reduce use of paper cups)
- Energy and water consumption programs
- Waste reduction and recycling programs
- Volunteerism and charitable giving
- Host Bike to Work Day/Week events
- Choose native vegetation that requires less water, fertilizers and pesticides

Link to Corporate Sustainability Strategy

- Create a cross-functional senior level umbrella group
- Link compensation to attaining sustainability goals
- Create a paid position to guide the green teams

Below are a few detailed case studies of how leading companies are greening their operations. To learn more about best practices, Table 2 at the end of this section identifies some of the most recent and relevant web-based resources on green teams, including some great resources available on www.greenbiz.com.

Intel

Intel, with over 80,000 employees at 300 facilities, has 7 or 8 informal sanctioned employee green teams. Carrie Freeman, a Corporate Sustainability Strategist with Intel's Corporate Sustainability Group, spends part of her time supporting the green teams to be more effective.

Some of them are more aligned with business objectives, while others focus on employee awareness and education. Most of them are responsible for doing site events and educating employees on a range of sustainability issues; funding is provided on a case-by-case basis.

Intel's green team helped launch a program that offers Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) programs to employees, allowing them to easily access locally grown food. They offer speakers and educational forums, composting in cafeterias and are piloting Carbonrally, a web-based activism platform that challenges users to reduce their personal carbon footprints. Participating employees will be able to make individual pledges for reduction in their work and office environments, helping Intel meet its greenhouse gas reduction goals.

Genentech: Green Genes

At Genentech, the green team is aptly called Green Genes. They focus on educating and empowering employees to be more sustainable at work and at home. They sponsor monthly guest speakers, hold movie nights focusing on sustainability issues and host an annual eco-party.

A recent post on Triple Pundit details some of the best practices implemented by Green Genes, including:

- Implementation of composting at the employee cafeteria, which today diverts over 2,000 tons per year from landfills;
- Creation of an Environmental Sustainability Team, with representatives from key departments, to help connect sustainability initiatives directly to corporate leadership;
- A web-based forum where any employee can suggest sustainability ideas;
- Reduced use of bottled water, saving $200,000/year by using filtered water machines and reusable containers; and
- Hosting an Annual Eco Fair. "The Eco Fair is a way of communicating what our sustainability program is at Genentech," says Katie Excoffier, Green Genes leader.

The Eco Fair is a large annual event, thrown on Genentech's South San Francisco campus. Genentech provides tables detailing their own sustainability activities, and the Green Genes team hosts booths with advice on how employees can green both their work environments and personal lives, through things like a water taste test to discourage bottled water use and information on composting, low-flush toilets, solar panels and improving home energy use. Green Genes also invites vendors to show off their sustainable products and services, getting solar providers, electric car companies and toilet manufacturers to donate product and offer special deals to Genentech employees.

eBay

A few dedicated employees who were committed to sustainability and wanted a mechanism to make eBay a greener company started eBay's Green Team effort. Without the structure of a formal corporate program at the outset, a successful grassroots and de-centralized Green Team has grown from 40 employees in 2007 to over 2,300 employees in 23 countries today.

They organize volunteer projects, support state and federal environmental legislation and lead a variety of local activities, including:

- Banning water bottles on campus;
- Engaging employees in a low carbon diet campaign, in partnership with Bon Appétit Management Company;
- Planting a community gardens;
- Starting CSA programs;
- Hosting Earth Day, Bike to Work Week and
- Holding an electronics recycling events.

The team has also been the catalyst behind a number of larger scale projects, like the construction of a LEED gold certified green building in San Jose and the city's largest commercial solar installation. One of the Green Team members helped make the business case for the solar roof installation.

While still grassroots in nature, today, eBay's Green Team has support from a dedicated staff, a small budget to fund local activities and a corporate intranet site that enables local teams to share ideas and best practices and provides information on green events and tips for going green at the office, on the road and at home. The team also enjoys support from senior management, including CEO John Donahoe, who is committed to making sustainability a major thrust at eBay.

Yahoo!

Christina Page, Director of Climate and Energy Strategy at Yahoo!, acknowledges that while making their data centers more efficient is a key focus of their corporate strategy, eliminating paper cups and other visible and tangible actions are an important gateway to building awareness of sustainability. The Green Teams "are a chance to match passions with specific interests," explains Page.

She stressed it is important to help employees build green skills and develop expertise. Some of the Yahoo!'s staff attended the Sustainability Change Agent training offered by Sustainable Silicon Valley. "Educated and engaged employees are happy, healthy and inspired employees. It is a win-win."

At Yahoo! Emily Poague, a senior marketing manager, voluntarily took on the role of employee green team group leader. They do not have a paid position to oversee and support the green team. Their initial efforts have been more ad hoc, focused on green solutions in the work place. About 350 employees are part of their Yahoo! green group with 10 to 20 people acting as champions for specific projects, including:

- A speaker series;
- Chuck the Paper Cup, a campaign to reduce paper cup use;
- A low carbon diet campaign;
- Planting community gardens;
- Organizing a CSA program; and
- Implementing an e-waste recycling campaign.

In 2008, the green team decided they were interested in making energy consumption more visible at Yahoo! As a result, it developed the Yahoo! Green Screen, a touch screen, energy-monitoring system at its Sunnyvale headquarters. This system helps employees understand Yahoo!'s overall energy usage by tracking energy consumption building by building at their Sunnyvale headquarters and displaying the results in a user-friendly dashboard.

Poague is currently exploring how to move away from ad hoc projects to initiatives that support the broader corporate sustainability goals.

TABLE 2: RESOURCES FOR LEARNING MORE

- Building an Organizational Culture of Sustainability
- Corporate Green Teams: A New Social Trend at Work
- Crossing the Green Divide
- Corporate Green Teams: A New Social Trend at Work
- Corporate Green Teams: Sustainable Business from the Bottom Up
- eBay Green Team web site
- Employee Engagement for Sustainability: A Survey of Emerging Best Practices at 30 Large Global Organizations
- Employee Transportation Coordinator Handbook
- The Engaged Organization
- Green Genes at Genentech
- How Intel Engages Employees in Sustainability
- How to Build a Green Team: The First Step to Sustainability
- How to Start an Employee Commute-Benefits Program in 10 Easy Steps
- Leading From the Middle: The Power of the Green Champion
- Making Your Impact at Work
- The Role of Human Resource Management in Corporate Social Responsibility
- Sustainable Silicon Valley Green Team page
- Ten Keys for Educating and Engaging Employees
- Top Strategies for Getting Employees Behind Sustainability
- Three Tips for Engaging Employees in Sustainability

Get Senior Management Involved, But Don't Lose the Grassroots Energy

We often hear that top-down vision and commitment is critical for the success of sustainability programs. While many stress the importance of senior management support and involvement, others think it is important to maintain the decentralized, grassroots flavor of green teams so employees can modify and adjust based on local needs.

Although the eBay Green Team has grown, they have avoided constraining the teams with too much formal process, recognizing that environmental issues and employee interests often vary by location. The Green Team has sub-groups that are organized by geographic site and overall coordination and support comes from dedicated resources in the Global Communications Department.

The key seems to be to provide tools, resources and best practices to harness and support the green team, without squashing their grassroots spirit, energy and innovation with too much structure and hierarchy.

Page from Yahoo! agrees, "It helps to have a consistent corporate policy and buy-in from the executive level." But, she stresses, "It is also important to have green teams at the grassroots level to provide tangible, visible, creative and viral ways to create behavior changes in the workplace. "

Engage Employees to Capture Ideas

An important characteristic of green teams is that the ideas come from the bottom-up. If there is corporate guidance on strategic issues to focus on, for example to reduce waste or energy use, it is important that the on-the-ground teams have the ability to propose their own initiatives.

Companies like Genentech, Yahoo! and eBay all have web-based tools that allow employees to suggest ideas on how to make their company more sustainable. eBay recently held a Big Green Idea contest, asking employees to submit their best green ideas and suggestions through a submission form on the company's intranet. They received over 600 ideas!

Most companies with these forums have experienced an outpouring of suggestions. The bigger challenge is setting up a user-friendly and quick process for screening ideas and identifying the most viable ones.

One option for this process includes creating sub-groups that focus on key issue areas. For example, at Genentech, the green team is divided into 6 sub-groups that focus on specific issues such as recycling, transportation, energy, Web, waste and water.

Employees can submit their ideas online and suggestions are forwarded to the appropriate sub-group. Once screened by the appropriate sub-group, the concept is forwarded onto the Environmental Sustainability Team, a corporate group that includes senior level representatives from key departments, for final approval. This structure helps connect the final ideas to the department heads, which can provide leadership and resources to implement a new program.

At eBay, they have created a cross-functional Sustainability Steering Committee that includes senior leaders from key departments, including facilities, procurement and IT. After the Green Team screens

employee suggestions, this core team helps to prioritize and act on those ideas.

Communicate and Share Best Practices

Many companies are harnessing Web 2.0 tools (interactive web sites, blogs, discussion boards and Twitter) to raise awareness of environmental issues and support green teams.

Intel has created a new portal, Green.Intel, to support interaction among employees for sharing best practices or getting guidance on implementing ideas. They also have a communications platform that focuses on Intel's environmental efforts, with updates from the CSR and operations team, videos on different Intel programs, an internal blog and a discussion forum open to all employees.

eBay likewise has created an intranet site that offers their Green Team members information on green events and best practices for the office, travel and home. They also recently held a Global Green Team Leader Summit, where Green Team leaders from across the company gathered to share best practices and explore common interests and issues. In addition, this venue provided eBay the opportunity to share corporate level priorities, such as their recent commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

They also recently launched a new public site, ebay.com/greenteam, focused on smarter, greener choices that buyers and sellers can make both on eBay and off.

Engage Employees With Their Bellies: The Low Carbon Diet Campaign

One of the employee engagement strategies gaining traction is sustainable food service. Companies such as eBay, Intel and Yahoo! are all working with Bon Appétit Management Company to lower the carbon footprint of their food and bring more sustainable food choices to their employees.

Page from Yahoo! explains, "Something we love about them (Bon Appétit) is their commitment to the sustainability of food and the fact that they are always tinkering with new ideas to source food more sustainably and to raise employee awareness. "

While bringing more sustainable food is often a corporate decision, not linked to the green teams, Bon Appétit has partnered with several green teams to launch a low carbon diet campaign, raise awareness around the carbon footprint of food choices, reduce disposable take-out containers and create an on-site CSA program.

"I can't say enough great things about Bon Appétit," says Freeman from Intel. "They are very willing to do different things based on employee interest."

Engage Employees in Their Personal Lives

There is a growing trend to engage employees on multiple levels, both at work and at home. Wal-Mart, Hewlett Packard, eBay, Deloitte and Genentech all provide tools and resources to help employees live a more sustainable personal life, but participation is not mandated.

Specific strategies range from providing energy kits to reduce their personal carbon footprint at home to offering incentives for biking to work to offering advice and special vendor deals to asking employees to

commit to personal sustainability practices.

The theory is if you can get employees engaged and excited about being greener in their personal lives, they will bring this excitement and energy to their jobs as well.

Wal-Mart's Personal Sustainability Project (PSP) is an often-cited model of engaging employees in their lives and at home. As part of Wal-Mart's commitment to sustainability, the program encourages associates to adopt habits that positively impact the environment, their communities and their own personal health and well being. PSPs can be anything from pledging to recycle, to eating healthier or getting outdoors more.

While focusing on associates personal lives, the program has increased sustainable thinking on the job. One Wal-Mart employee noticed lights on around the clock in the break room. He suggested to the energy division that they remove the lights, saving the company nearly $1 million in electricity bills every year!

AngelPoints, a provider of enterprise software solutions for employee engagement, has recently partnered with Saatchi & Saatchi S, the sustainability strategy firm that helped Wal-Mart create their PSP program, to create a new web-based platform to help engage employees in sustainability and to track their progress across a number of impact categories, such as reducing your carbon footprint, improving health and wellness, reducing waste and connecting with others.

"The idea of this is to help facilitate green teams, build awareness and get commitments from employees toward greater sustainability," explains Andrew Mercy, CEO of AngelPoints.

Engage Customers to be Part of the Solution

A few companies, including eBay, Yahoo! and Intuit, are linking their consumers to green practices and helping them reduce their footprints.

As eBay has grown, they realized the most powerful thing they could do as a company would be to invite their consumers into the equation. Many of their customers have green values—when they opened the eBay Green Team (ebay.com/greenteam) to the public earlier this year, 40,000 people signed up over night. The Green Team, along with their corporate commitment to sustainability, has strengthened relationships with their customers and helped them achieve an authentic green identity in the marketplace.

In just six weeks, 100,000 people became members of the eBay Green Team.

Intuit reaches millions of small businesses with its software programs. As part of their sustainability strategy, they have made a commitment to helping their customers be more sustainable. They developed Green Snapshot, a new free tool to help small businesses quickly and easily estimate a company's carbon footprint and identify recommended actions to shrink it, saving customers money in the process.

Yahoo! makes green relevant to its consumers through Yahoo! for Good, a campaign that offers tips and

resources for going green, and Yahoo! Green, one of the most popular environmental sites on the Web.

Use Art to Raise Awareness

At Yahoo!, "Chuck the Cup" Day was held at four of their campuses to raise awareness about the environmental impact of using paper cups and highlight the things employees can do to create a more sustainable workplace. The project is the brainchild of Kai Haley, a Yahoo! Green Team member and the "Andy Goldsworthy " of trash. She calculated how many paper cups are consumed every 15 minutes on Yahoo!'s main campus and created hexagon globes out of thrown away cups.

Along with providing incentives to encourage employees to bring their own mug, Yahoo! put the attention-getting sculptures that Kai created on their main lawn, each of them representing the number of coffee cups (over 100) used in 15 minutes at their headquarters.

One of eBay's local Green Teams was determined to phase bottled water out of their office. Prior to installing filters and chillers and removing water bottles from break rooms, they invited employees' children to participate in a poster contest with the theme "what does water mean to you?" Winning posters were displayed around the office, along with facts and statistics to educate employees on the environmental impact of bottled water production and consumption. The team credits the poster campaign with increasing awareness and support for the project and allowing for a successful transition.

Create a Toolkit to Support and Guide Green Teams

Deloitte's green program includes a "Greening Toolkit." The kit, given to each office, includes 37 suggested best practices and greening projects, focused on energy consumption, paper consumption, daily product consumption, waste reduction, recycling and travel. The program is monitored through a "Greening the Dot" Web site, which charts the number of toolkit projects that have been completed, kicking up competition between office locations. In the first six months, over half of the workforce engaged in the implementation of over a thousand greening projects across nearly 100 offices, and reducing energy, water, paper use and travel and increasing recycling.

Align Green Teams with Corporate Sustainability Goals

Traditional green teams often have little or no involvement in the company's official sustainability efforts. Some companies are taking green teams to the next level by linking them to corporate sustainability goals.

One way to link corporate sustainability goals to green team activities is to have a staff person from the corporate sustainability program lead the green team, providing synergy between the corporate objectives and the green team programs. Both Genentech and Intel use this model.

Other strategies to help link green teams to corporate sustainability goals include:

- Create a paid in-house position to oversee the green team or hire a consultant to help;
- Integrate sustainability metrics into employees' performance goals;
- Link bonuses/compensation to sustainability goals;
- Create a senior-level, cross-functional team that brings department heads from key departments together to link sustainability initiatives to green team initiatives;
- Train employees to understand which sustainability issues are important to the business; and
- Set the context and help employees understand that their small action can make a difference. For example, how changing travel habits can make a big impact in a company's carbon footprint.

In order to encourage companywide support for increased environmental performance, Intel has tied a component of every employee's bonus to the company's environmental performance. This year the bonus is tied in part to reducing their carbon footprint. And corporate services, IT and corporate affairs all have sustainability goals integrated into their strategic objectives.

Intel found that their green teams were active enough that it made sense to have a corporate convening structure to help align their activities with corporate initiatives. "We aren't trying to dictate everything that they do, because so much of what is important to them is what is important at their locale," explains Freeman.

"We didn't want to hamper the green team efforts, but we also wanted some alignment with our corporate initiatives," she continues.

They have established several programs to engage employees in meeting the company's corporate sustainability goals. The Sustainability Action Teams are corporate driven groups with representation across different business units around the world, from corporate services, IT and corporate affairs. The purpose of the Sustainability Action Teams, "Is to make sure there is alignment with our overall employee engagement efforts," according to Freeman.

The teams still have the latitude to focus issues of interest, such as planting on-site organic gardens or reducing shopping bag use, but for 2009 they also were asked to help incorporate awareness, communication and education on reducing office energy use, providing some alignment with their carbon reduction goal.

Winston in *Green Recovery* stresses that getting employees to green your actual business is where the greatest value lies. "Personal Sustainability Projects (PSPs) can give people a fuller understanding of their footprints as workers, family members, and people. But imagine what it could mean to the business to turn that energy inward."

He challenges companies to, "Ask your employees to focus team efforts on innovating to reduce energy use or to design new products that satisfy green-minded customers. Green teams, if used right, can

morph from mainly engagement tools to something even more fundamentally valuable to the business."

Green teams can be a great ally and resource for creating excitement around new green ways of doing business.

CONCLUSION

Engaging employees is more art than science, very dependent on a company's culture and governance style. This is not easy territory with a simple formula for success. Harnessing the power of green teams and aligning their efforts with corporate goals is a learning edge for most companies.

While the best practices outlined above provide ideas for getting started, challenges do exist. Some of the key challenges a company might face as they dive into green teams include:

- **Metrics:** It is critical to define what success looks like and to identify which metrics to track. However, it is not always easy to gather data on progress. Software tools are becoming more readily available to help green teams track results.
- **Engaging business units:** A key challenge is how to engage business units and the product focused part of a company, if they are not interested in sustainability issues. It is important to articulate the business case in terms that are meaningful to them.
- **Strategic versus grassroots**: Companies needs to decide if it makes more sense to link employee activities to the corporate strategy or give them the flexibility to address the issues they care about at individual locations.
- **Volunteer or paid time**: Do employees implement activities on their own time or is it part of their job? In these strained economic times, what is the best way to reassure employees that they will not be penalized for participating in a green team?
- **Corporate structure without losing the grassroots passion:** Another challenge is how to manage the tension between providing enough structure to link green team activities to a corporate strategy, without losing their grassroots energy, creativity and passion.

Deborah Fleischer is founder and president of Green Impact, a strategic environmental consulting practice that helps companies engage employees, strengthen relationships with stakeholders, launch profitable green initiatives and communicate about their successes and challenges. She is a LEED AP with over 20-years of direct experience working on sustainability-related challenges in both the public and private sectors. She brings deep expertise in sustainability strategy, stakeholder engagement, program development and written communications. Her background includes a Master in Environmental Studies from Yale University and a Master in Public Administration from Harvard.

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APPENDIX A:
BEST PRACTICES AND LESSONS LEARNED ON EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

Company	Best Practices	Leadership	Focus	Lessons Learned
Deloitte	▪ Green Footprint Registry ▪ Green Dot Scorecard ▪ Greening Toolkit, 6 categories: energy consumption, paper consumption, daily product consumption, waste reduction and recycling, travel and awareness building	▪ Corporate Responsibility Officer ▪ Deloitte Green Council	▪ Work and personal lives	▪ Tap into the existing passion of your people ▪ Embrace an opt-in/voluntary program
eBay	▪ Public green team web site ▪ Intranet ▪ Carbonrally ▪ Local volunteer projects ▪ Support state environmental legislation ▪ CSAs ▪ Bike to Work Week ▪ Contests to gather ideas ▪ Low Carbon Diet	▪ Sub-teams are organized by geographic site, and central coordination comes from a few dedicated resources in Global Communications Department ▪ Sustainability Steering Committee	▪ Work and personal lives	▪ Talk to peers ▪ Find allies ▪ Consider low-hanging fruit ▪ Seek executive-level support ▪ Build a cross-functional core team ▪ Develop a plan that outlines key tasks, metrics, deliverables, project benefits
Genentech	▪ Educate on sustainability at work and home ▪ Annual Eco Fair ▪ Special vendor deals to employees ▪ Lunch and learn sessions ▪ Reduce bottled water use ▪ Compost food waste	▪ Environmental Health and Safety Sponsor ▪ Green Genes Leader ▪ 6 sub-teams: Recycling, Transportation, Energy, Web Site, Waste, Water ▪ Environmental Sustainability Team	▪ Work and personal lives	▪ Balance top-down support with need to maintain grassroots energy and passion

Company	Best Practices	Leadership	Focus	Lessons Learned
Intel	▪ Green intranet portal ▪ Employee volunteer program to support CSR priorities ▪ CSA ▪ Partnership with Carbonrally ▪ Link to compensation	▪ Corporate Sustainability Group ▪ Sustainability Action Teams	▪ Work	▪ Find a way to link green teams to corporate sustainability strategy
Stonyfield	▪ Hiring process ▪ Employee-led green teams ▪ Multi-departmental leadership ▪ Performance incentives ▪ Mixed-media communications ▪ Link to job performance	▪ MAP team employees	▪ Work	▪ Make sustainability relevant to job performance ▪ Focus on key areas and set improvement goals
Wal-Mart	▪ Personal Sustainability Project (PSP)–personal, voluntary commitments ▪ Multi-departmental leadership ▪ Integrate sustainability into performance evaluations	▪ Sustainability office	▪ Personal lives	▪ Make outreach personal and voluntary ▪ Engage employees in setting goals
Yahoo!	▪ Speaker series ▪ Paper cup campaign ▪ E-waste recycling campaign ▪ Low Carbon Diet ▪ Awareness of energy consumption	▪ Director of Sustainability	▪ Work and personal lives ▪ Consumers	▪ Find a way to align with overall corporate strategy

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