Facilitating Employee Engagement in Sustainability Initiatives

Presented for Illinois Sustainable Technology Center’s Sustainability Seminar Session

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Objectives

• Consider how to start a movement
• Review concept of crossing the chasm between ‘the few’ and ‘the many’
• Highlight the critical importance of a network-based approach
• Discuss the role of program sponsorship and the effect it has on an initiatives success
• Customize your why message
• Shine a light on million small beginnings
How to Start a Movement

• Leaders need to courage to stand out
• 1\textsuperscript{st} followers are an underestimated form of leadership
• New followers emulate the first followers, not the leaders
• Nurture 1\textsuperscript{st} followers as equals so it’s about the movement – not the leader
The Few

High Context

Intender, Inner Circle

Decide

The Many

Low Context

First Followers, Emulators

Determine
First Followers

• Spend your time with your first followers
• Empower your first followers to push the new behaviors to the depth of their social networks
  – Educate them
  – Give them permission
  – Provide them with tools
Network-Based Approach

• Nicholas Christakis, *Connected: How Your Friends’ Friends’ Friends Affect Everything You Feel Think and Do*
• The relationships we have allow us to influence and be influenced by others
• Social contagion – our ideas, our behaviors, our emotional states – effect to 3 degrees of separation
# Network-Based Approach

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traditional Approach</th>
<th>Network-Based Approach</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Centralized decision making</td>
<td>• Decentralized decision making</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Focus on individual efforts</td>
<td>• Focus on the connections forged between individuals and the building of networks</td>
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<td>• Procuring programs and deliverables</td>
<td>• Stimulating activity</td>
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<td>• Firmly controlled and planned process</td>
<td>• Open information sharing and emergent learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Effectiveness linked to concrete outputs</td>
<td>• Effectiveness linked to trust, shared values and information accessibility</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Ownership limited by area of expertise</td>
<td>• Ownership and expertise distributed across multiple areas</td>
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Sponsorship

Three critical roles for primary sponsors that are required for project success:

1. Participate actively and visibly throughout the project
2. Build a coalition of sponsorship and manage resistance
3. Communicate directly with employees
Custom Why Messages

- Simon Sinek, *Start with Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action*
Shine a Light on a Million Small Beginnings

- Ground level actions
- Dare to think small
- Recognize people for ‘small wins’ and share that progress throughout the organization
- Stop waiting for something big to happen
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Helping organizations to embrace something new or different.