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## The Low Carbon Agenda

No.14 / March 2009

### Spring is in the Air

I love this time of year. Flowers and buds are bursting out everywhere and the evenings grow longer day by day - and warm enough for an al fresco glass of wine to finish the day. A wonderful antidote to the continuing grim economic news.

Anyway, [last month](#) we considered the basics of staff engagement - particularly the point that you need more than a lunchtime lecture to make a sustainable change in staff behaviour. This month we'll go into a bit more detail on how to implement these principles.



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!

**Gareth Kane, Terra Infirma Ltd**

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### Recap

The gist of [last month's newsletter](#) was that to change staff behaviour you need:

- Intervention: to make the change, and;
- Reinforcement: to sustain the change.

### Reinforcement

We'll look at reinforcement first as it is the key issue to sustaining the desired staff behaviour (although as we will see, good interventions make reinforcement easier). There are four types of reinforcement:

- Alignment of all systems to the goal: there is no point in trying to cut unnecessary car use if your allowances reward excessive mileage;
- Information: providing feedback on progress;
- Leadership: demonstrating personal commitment to the objectives and being intolerant of poor commitment from others. Leadership includes delegating responsibility and authority to the best effect;
- Self-reinforcement: when individuals or groups start to make the desired behaviour a habit. This is the ultimate goal of change management, but you will normally need the other pieces in place before you can achieve it.

### Intervention

If you take a purely top down approach to achieving reinforcement you will come up against resistance, cynicism and possibly outright rebellion. Here are some proven strategies for creating enthusiasm for the new regime amongst your staff:

- Incentivisation: providing rewards for good behaviour (eg rewards for not commuting by car) can have a big impact but beware of unintended consequences;

- Ownership of the solutions: if you engage staff in developing low carbon solutions for your organisation, they will take pride in implementing them. Problem solving can make staff engagement much more effective;
- Delegation of responsibility: delegating decision making (and even some budget) to a staff committee;
- Equity and fairness: if sacrifice is required, make sure that the management level takes at least their fair share of the pain;
- Fun: make it "more stilettos than sandals". Play games, hold competitions or give out awards.

There are a number of options for intervention actions:

- Proclamation from the top: this is the least effective method and it will take very strong leadership to succeed without the softer forms of staff engagement;
- Training and awareness: these can range from the dull and worthy through to the sublime. I always use such sessions to generate solutions - it gives the participants ownership;
- Guerrilla Methods: these are cunning ways of making people think about their behaviour without preaching eg leaving chocolates on the desks of people who switch their computers off overnight, but with no explanation;
- Peer to Peer: allowing your staff to spread the message through informal social networks in the workplace, eg via staff committees and energy champions. Peers are usually better at working out what is 'fun' than management.

So, the message is: set up the systems and lead by example while delegating ownership and funds and let your staff engage with each other peer to peer as much as possible. Easy?

## Next Month

Next month we'll be taking a look at the dos and don'ts of low carbon communications and marketing.

## Low Carbon News

In the UK, [the National Grid](#) has called for the development of a UK Masterplan to determine the route-map for a low-carbon economy. They say this is essential to get the right frameworks and infrastructure for the connection of new renewable sources of electricity generation, the development of technologies such as biogas production, and linking smart meters into smart grids.

At the [Geneva Motorshow](#), the car industry demonstrated its belief in low carbon vehicles to dig the sector out of its predicament. From the new Prius hybrid to Peugeot's diesel hybrid to GM's new electric vehicle (oh, the irony) to VW's Eco-motion options, it is very clear that they see green as a route to survival.

The Maldives have announced that they intend to be [the first carbon neutral country in the world](#). They've got a vested interest - most of the land is just 2m above sea level so they're on the front line of climate change impacts.

## Tip of the Month

Try setting up a 'revolving door fund' for carbon saving projects - reinvesting a proportion of economic savings back into the fund to pay for future projects.

The small print:

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