

CONNECT, ENCOURAGE

In the second of our five-part series 'As If People Matter', **Michael Townsend** explains how engaging people is vital in making a successful and lasting transition towards sustainable business and delivering tangible business benefits

"The biggest challenge in sustainability is engaging people and delivering the necessary behavioural change. This is all about how to turn a moment into a movement."

Cristina Amorim
Vice President of Global Citizenship,
Life Technologies

Last year was an incredible year for change. From the Arab Spring to the Occupy Movement, people around the world have demonstrated the combined strength of their feelings, as they try and influence a better world. It is at once amazing and inspiring to see how people can come together and strive towards positive change for the greater good.

And yet it is also people that present one of the greatest barriers to change, too. Perhaps none more so than the powerful vested interests, as they seek to retain the status quo. We see on many occasions how difficult it is to change our big picture in genuine pursuit of a sustainable and low carbon world, evidenced by the continuing saga of the climate change deal – the latest instalment played out so predictably in Durban. Machiavelli was right, "the innovator has for enemies all those who have done well under the old conditions and only lukewarm defenders in those who may do well under the new."

But change can also be difficult at an individual level, too. Yes, we like the idea of going green, but are we really ready to make the sacrifices that are necessary? Are we really ready to change our habits, our daily routine and our way of life? In a 2010 survey by Accenture,

93% of CEOs claimed that sustainability was important to the future success of their businesses, while admitting that they universally struggled to integrate sustainability into their day-to-day operations. Real change is hard.

One of the key learning points from the Global Research Project is that people factors and behavioural change are critical, but often over-looked or under-valued factors within any sustainable business change programme. Of course, one can find many examples of community-based initiatives, volunteer programmes, and of commitments to equality and diversity, but it is less common to find companies that engage with their people right at the heart of business change, and even more rare to find companies that truly capture the benefits from doing so.

Engaging with people and influencing the right behaviour is a vital factor underpinning the successful deployment and lasting change. Whether directors, employees, suppliers, customers or investors, we all need to start thinking and acting more sustainably, if we are to truly deliver sustainable business success.

One of the key recommendations arising from the Sky Future Leaders Study put improved employee engagement right at the top of its Five Point Plan, in order to create a culture that thinks sustainably. Two key benefits flow from this: firstly, better-informed and engaged employees are more likely to help implement sustainability policies and make them work; and secondly, that employees will have new ideas for change that businesses will be able to tap into. Simple.

Let us consider two contrasting approaches to people engagement within sustainable busi-



ness change programmes; one about how to achieve employee buy-in to delivering a new, more sustainable way of working in a small company, and another case looking at how to get people engaged in thinking and acting more sustainably in a relatively large business. Both examples provide transferable lessons for many organisations.

Enabling people to change in support of beneficial business change was at the heart of Apollo Motor Group's radical shift towards a more sustainable business operation; in this case, very much focused on winning hearts and minds. Trevor Ferris, the MD of Eco Repair Systems (an ecological repair systems supplier to Apollo and the automotive industry), offered to come down to the workshop and engage with Apollo's workforce, not only to demonstrate how to use the new technologies, but also to show how the new approach would generate increased earnings for the repair technicians, as well as better returns for the business.



Trevor employed a highly 'visual' approach when appealing to the workforce; placing a large rubbish bin on the table, he proceeded to throw wads of cash into it, demonstrating where key elements of the total repair cost were being spent, under the old approach, and ultimately how little money was actually left for their wages. He then ran through the demonstration a second time, this time showing much they stood to gain by adopting the new approach.

Although this approach sent a powerful message to the workforce, it was not just a case of appealing to financial motivations; Trevor then moved on to demonstrate what the new process would mean to them in their daily jobs, how they could also develop their skills further, and deliver even more satisfying and high quality work. Quite simply, their jobs would become more enjoyable and more rewarding: a no-brainer. Once they were onside, Trevor could then go further, to demonstrate how to get the most out of their

new kit. As we have reported before, the new way of working has resulted in waste being reduced by 42%, energy and carbon emissions by 34%, while concurrently reducing overall costs and improving margins.

Life Technologies, a global biotechnology tools company, also offers a number of interesting insights. Life Technologies is now one of the broadest suppliers of biotech products in the world, with more than 50,000 products used by over 75,000 customers around the globe, with 11,000 employees, sales in excess of \$3.6B worldwide, and a presence in more than 160 countries.

The company has developed an impressive approach to integrating sustainability principles into its business, through what it calls Global Citizenship, delivered in practice through a robust and, practical but far-reaching Four-Phase Evolution Model. We will explain more about this model in a future article. Interestingly, one of the key underpinning initiatives behind its successful approach involved employee engagement; they asked the question "how do we help people understand that their individual contribution will make a difference?" In response, the Doing Good By Doing One Thing (DOT) campaign was born.

DOT is based on the proposition that there are endless possibilities for creating a better company and better world by doing good, and that one good act, multiplied by 10,000 people, can become a significant impact. The power of the approach is that it aligns with the company's overall strategy for Global Citizenship and it offers a simple, yet elegant approach to engaging with its employees. It translates the big idea of Global Citizenship into simple, repeated actions for all employees to engage with, known as DOTs.

The goal of the DOT movement is to connect with each other (connecting the DOTs), share actions and breakthroughs, while at the same time having fun, a feature that should not be underestimated in these challenging times! One simple point underpinning the approach is the recognition that there is no telling where the greatest ideas will come from. Everyone can, and does, add something. Ultimately this approach also helps to create a culture rich with new and diverse ideas on making life better and for helping the transition to a more sustainable world.

The approach was also developed in recognition that the changing world of climate change can sound big and intimidating, and can consequently leave people with the feeling that they are unable to make a difference. DOT simply allows people to start small and simple and build their impact and influence

over time. Each person can choose an action that is right for him or her, right now, rather than feeling overwhelmed. But how does it work?

Life Technologies has a simple four-step process:

Step 1, Choose your DOT: Think about what makes you happy; a DOT should not be a chore. Think about areas of life that are important: health & wellness, professional development, family & friends, and the environment one lives in. Where is there room to make life even better?

Step 2, Start Small: Decide on small, achievable steps that help make the improvements you want to see, e.g. eat organic veggies twice per week, print ten fewer sheets of paper each week, and so on. Make a list of these actions, and select perhaps three for a short-list.

Step 3, Select a Strong DOT: Perhaps using the 'RISE' filter to help you prioritise (Repeatable, Inspirational, Sustainable, Enjoyable).

"DOT is based on the proposition that there are endless possibilities for creating a better company and world"

Step 4. Do One Thing! Select your 'best fit' action, write it on a sticker, frame it, hang it on wall, or shout it from the rooftops!

The process also encourages people to help others, by sharing personal stories, through encouragement, offering challenge to people to think of new actions, and staying positive, rather than getting caught up in resistance. The idea is that voluntary actions will tend to stick, as they are formed through personal choice. Employee engagement may sound soft and fluffy, but make no mistake; it is an important enabler in support of serious business outcomes. Since Life Technologies started out on its journey in 2004, sustainability initiatives have delivered the combined impact of around \$57M savings to the bottom line. During this period sales have grown by 236%. Operational sustainability impacts improved energy use by 56%, water consumption reduced by 52%, and waste reduced by 40%. While the DOT Movement is one of its latest approaches, one can be sure that behind each successful initiative and each sustainable change lies people power!

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