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## The Low Carbon Agenda

No.19 / August 2009

### No Leadership? Don't Despair!

Last month we looked at Low Carbon Leadership. I noted in the article that it is quite normal to find people blocking progress towards sustainability, and often these individuals are in leadership positions. So how do you progress?

In the martial art of Jujitsu, one of the basic principles is using your opponent's strength and energy to your own advantage. We'll be looking at how to use this principle to achieve the seemingly impossible.



All the very best,

Gareth

**Gareth Kane, Terra Infirma Ltd**

[gareth@terrainfirma.co.uk](mailto:gareth@terrainfirma.co.uk)

PS: Following the success of last month's favour, I'd be very grateful if you could forward this edition to at least TWO other people who you think would find it of value. Thank you!

### Avoiding Conflict

My central argument this month is to use jujitsu tactics to avoid conflict and ease your opponents into submission. Never risk a toe-to-toe confrontation on low carbon issues with a sceptic. In particular, never enter a debate the why's and wherefore's of climate science. You will end up rebutting the humungous amount of misinformation floating around in cyberspace and, mark my words, that can take months!

So we need some jujitsu tactics. Here are four ways of using your opponents strength against them, whether they are anti-green, uninterested, too busy or all three. Obviously I am using terms like 'opponent' in a tongue in cheek manner here - seeing others in your organisation as 'the enemy' is a recipe for disaster.

#### 1. Speak Their Language

A key green jujitsu tactic is to speak your opponent's language, not yours. Don't use words such as 'carbon', 'environment' or 'green' unless they are they are part of a piece of legislation or taxation. Words and phrases like 'energy efficiency', 'waste minimisation' and 'risk mitigation' can be much more powerful.

If your opponent is financially minded, then translate everything into financial terms. If they are commercially minded then talk about 'market opportunities' and 'product differentiation'. And so on.

#### 2. Use Questions, Not Statements

Bold statements of fact to a cynic or sceptic can be a red rag to a bull. Asking questions with a fact embedded in the middle tend to give you momentum, as they are less threatening and your opponent has to respond thoughtfully. Make each question directly relevant to your organisation, for example:

- "Do you know that we are wasting £20 000 on energy every year?"
- "Have you seen how much they're charging us for waste disposal? Do you think we should

look to cut these costs at source?"

- "Our biggest client has just sent a suppliers questionnaire asking for our environmental policy. What do we do?"

And most powerful of all:

- "What are the implications of not doing [low carbon option]?"

### 3. Ask Them For Help

As with other forms of staff engagement, asking your opponent to use their wisdom, expertise and knowledge to help develop solutions is a powerful way of obtaining their buy-in. People love to be asked for help and once they start getting their teeth into an issue, they will often start to take more of an interest in the surrounding problem.

If they are of a financial bent, ask them to help cost the impact of a piece of legislation, or the potential return on investment on an energy efficient equipment. If they have an engineering or technical background, find a technical problem for them to help you with. If they are from the commercial side, ask their advice on how to compete against a rival product or service which is playing the green card in its promotion.

Choose your problem carefully. If it is too simple, they will see through it. If it is insoluble, or the ultimate answer is genuinely "it's not worth it", you might push them further from low carbon options. It has to be something reasonably challenging with a very good chance that the 'correct' answer will make the organisation greener.

### 4. Guerrilla Tactics

If your opponent is very powerful, then you may have to work around and beneath them. Military history shows myriad examples of where small, determined and resourceful bands of fighters have kept much more powerful armies at bay. Again, the jujitsu principle applies - guerrillas who confront their opponents on a conventional battlefield will be decimated. Guerrillas rarely if ever achieve a military victory, but often bring their more powerful enemy to the negotiating table.

Building momentum from the bottom-up can create a movement which is too powerful to resist higher up. Put together an informal team of willing people, pick some quick wins, implement them and use those wins to recruit more people to the cause. Use both formal and informal channels to expand this activity. Once momentum builds, use your track record of success and the other three techniques to start to bring the enemy over to your side.

### Next Month

Last month, I challenged leaders that "no budget = no commitment". This rang true with many readers who got back to me with tales of frustration. Well, next month we'll look at some powerful techniques for effective budgeting.

### News

Following the UK Governments release of four low carbon strategies on one day in July, the energy regulator [Ofgem has announced £500m](#) to develop local distribution networks a key omission in the original strategies.

After my lauding of him as a low carbon leader in the last edition of TLCA, Barack Obama has blotted his copybook by authorising highly destructive mountaintop removal (MTR) coal mining. (Thanks to reader Diana Korchien for pointing out this slip of the halo!). Leading climatologist Prof James Hansen and actor/activist Darryl Hannah were arrested during [protests against MTR in June](#).

The Chief Economist of the International Energy Agency, Fatih Birol, has declared that [oil production will peak soon](#), possibly in the next 10 years, lending considerable weight to the peak oil movement. We'll cover peak oil in the October edition.

### Tip of the Month

Eliminate 'perverse incentives' which encourage your staff to indulge in carbon intensive practices, eg phase out higher mileage rates for larger cars.

The small print:

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