

Communicating to Staff

As identified in the 'Involving Staff' factsheet, the value of encouraging participation and cooperation by staff and management in using materials and resources wisely should not be underestimated. Many barriers to change in sustainability are people issues rather than technical ones. Ongoing motivation and education are keys to the success of your environmental sustainability program.

Keeping staff involved in sustainability activities and raising individual awareness of environmental issues can generate real benefits:

- It encourages participation and environmental and social responsibility – the more support, the more effective your environment sustainability program / initiatives will be
- It helps dispel misconception that sustainability measures result in loss of amenity
- It boosts staff morale and pride – as people are made to feel part of a solution

What Do You Communicate and to Who?

Good communication is essential

If your Sustainability Action Plan is to succeed, communication with individuals, groups, the entire company and the public is an essential part of the task.

Locate your audience

Before communicating your sustainability activities, identify your audiences both inside and outside of your business. This will make the job of raising the awareness of the program much easier.

As an example; internal communications on reporting energy use usually takes place on a regular basis with:

- senior management
- department heads and budget controllers
- members of the implementation committee
- members of staff

A company chart is useful to identify who you need to report to, and to note what kind of report each person will require and how often.

External communications may take place with:

- regulatory authorities and other government agencies
- shareholders
- the local community and schools
- your customers
- the general public and industry groups

Who are my audiences?

Know your Staff Audience Well

After you have identified your target audiences, ask yourself 'What does this individual or group of people need or want to know and why?' Only when this information is established, can you plan the style and content of your communication strategy (e.g. letters, reports, memos, group discussions, debates, and problem-solving sessions).

A simple question to ask is 'What is the attention span of the target audience?' It is usually pretty short – especially when briefings are full of big words and technical jargon. Focus your message on the key information and try your best to use ordinary language to explain it. While developing the report information and format, work through a sample with a couple of key people in your target audience and encourage and accept constructive comments.

For example, a senior manager may want to know how environmental sustainability improves profits or enhances the company's competitiveness. A chart showing monthly *energy and cost* plotted against *consumption and cost* for the previous year can be used to compare with the current period.

Each business should develop a reporting process that reflects the needs of the organisation. Depending on the size and structure of your organisation you may choose to use a simplified version of the chart below. For example, in a small organisation the General Manager may perform the roles of the Production Area Managers while a senior staff member may adopt the role of the Environment Manger. The secret to success is to keep your reporting process simple and straightforward.

Who should receive reports from this information—guidelines only				
To whom	General Manager	Production Area Managers	Environment Manager	Staff/Major users
What to report	Summary against production + totals \$ (bulk) consumption greenhouse benchmarks	Summary against production + totals \$ (for area?) consumption greenhouse benchmarks	Detail consumption profiles/patterns trends other diagnostics	Summary overview/ savings (similar to GM?- simple format) waste saving tips for home and work
Why	Strategic planning Budgeting Staffing Resource allocation	Management Feedback to/from shop floor staff Control	Analysis Assessment Planning Management	Motivation General information Generate feedback
Format	Quarterly report, Annual report	Monthly reports, Staff presentation	Quarterly reports, Committee/Staff presentation	Feature article in staff newsletter Bulletin board notice

The general public will also want to know what your company is achieving with its sustainability initiatives. Consider the following to help raise your business's profile:

- articles in the local newspaper or daily press
- marketing brochures
- feature stories in trade journals or magazines
- entering environment awards
- community television or radio
- commercial media coverage
- sponsorships
- articles on your website

Try to give your story a human interest or environmental theme that will add weight to your communication. A good communicator will take time to understand particular audiences, and then motivate them with a range of relevant promotional ideas.

Ideally any stories that you broadcast, publish or circulate are an excellent opportunity to reward those in your organisation who have been instrumental in the program's success through naming and identifying individuals and their contributions. By saying publicly what difficulties they were up against, how they creatively worked around these obstacles and what results they got, you will add a personal touch to your publicity, make your story more interesting, provide inspiration to others and show the employees the recognition that they deserve.

Public acknowledgment provides your staff with one of the most valuable means of recognition and thanks they could ever want. There are very few opportunities in people's lives for their efforts to reap public acknowledgment and your employees will deeply value your thoughtful consideration in mentioning them. In turn, the staff loyalty and motivation you will incur through such measures will be substantial, measurable and long lasting.