

# How to get Jack and Jill to turn off the lights

Why should employees want to turn off YOUR lights? Or put that costly compostable cup in the right bin? Or suggest a more energy-efficient way to make YOUR products?

There is no obvious reason for employees to help you meet your sustainability goals. What's in it for them?

Herein lie both challenge and opportunity: You are almost entirely dependent on your employees to do the sensible things that will help the company cut its costs and meet its sustainability goals.

You need their cooperation. You need their ideas. You need their enthusiasm. And you need them to keep doing the smart thing, over and over and over again. How do you get their support? How do you turn the challenge into opportunity?

Enter internal communications, probably the least glamorous, least appreciated of corporate functions. It is the internal communicators – those fine people battered by corporate correctness and bent double from kowtowing to the vanities of executives – whom you have to rely on to motivate the masses.



This Bulletin is dedicated to communicating about sustainability to employees. We offer ideas and tell stories about the work we've done. We don't pretend to have the key, but spend five minutes with us and you might just get that eureka moment on how to get Jack and Jill to switch off the lights.

**WELCOME**

Our occasional bulletins are linked to a continuing conversation on our website where we explore the issues that matter most to our clients as they look to extract the most from their corporate sustainability programmes. In keeping with our transatlantic capabilities, our bulletins alternate between U.K. and U.S. spelling and style. This edition conforms to U.K. style.

**CONTACTS**

Devising and implementing internal communications strategies are among the corporate sustainability services that we have provided to leading multinationals since 1997. For more information:

U.K.  
**SIMON PROPPER**  
simonp@econtext.co.uk  
+44 (0)207 251 0050

U.S.  
**PETER T. KNIGHT**  
peter@contextamerica.com  
+1 212 216 9773

Join us to continue the conversation or download a PDF of this publication at [www.econtext.co.uk](http://www.econtext.co.uk) [www.contextamerica.com](http://www.contextamerica.com) or [twitter.com/Context\\_Group](https://twitter.com/Context_Group)

UK: 5-23 Old Street, London EC1V 9HL  
+44 (0)207 251 0050

USA: 1140 Broadway, Suite 905,  
New York, NY 10001  
+1 212 216 9773

# Don't leave home without your principles

We test all internal communications against seven principles. They form, surprisingly, the acronym CONTEXT. OK, we've had to be a little creative with the X but you get the idea.



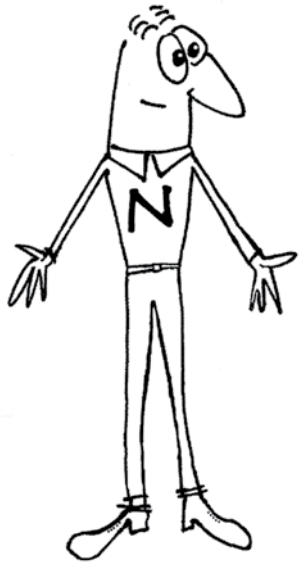
## C is for Credible

You're asking a lot when you invite people to change the way they think and work. The ask has to be genuine to be convincing. There must be good reason to switch off a light, or do without a rubbish bin. Make sure you provide good reasons – using sound science. Make the ask Credible.



## O is for Original

Sustainability communications are often boring, derivative and finger wagging. Pitch your ideas to your colleagues as you would to a journalist or new employer. Sell hard. It's got to be new. It's got to be different. Make it Original.



### **N is for No-nonsense**

Everything you say has to be believable and rational. This is especially important when you're asking your colleagues to act on the information you're dispensing. Keep it concrete. Make sure it's No-nonsense.



### **T is for Telling stories**

Messages stick so much better when we hear it through the experience of others. Listening to stories about successes and failures makes messages much more memorable. Make sure to Tell many more stories.



### **E is for Engaging**

We understand so much more when we become engaged. That trusted rule – show don't tell – works here. Look for ways to demonstrate and to involve your audience rather than pushing messages at them. Make it Engaging.



### **X is for eXciting**

Everyone learns better when they're having fun. Sustainability is very boring for many, but it doesn't have to be. Look for ways to lighten up, to seek out the unexpected, and keep it simple. Make it eXciting! (Yes, that X was a challenge!)



### **T is for Top-drawer (as in Only The Best!)**

Is this the best you can do? Constantly test to see if you can do better. Is that idea, that event, that video the very best you can offer? Your audience may be internal and captive, but they deserve the best. Be exacting. Make it Top-drawer.

## CASE STUDY...

### Why Bloomberg invests in employee communications

Five thousand clear plastic trash bags connected and inflated into a giant sculpture at the New York HQ illustrate how simple changes to office life could improve the environment.

A blog by an employee in Milan, Italy, describes how he uses the city's public bicycles, called BikeMi, to visit clients.

Five women from Kiev, Moscow and St Petersburg – self-named the Dashing Divas – are among the winners of an oversubscribed international team competition to photograph green travel ideas.

A packed lunchtime lecture theatre in London hears the producer of *The End of the Line*, a documentary charting the decline of fish stocks and how to choose sustainable fish (which is the only fish ever on the menu at Bloomberg), talk about the making of the film.

"These are just some of the many events and activities we've organized to ensure that our employees are motivated to help us achieve our sustainability goals," says Lee Ballin, Sustainability Manager at Bloomberg L.P.

Bloomberg is an information, software and media company, headquartered in New York City with offices around the world. In 2009, it introduced environmental, social and governance (ESG) data to its 300,000 terminals used by the global financial community for essential investment information. Its internal sustainability program is called BGREEN.

Lee continues: "Sustainability is integral to the company. I know people say that all the time, but we are absolutely serious about it.

"For example, we're on track to halve our carbon footprint by 2013, based on 2007 emissions. We're doing this by increasing energy efficiency, using renewables and reducing waste. We've got composting programmes in our major U.S. offices and we have LEED-certified offices in the U.S., Japan and the U.K."

The company is data driven and has a clear strategy to shrink its environmental footprint in a highly methodical, business-led manner.

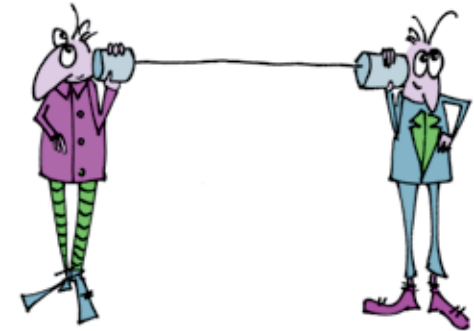
"We realise that we need all our colleagues around the world to understand what we're trying to do and why," Lee adds. "We need their support and that's why we run a highly organized internal communications campaign to get the message across in the most informative and entertaining way."

Bloomberg's internal sustainability communications strategy, supported by CONTEXT, uses a combination of exhibitions, artworks, activities and competitions. These are based around environmental themes, which change every quarter. A lively, entertaining and informative intranet site, called BGREEN<GO>, provides an information base and acts as a launch pad for activities.

"We use the BGREEN blog to keep a conversation going with our colleagues. And they find it very useful to tell us if we're not doing enough. They are our biggest critics and our strongest supporters," says Lee.

## THE ESTÉE LAUDER COMPANIES SABRINA DUPRÉ

**"When engaged, employees can be a company's most valuable customers. It is important that the same standards for how we creatively and effectively engage customers outside of the office should apply to how we engage our workforce within the office."**



## INTERFACEFLOR RAMON ARRATIA

**"In many companies the sustainability champions have the same status as the fire wardens. Internal communications should start by giving sustainability a high internal social status and work to prevent cynicism that results from over-promising."**

# Essential elements needed to win

With your **CONTEXT** internal communications principles in hand, these are the four essential elements you need for success:

1. Good planning
2. Engaging content
3. Effective networks
4. Attractive intranet



.....  
**BLOOMBERG  
LEE BALLIN**

**“We need all our colleagues around the world to understand what we’re trying to do and why. We need their support and that’s why we run a highly organized internal communications campaign to get the message across in the most informative and entertaining way.”**

.....  
**BT  
JANET BLAKE**

**“Engaging employees in responsible and sustainable actions works best if they can choose something relevant to their world, that they can shape, own and deliver. We now have over 130 Carbon Clubs around the globe where groups of up to eight employees work together on a local action to tackle climate change at home or at work – everything from electric car trials and recycling water cups, to bike sharing and finding inspirational ways to save carbon in telephone exchanges and data centres.”**

**NO SUBSTITUTE FOR GOOD PLANNING**

Planning is the Viagra of good communications. Knowing what you’re going to do when and how is good planning.

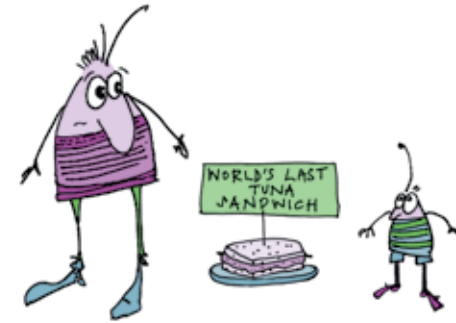
The magic lies in being sufficiently organised to have mapped out an event a year in advance, but flexible enough to rework the calendar if an opportunity arises. We borrow heavily from political campaigns and we study the successes of campaigning NGOs. Both teach you how to plan for the long term and exploit the unexpected.

For example, a corporate response to a natural disaster won’t be in the 12-month plan, but it provides a great opportunity to engage with your audience.

We consider our internal communications work campaigns, much as environmental activists do. Too many internal communications functions in companies think they are a government information service, doling out good advice and corporate homilies without a thought for the audience.

Our campaigns have principles, themes and actions that are planned at least 12 months in advance. Everyone involved should know what will happen at any point in the project, and what’s expected of them. You can’t make it up as you go along.

But no matter how good your planning, or how clever your ideas, it’s the implementation that is important. Anyone can fill out a spreadsheet and populate a calendar, but success comes only to those who pay attention to the detail of implementation.



**ENGAGE OR BE DAMNED**

There is really no excuse for being dull. Sustainability communicators – especially internal corporate message makers – often think that they have to act like goody-two-shoes, just because the subject has a reputation for being worthy. They could not be more wrong.

Sustainability is about the opportunity to do things better. The payback is in the immediate improvement in our quality of life and the long-term kick-back for our children and their children. What’s dull about that?

The advertising world can sell soap, moisturisers and shaving cream (very boring things indeed). Surely we can get people excited about flexible working (carbon saving), videoconferencing (who wants to be a road warrior anyway?), turning off the lights (what’s so hard about that?), packing lorries better (good logistics saves money and carbon) and cutting waste (it saves money).

What’s so difficult about convincing our fellows that a few changes in our lifestyle will mean our grandchildren can enjoy the taste of tuna, or the site of a coral reef?

## WHY HUMAN NETWORKS MATTER

The intranet (see below) has revolutionised internal communications by helping to carry messages to an organisation's nether regions. But depending too much on the intranet and emails will severely handicap your chances of success.

Engagement demands grassroots networks of people who can organise things locally. These are people who can make friends with local environmental groups, put up a poster and provide valuable feedback on what their colleagues find interesting (audience research).

These people are members of your green teams, or green champions. If you don't have them, start thinking seriously about finding them. This is a project in itself, demanding clear thinking and good rewards for those who participate. Such teams have been around for years, so seek out the advice of others and check the helpful information available on the web.

Much as local newspapers and blogs survive by providing really local news, ways have to be found to ensure that corporate messages resonate with plants and offices that are continents away from HQ. Green champions are your eyes and ears to interpret the wants and needs of local audiences, which helps you craft powerful messages. The champions are also your arms and legs, putting up that poster (yes, still important even when everyone is online) and ensuring your Earth Day events run according to plan.

## MAKE THE INTRANET ZING

Flash and interactivity characterise most corporate websites where brave attempts are made to engage the audience. But intranet sites are often worse than the poor relation: filled with turgid information poorly presented. If intranet sites were a meal, they would be gruel and dry crusts.

### CASE STUDY...

#### Why local champion networks are important

The challenge: get over 30,000 employees to understand the new corporate sustainability goals and their role in reaching the targets.

"We did not give it much thought, but we initially assumed that we could use the intranet as our communications medium," says the sustainability manager.

The multinational B2B manufacturer has a popular intranet which reaches even workers on the shop floor. They check their emails and company updates between shifts.

"But it quickly became apparent that we were being a little too hopeful. We realised that we could not rely solely on the intranet to do what we had to do. We needed an old-fashioned network of real people to organise on the ground," she says.

"When we set our goals we knew that there had to be employee-led participation. But our employees are engineers. We gave little thought to exactly how we were going to

Of course there are exceptions. Those are the sites that take the trouble to understand their audiences and cater for their needs in an intelligent and respectful way. Yes, it costs a bit more than providing a selection of PDF downloads, but the difference is dramatic.

We use the intranet as the hub for all internal communications. It is both the repository for essential information and the interactive point of engagement where competitions are run, issues are hotly debated on blogs and feedback is sought so that we can improve.

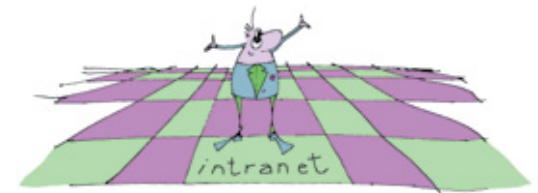
communicate the goals and get them to join in the push for change. We thought we could just send out a few emails and it would be done."

Working with CONTEXT, the company is now setting up a system of green champions who will provide a physical network of committed employees in different plants and offices around the world. The champions will interpret the corporate goals for their colleagues, and act as information points and cheer leaders. They have also been charged with engaging local environmental groups to encourage community activities, especially around Earth Day.

She adds: "We know that our corporate sustainability issues have to be relevant locally, otherwise it's just a case of 'we're from head office and we are here to help you.'

"We're investing in our champions network and we are committed for the long term. We know that we need their enthusiasm to make the corporate plans work, and they know that we are prepared to help them achieve their goals of improving the environment for their communities."

As with all communications, the intranet site has to be audience-focused, fun, engaging, informative and, above all, fresh. Like a garden, it needs constant weeding, watering and nurturing. Your audience will very quickly tell you if they like what they see – the analytics will be brutal if you are failing.



# Dos and don'ts for successful internal communications

## Do

Treat sustainability as an exciting, positive subject.

Make an effort to understand the needs of your audience, even though they may sit next to you.

Follow the CONTEXT principles of good internal communications.

Appeal to self-interest.

Be different.

Keep the faith – follow the plan, be brave and see it through.

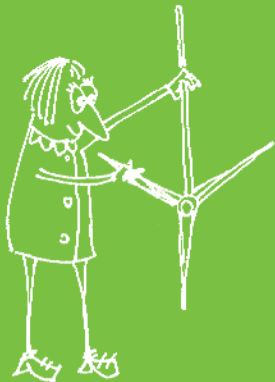
Be big enough to change course if it's not working.

Be creatively repetitive – changing people's habits demands lots of gentle reminders, always a variation on a theme.

Think long-term – changing people's habits needs Napoleonic planning and thinking ahead.

Keep it simple.

Tell stories.



Nag or finger-wag – it's rude and counter-productive.

Assume colleagues share your enthusiasm for sustainability. Look for ways to engage the sceptics.

Ignore the obvious – tell me why I should recycle?

Depend solely on data to make your arguments, seek out the emotional.

Dumb down sustainability, but avoid a science lecture.

Talk in the abstract, look for genuine stories and illustrations.

Use business or sustainability jargon.

Let failure get you down. If you're not taking risks, you're probably failing.

Panic – changing hearts and minds takes time.

Treat your intranet as a management tool – see it more like a Facebook for employees.

Be dull.

## Don't

