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The Low Carbon Agenda

No.13 / February 2009

The Big 1 3 - lucky for some...

Welcome to the thirteenth edition of the Low Carbon Agenda, which means it was a year ago this week that we published the very first bulletin on the low carbon economy. Since then we've covered carbon footprinting, low carbon strategies, carbon offsetting and green electricity tariffs. Over 250 of you have joined the mailing list in that time so, if you've missed any issues, you can see [the back issues here](#).



This month, we're going to look at a very hot topic, staff engagement, as there is more to this than meets the eye.

All the very best,

Gareth

PS: If there is a topic you would like to see covered in The Low Carbon Agenda, just drop me a line!

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No Pain, No Gain

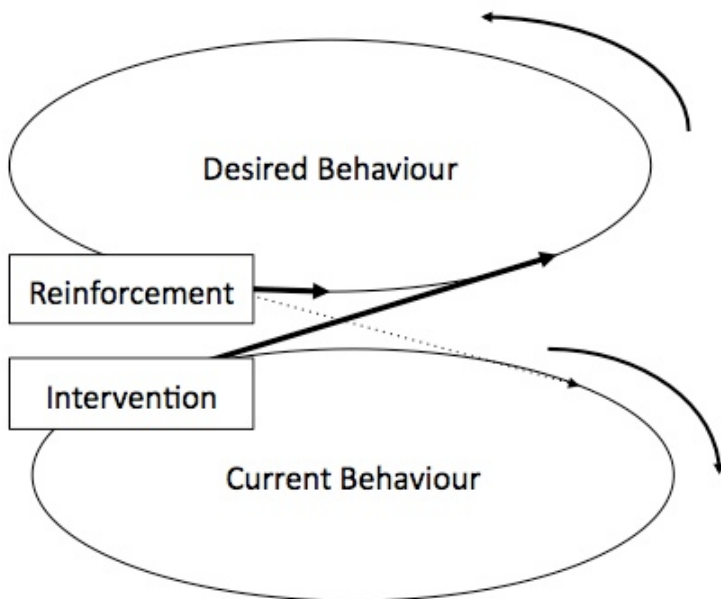
Every couple of weeks or so I get a call asking me whether I can run a lunchtime staff engagement session. And my answer is always "Yes, but..."

The reason for that "but" is that deciding to do staff engagement is a bit like realising you are out of shape and joining a gym. You can't expect to get fit on the first session - in fact you are more likely to hate it and go back to your old habits. A training programme, self discipline, and changes to the rest of your lifestyle will be required to make the change properly.

Intervention and Reinforcement

Staff engagement is vital to greening your business, but there is no magic pill. You need to have some form of *intervention* to shift people from their current behaviour and into the behaviour patterns you're after. But to keep them there you need *reinforcement* or they will quickly slip back into their old ways. It is the second of these principles that is most often overlooked, hence my "but" when clients ask me to do a lunchtime seminar.

The diagram below shows how the two principles are required to develop *and sustain* desired behaviour. This is highly simplified and you may need to make a number of interventions to change different types of behaviour.



Call Off The Thought Police

At first glance this might appear overly dictatorial or manipulative, but the most effective way of getting people to change their behaviour permanently is for them to voluntarily make the leap and become self-reinforcing. In fact the more dictatorial approaches can lead to cynicism, hostility and, on occasion, outright mutiny. As with all management issues, the balance between enforcement and staff empowerment needs to carefully maintained.

Next Month

It should be clear now that successful staff engagement will take more than a lunchtime talk on climate change. Next month we'll take a closer look at the most effective methods of intervention and reinforcement.

Low Carbon News

According to [The Environment Expert](#), 10% of Barack Obama's \$787bn financial stimulus package will be for low carbon projects - \$32.80bn for clean energy projects, \$26.86bn for energy efficiency initiatives and \$18.95bn for green transportation.

On the other side of the pond, the [UK Government announced a package of green measures](#) for every home in the UK. For some reason this will not start until 2013.

With the EU's ban on traditional filament lightbulbs starting to bite, [the Daily Mail](#) started a campaign to overturn the ban, but failed to achieve the traction that they had in their campaign against the Alternative Weekly Collection of municipal waste.

Tip of the Month

Why not provide a fighting fund for carbon reductions which is topped up from a proportion of financial savings? For example, if the fund invests in a new compressed air system which leads to savings, then, say, 50% of the savings every year go back into the fund. Woking Council have been operating such a fund for 13 years and have managed to save over £1m and cut carbon emissions from council buildings by 77.4%.

The small print:
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