



SUSTAINABILITY IS EVERYONE'S BUSINESS

If we don't change our direction, we're likely to end up where we're headed.

— CHINESE PROVERB

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Describe the business case for sustainability from environmental, economic and social perspectives.
- Develop and practice systems thinking skills.
- Assess actions your organization is currently taking.
- Identify strategic actions your organization could take toward more sustainable practices.
- Apply both rational and emotion-appealing arguments to articulate your own case for sustainability action in your organization.

ABOUT THIS SESSION

Many people today still see maximizing profit and taking care of the planet as two completely separate paths. But research shows that being a good corporate citizen can actually increase revenue and productivity. In this session, we will discuss the business case for sustainability from a variety of perspectives. We will also consider how to best communicate that business case to others — by combining both rational and emotional arguments to effectively persuade others that sustainability is a worthwhile endeavor.

Circle Question

The authors of “Seeing the Whole Picture” say, “Life creates the conditions for life.” What is one way our Industrial Age behaviors do not create the conditions for life?

Reminder to the facilitator: The circle question should move quickly. Elicit an answer from each participant without questions or comments from others. The facilitator’s guidelines are on page 8.

SUGGESTED DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Do the people you know feel more or less connected to larger systems in today’s global world? Why?
2. What is an example of a default decision you’ve seen made (without considering larger systems) that caused additional problems? What is an example of a decision you’ve seen made with consideration to larger systems?
3. Do you believe that the level of change Paul Hawken describes in “The Ecology of Commerce” is possible within your organization? Which proposed design objective do you believe is most attainable? How might your organization take steps towards this change?
4. How might looking at sustainability first as an economic benefit open the door to thinking of it as an environmental and social benefit as well?
5. What kinds of memes do you think would spur serious conversation about having goals for our economy other than growth?
6. In your company, would an 11% increase in value justify adopting sustainable practices? If your company has adopted sustainable practices, how do you think that change has affected its value?
7. Discuss the reasons that employee recruitment and retention would be impacted by a company’s sustainable practices. How does a company’s environmental/sustainability record and vision play into your choices about employment?
8. Have you ever used nature to inspire your work? If so, please share. If not, how could you?
9. Think ahead to a world in which products are continually upcycled, recirculated, and so on. How might such a system keep pace with a rising population? Could such an approach sustain society’s ever-growing demand for possessions, or should reducing demand still be a focus?
10. What is a “nutritious” product? How would you redesign a product that you currently use or sell to be nutritious?



PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

Consider how you can apply what you learned in this session in your own organization. Putting one thing into practice each week helps you feel empowered to make larger change and inspires new ideas for ongoing action. Here are some categories and suggestions to get you started.

- Transportation.** Start a carpool with co-workers who live close to you, or create a carpool program for work events and meetings.
- Water.** Provide reusable water glasses and pitchers for use during meetings.
- Energy.** Install LEDs where possible, and check with your local waste management department to determine how to dispose of them properly after use.
- Waste.** Take your reusable water bottle and/or coffee cup with you wherever you go this week — and remember to use it!
- Food.** Support local and organic growers, caterers, or food suppliers who practice environmentally responsible operations.
- Connection.** Consider implementing a “recess” program for your employees. KEEN’s campaign to bring recess back offers a toolkit and ideas for getting started: keenfootwear.com/recess/