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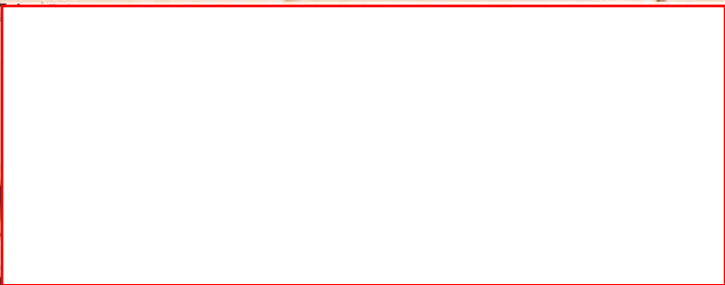
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Learning to go green



Training for Sustainability

Laying out a roadmap to green businesses and communities

By Tabitha Crawford

Every action has a reaction, and businesses today are facing increasing scrutiny and regulation when it comes to the impact of their actions on the environment and natural resources. It has become the expectation from customers, and society in general, that businesses make sustainability a top priority. "Going green" isn't a fad or a trend—it's a fundamental shift in the way we do business.

From the corner office to the field teams, residents to suppliers, true sustainability can be achieved only through a collective effort to reduce waste and energy use, use resources wisely (including financial resources), promote sustainable behaviors and business practices, and go green as a part of everyday life.

What does it mean to be sustainable? According to the Brundtland Commission (formerly the World Commission on Environment and Development), which was established by the United Nations in 1983, sustainable development is defined as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." What does it take to meet those needs? Resources—natural, human, and financial. Business leaders must consider the complex interaction among economic, social, and environmental forces as they strive for long-term sustainability.

According to Balfour Beatty, true corporate sustainability means being confident of survival and success over the long term. Resource depletion, energy security, a growing world population, and the expectations of our customers, investors, employees, and communities—these factors will continue to intensify and impact how we do business. "Respect for the natural world and the communities we serve requires think-

ing about the impacts of our decisions," says Bruce Robinson, president and CEO. "This means applying sustainability to small and large projects alike, at all stages."

A sustainability roadmap

Once a business has made the commitment to meeting economic, social, and environmental criteria for long-term sustainability, it is important to have a quantifiable approach in place to achieve those goals. One mistake corporations often make is kicking off their sustainability program with a big event and providing broad, "feel-good suggestions," then leaving the program to its own devices or a committee effort. While the intentions are there, this approach simply doesn't work. So what does work?

First, identify a lead team to orchestrate your organization's sustainability initiatives, and task the team with finding out what the company is already doing. Chances are you are already taking action in ways you may not recognize, both large and small. Next, look at what you're doing with fresh eyes and measure the gap between where you are and where you want—and need—to be.

After performing the initial baseline assessment and gap analysis, set definable, quantifiable goals. Be ambitious with those goals, keeping in mind the cross over between the markets, the communities, and the environment in which your business operates. At Balfour Beatty, sustainability goals and efforts all come back to three broad, intertwining themes:

- **Profitable markets**—creating and developing sustainable long-term relationships with customers, employees, and suppliers. This includes educating all stakeholders about



Photo by Michael Gliniski

Amber Humphries, Balfour Beatty LifeWorks Coordinator, teaches some of the youngest residents at Fort Stewart, Georgia, the benefits of recycling.

your own sustainability goals and learning about theirs so you can work in tandem toward achieving those goals. It is the responsibility of your company to teach outsiders what you're doing so they know you're committed to winning work. Being sustainable is good, but having a thriving business is better—markets will reward forward-thinking strategies and high-quality use of resources.

- **Healthy communities**—considering the positive contribution that can be made to the communities where we work. This means keeping employees, residents, and customers safe, healthy, satisfied, and engaged; relating your sustainability initiatives to your customers; employing locally; giving back to the community; and managing the supply chain to support sustainability.
- **Environmental limits**—enabling communities and individuals to meet their needs while limiting impact on the environment and using resources in a sustainable manner. Goals in this area center around climate change (reduce greenhouse gas emissions, find low-carbon solutions), minimizing waste and reducing water use, materials and resource use (identify recyclable items, source of materials, reduction), and ecology (preserving the habitat in which you do business).

Goals and actions

There can and should be crossover between your primary goals and the actions identified to achieve them. For example, working with supply-chain partners to identify areas to reduce waste and environmental impact is important for environmental, community, and financial reasons.

Supply specific, easy-to-follow actions and processes that are incorporated into individual key performance indicators

(KPIs) for all managers to create movement toward designated sustainability goals. Providing recommendations and examples should help people, not get in the way, so keep it simple and attainable, and always consider how you can help your employees understand the impact their actions have on overall sustainability goals.

Set guidelines—some mandatory, some voluntary—to get everyone started. By establishing measurable targets and specific timelines, the organization gives itself a tool by which to measure success and monitor progress. One approach is to tie sustainability plans to annual reporting, giving each leader specific goals and KPIs that are measured and reassessed at the end of a determined period. At Balfour Beatty, every company worldwide is held accountable for reducing waste by 50 percent, water use by 10 percent, and energy use by 10 percent by 2012—and that includes the properties we manage.

Track and monitor progress via data reporting along the way. This will help the lead team identify where the organization has succeeded and where there is room for improvement. It also allows best practices to be shared and adopted. Once certain goals are met, set new targets. Another best practice is to bring in an independent auditor to hold your organization accountable to the goals you have set for yourself. Have each project leader and employee provide data and specific updates on their efforts and achievements. In our case, URS and KPMG have been retained to audit our metrics, reporting, and progress to ensure the highest quality of data integrity.

Overall, it is of vital importance to establish sustainability as a collective responsibility. Take the lead and get everyone involved. Show the commitment of the organization in order to engage and inspire others to make it their own personal priority as well.

Training and education

Once the roadmap is in place, companies must train each employee, from the corner office to the people working in the field, to become part of the sustainability initiative. In order to achieve success, every individual needs to understand and embrace the program and its goals. Implementing standard sustainability training for 100 percent of employees ensures they understand what is expected of them.

One way to make certain all employees receive the training is to build a mandatory e-training module into new employee orientation. The sustainability team and senior management at Balfour Beatty used their national meeting as a platform to kick off the program, with an educational session for all installation community managers, facility managers, and project directors. This session set the tone and expectations for a long-term sustainability effort by the company and all of its employees at all locations.

Achieving real change and adoption of sustainability initiatives is not just about education—education alone doesn't get adults to change their behaviors. However, it is well documented that giving individuals one specific task toward a relevant, achievable goal has the ability to drive real change. This is why setting specific processes and tasks is so important to achieving success across the organization, and why Balfour Beatty had

every leader incorporate a minimum of one work-related and one personal KPI for 2011 for which he or she will be held accountable.

Additional strategies include the following:

- **Ask for employee input.** Allow them to choose their own actions. Work with all segments of your business to identify priorities and opportunities for change and to decide what will work for their unique position and daily operations. Giving employees the power to decide how to commit to becoming more sustainable in their personal and professional lives motivates them to make related and achievable changes to do their part. Acknowledge that different approaches will make sense for employees in different roles. Give sample recommendations for goals, such as: attain LEED membership, achieve Green Building Certification standards; set up a construction recycling program for recycling/reusing construction waste; install LED or CFL street lighting; set up alternative transportation programs; commit to job-site utility conservation; and establish green job-site/office guidelines.
- **Implement and reinforce.** Conduct training and guidance through employee meetings, calls, green events, and existing programs and initiatives. Recognition and incentive programs can also make a difference in adopting sustainable behaviors. Tie it all in with annual performance reviews to include safety and sustainability metrics that are individualized, relevant, and changed annually to move toward a continually improving organization. Providing specific benchmarks and measurable goals gives all employees a set objective to work toward.
- **Reassess.** Perform surveys with your employees to see what's working. Use quarterly tracking and assessments to document successes. By natural extension for those operating in the world of privatized housing and defense communities, there is automatic crossover between your own corporate initiatives and those of your residents. Near-term goals and changes drive long-term sus-

tainability that will help your communities and your business in the future. Get the whole community involved, organize awareness events, and educate your residents about conserving energy in their homes, especially when they are vacant.

A collective responsibility

Sustainability must be built into everything a company does. From employees,

customers, and supply-chain partners to the corner office or field projects and individual residents living in your communities, sustainability is a team effort. In both business and personal territory, it is an ongoing commitment to ensuring the success of future generations. ■

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