The GMIC Guide to

Forming A Green Team
SUSTAINABILITY DEFINED

The term sustainability is a widely used term that has come to mean taking into consideration the social, economic and environmental aspects of our actions, as well as recognizing the inter-relationships between these aspects. Sustainability includes protecting our environment and preserving natural habitats and biodiversity, but it is also about promoting a healthy and engaged society and thriving economy. Sustainability requires balancing opportunities and constraints, and taking a longer-term view so that we are able to reach our maximum potential now, and future generations are able to do the same.
Organizational sustainability policies alone cannot help to find system enhancements, operating efficiencies or communication improvements.

To realize such business benefits, teams of informed, engaged people are needed. The purpose of any ‘green team’ is to activate the organization’s sustainability mission, raise awareness of sustainable practices and to facilitate education to help stimulate ideas and actions for system improvements.

A green team is an effective way to implement a sustainability program. Using a team approach helps to ensure that all divisions and/or offices of the business are aware of and participating in the program. In addition, the team approach allows for the work to be distributed among several people and departments.

Green team responsibilities include:

- Identifying the goals and objectives of the organization regarding sustainability
- Designing and planning programs to meet the goals of the program as identified
- Gathering support and necessary tools to implement programs
- Recognizing and rewarding successful efforts to help reach the goals
- Communicating with staff and stakeholders
- Tracking and reporting of metrics
- Continual vitality of program
TOP 10 CHARACTERISTICS OF A SUCCESSFUL GREEN TEAM

1. Support from Top Level Management
2. Representation from all Departments of the Organization
3. Committed and Participative Members
4. Established Structure with Defined Meeting Time and Guidelines
5. Collaborative in spirit, welcoming ideas from all stakeholders
6. Shared Purpose and Goals
7. Defined Plan of Action to Achieve Goals
8. Project-focused rather than administration focused
9. Shares and Celebrates Successes
10. Creativity and the Ability to Make Activities Fun
Participation and representation in the green team from each department of the organization is crucial to its success. This includes top level management.

Team members can be passionately interested contributors or they can be selected for their expertise in a particular area. Ideally, all members of the team will be enthusiastic about the program but it is more important that they understand the necessity of the project and commit to their roles. Over time, any lacking motivation or interest may evolve as successes begin to mount and positive recognition for green team contributions become public.

GREEN TEAM MEMBER DUTIES

Green team members are responsible for helping implement the goals and objectives of the organization’s sustainability program. They are also the ambassador for promoting sustainability within their own department and for identifying achievements, opportunities, and struggles for communication back to the team.

GREEN TEAM LEADER DUTIES

The green team needs a point person who is energetic and committed to the program. Responsibilities include:

- Organize and lead monthly meetings
- Encourage participation
- Answer questions about the program
- Track and record overall progress of the program
- Act as liaison between employees, clients, and other stakeholders.
GREEN TEAM LEADER TRAITS

It is important to note that leaders exist at all levels of an organization. Green teams should work to recruit these positive, vocal, respected leaders as they will add credibility and will engender support for the green team initiatives. Successful green team leaders bring the following traits:

- Well organized
- Good moderator
- A consensus builder
- A strong communicator

Once the green team roster has been established, it should decide on a regular monthly meeting time and day/date. Meeting too frequently doesn’t allow for members to complete assigned tasks. Too infrequent of meetings can slow progress, enthusiasm, and momentum.

The green team leader should recognize that dry meetings, free of atmosphere, spirit or purpose will fatally injure the green team. During the meeting, it’s important to observe the same tactics as successful event planners. Mix it up. Use workshop elements which require small groups to work together on a task and share findings with the group.

Confirm that the identified goals are shared by all in attendance and get commitment to the desired outcomes of the meeting. Encourage different types of collaborations to best fit with different personality types. Make the meetings a welcome place for exchange of ideas without compromising a commitment to being action-oriented. Keep a disciplined eye on the desired goals and outcomes of the meeting and spark engagement.
INFORMATION GATHERING

An initial step of the green team is to gather data about sustainable practices currently enacted in the organization. Team members should discuss the following:

- Based on our definition of sustainability, what sustainable practices are already in place?
- Do we have the support of top level management? Where does sustainability sit on the list of organizational priorities? What other areas of support do we have?
- What resources (including personnel and finances) are available for the program?
- Baseline metrics (waste diversion, water consumption, energy consumption, purchasing practices, carbon emissions, hours invested in community service, etc)
- What are possible barriers to our success?
- Have initiatives been tried in the past that did/did not work? Can they be revisited? About the program?
- Are there opportunities to address current staff concerns? Health and safety issues?
- Are there community/city concerns that might be addressed?
- Are there hazardous chemicals that could be eliminated?
- Will multiple departments see a benefit?

PRIORITIZING OF ACTIVITIES

Once the inventory of sustainable business practices is complete and baseline metrics are understood by all members, the next step is to prioritize activities on which to focus. This can be approached by department, goal, or sustainability area (e.g. Energy, water, waste, communication, air quality, purchasing, people etc). Some questions for the team to ask when reviewing an activity include:
• Could resources (i.e. Water, energy, materials) be used more efficiently? Where is the greatest risk of cost and waste?

• Who do we need to support this activity?

• Are there potential cost savings to be realized?

• How visible is the program?

• What is the level of participation from staff and the public?

• Could we achieve some early successes to raise enthusiasm

ESTABLISHING AND MAINTAINING DEPARTMENTAL SUPPORT

Once the green team is officially formed, and once they have identified a set of clear goals and focus areas, it is beneficial to announce the action plan to the entire staff. When making this announcement it is helpful to include the following:

• Identification of the green team leader and members

• A commitment to the program from top level management (i.e. A statement from the CEO, a sustainability policy)

• Areas on which the program will focus

• Current metrics and opportunities for savings

• A description of how the program will benefit the facility, the community, and the environment

• Encourage idea sharing and participation from employees outside of the core green team.

• Explain that the success of the program is dependent on participation from all employees.
It is an ongoing effort to keep people engaged and to inspire widespread behavior change which support sustainability. Therefore open, two-way communication is key. It is important to keep staff updated and excited about the accomplishments of the program.

The green team can accomplish this by:

• Posting frequent program updates or general environmental tips (newsletters, bulletin boards, email, etc.)

• Announcing and celebrating program milestones

• If possible, calculating the environmental impact of activities in metrics people can understand (# of homes powered, # of Olympic size pools, # of elephants, e.g.)

• Creating and posting prompts, such as reminding people to turn off computers at night

• Offering incentives

• Setting facility goals and celebrate with prizes or incentives when goal is met

• Soliciting suggestions from employees/clients for new ideas for the program; give awards for the best ideas or suggestions

• Holding internal recognition events where awards are given

REMAIN FLEXIBLE

As with any new program, some initiatives will be successful and others will fail. However, it is difficult to predict these outcomes prior to implementation. Do not get discouraged by programs that do not have expected outcomes. Instead, identify what made the program fail and try to improve upon it for the future.

For most organizations, sustainability is a new concept which requires a new way of thinking. Creativity and collaboration are important for advancing the sustainability agenda to build better businesses and communities.
GMIC would like to extend very special thanks to Lindsey Arell of Arell Logic, Andrew Walker of E3 Strategy and Michael Leuhrs for their hard work in putting this guide together.
ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

http://greenmeetings.travelportland.com/greenToolkit/planningGreen/greenTeam.html

PATAGONIA: AN EXAMPLE OF A COMPANY EMBRACING TRANSPARENCY AND OFFERING TRUE METRICS OF THEIR IMPACT.
http://www.patagonia.com/us/environmentalism

RESOURCES

EPA GREEN FACILITY TEAM CHALLENGE:
CITY OF PORTLAND, HOW TO FORM A GREEN TEAM GUIDE: HTTP://WWW.PORTLANDONLINE.COM/BPS/INDEX.CFM?C=49793&A=110278
IDEAS AND TIPS ABOUT HOW TO FORM A GREEN TEAM AND WHY:
http://www.greenbiz.com/microsite/green-team
ENERGY STAR, PORTFOLIO MANAGER:
http://www.energystar.gov

EPA Waste Wise:
http://www.epa.gov/epawaste/partnerships/wastewise/index.htm

Bike commute challenge: A friendly annual workplace vs. workplace competition during the month of September. Online trip tracking tool provides calculations and reports.
http://bikecommutechallenge.com/

Environmental Defense Fund, Paper Calculator:

California Integrated Waste Management Board, Measuring the Success of Office Paper Reduction Efforts:
Evaluation and calculation tool for paper reduction efforts.

GreenBiz. Green Team Microsite
http://www.greenbiz.com/microsite/green-team