

UN Sustainable Development Goals

GETTING YOUR TEAM ABOARD THE SUSTAINABILITY JOURNEY

CASE STUDY: CHRISTCHURCH AIRPORT

Businesses around the globe are building visions around sustainability, making pledges and altering their Business Plans. But authentic change cannot be made in the Boardroom alone, the real challenge is creating a culture of sustainability within the business itself.

That is something Sustainable Business Council member Christchurch Airport has successfully embraced with a prolonged campaign that now features a bespoke, interactive digital tool that shows, in real time, the business' progress on sustainability initiatives. It's a tool that is inspiring many and may soon be made available to others.

You don't have to Google hard to read about some of the impressive gains Christchurch Airport has made on its sustainability journey... it's cut the terminal's energy use by 20% since 2013 and transitioned its entire light vehicle fleet to EV.

The airport's Business Plan has 'being great kaitiaki' as one of its three key pillars, chief executive Malcolm Johns is a vocal advocate for the Climate Leaders' Coalition, it reports on natural resource use and carbon emissions at every Board meeting and produces an annual Sustainability Report. At a strategic level, the airport has long been well equipped to achieve the ambitious goals identified in its Sustainability Strategy.

18 months ago, it set about realising a much bigger goal – creating a culture of sustainability through

getting each and every staff member engaged with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The airport's General Manager of Strategy and Sustainability, Rhys Boswell, says they wanted to embed sustainability into every team's thinking.



"We continually strive to be better and while we have already seen real improvements, there is always more to be done. We wanted every person in the company to contribute to our vision to be a global leader in sustainability, rather than leave it to our sustainability team."

SOWING THE SEEDS OF CHANGE

A key milestone in creating that cultural shift was the appointment of Sustainability Champion, Caroline Thalund. She began working from the 'bottom up' to raise awareness and engagement with the SDGs.

"We took some time to create a campaign that introduced the SDGs to our staff in a way that would make a positive environmental change and engage not only them, but their families."

The solution? A series of interactive workshops where everyone was given a native tree to plant at home.

"It was a simple idea but it was amazing how much excitement it created – we were sent many photos of excited kids in the garden alongside Mum or Dad and Canterbury now has an extra 250 native trees."

The company's intranet, Yammer, noticeboards



and tearooms soon became regular repositories for SDG-related messaging while Caroline also focused on an intense period of building relationships and influencing staff.

A POWERFUL GROUP OF AMBASSADORS



Within a short period of time, Caroline had identified 20 individuals (at least one from each of the airport's business teams) who were particularly passionate about sustainability and wanting to make a difference.

"We immediately recognised their value and the Sustainability Ambassadors Programme was born. They now meet regularly and have become a critical tool for us to embed our messages and boost engagement in their respective teams."

Caroline says the ambassadors have got teams across the business building sustainability into their functions.

"There have been many successes ... our Procurement team now requires sustainability to be considered in key purchases, our Marketing team's most recent retail promotion involved sustainably-produced reusable shopping bags, our IT team has collected more than 2 tonnes of e-Waste for reusing and recycling and a midyear snapshot shows we have lowered our printer use by 25%."

P1 – A BESPOKE, INTERACTIVE TOOL

Sharing the story of and celebrating each success has grown enthusiasm for the SDGs within the company.

“That storytelling led to a whole lot of fresh ideas of other things we could do help achieve the SDGs and also sparked new pride in people realising what they were already doing to help achieve the goals. For example, the People, Culture and Safety Team’s charity lunches and the company’s Community Fund.”

Caroline wanted to create a digital tool that would bring the SDGs alive for staff, showcase all that the company was doing to work towards the goals and collect new ideas from staff.

“It had to be interactive, easy to use, engaging and robust so that each project idea has measurable outcomes. Nothing like this has been done before so I worked with our Sustainability Ambassadors, the IT and Marketing teams to create it.”

The tool, P1 (Planet One) now sits on the airport’s intranet. Users can click on the different sustainability pillars where they can see all the actions the business is taking and how it links to the SDGs and their targets.

It also tells staff why they should care about each of the eight SDGs, how they can work towards it (at work and at home) with simple ideas tailored to the Airport and Canterbury.

“It’s about making the SDGs accessible and engaging,” says Caroline.

P1 was introduced to staff in early 2019.

“We took the time to introduce it to teams in face-to-face sessions and ran an initial campaign, with prizes, to incentivise staff to submit ideas.”

143 ideas – at least one from every department – were lodged within four weeks of P1’s launch.

“We were delighted with the engagement but even more so with the quality of ideas, many of which we’ll be able to implement,” says Caroline.

“P1’s success shows that if you make something compelling, sincere, transparent and easy, people will engage with it.”

SHARING THE SUCCESS

Phase Two of P1 will enable the delivery of the ideas to be tracked and automated reporting on all of the actions.

Caroline is currently exploring the development of a customisable sustainability tool, intending to assist businesses and organisations nationally and globally to benefit from the Airport’s experience.



Overall, Rhys Boswell says the company is very happy with how its cultural change is tracking.

“It is, of course, a very hard thing to measure but our most recent survey showed that staff scored themselves an average of 7.1 out of 9 for how their understanding of and engagement with sustainability has grown over the past year and gave themselves a 6.4 out of 10 for their sustainability efforts at home (up from 5.6 in 2018). That is very pleasing. It shows our efforts are not just impacting our team’s behaviour but that of their children - our future generations.”

“This change in culture is also a great thing, it will ensure our move to become more sustainable endures any alterations in strategic direction or leadership which is good for our planet and our community. This is work that makes us very proud.”

All this wouldn’t have been possible without our IT, Marketing and Sustainability teams, and crucially, our sustainability ambassadors, especially IT expert Martin Crockford who brought our ideas to life through the new tool. Thanks also to the SBC for their support as we developed this tool.

About Christchurch Airport

Christchurch Airport is the international gateway to the South Island, with our airline partners ensuring travellers can get anywhere in the world by leaving from here on an international flight. The airport is a major driver of the South Island regional economy, with some 6000 personnel working in 250 companies on the airport campus making it the largest site of employment in the South Island. It is one of the partners in the SOUTH initiative, which sees all 13 regional tourism organisations working collegially to promote the South Island.

About the Sustainable Business Council

SBC is a membership organisation, with a long-term aim to make sustainability mainstream within New Zealand businesses. They do this by inspiring businesses by creating a community of positive change, supporting members to go further and celebrating their leadership and success. SBC is part of the BusinessNZ family and is the New Zealand Global Network partner to the World Business Council for Sustainable Development.