



February 2011

Green Innovation in Business Network 2010 Solutions Labs Series

Summary Report

By Jaclyn Pitera, AltaTerra Research



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Executive Summary

Businesses leading in environmental sustainability are implementing strategies and practices and moving beyond basic measures for energy efficiency and carbon reduction. They are expanding their efforts outside the organization, improving the supply chain, and engaging stakeholders. Inside their organizations, they are institutionalizing sustainability by setting up behavior-changing policies, processes, and programs.

Many organizations are beginning to follow this lead. Their focus is on making the business case for sustainability to obtain executive-level buy-in. Proving energy efficiency savings and mitigating risk from impending regulation are at the top of their agenda. At another level, sustainability practitioners, economists, and policymakers are grappling with how to engage society in more-sustainable consumption and integrate sustainability thinking into educational systems and public policy.

To accelerate this progress, a number of organizations, allied as the Green Innovation in Business Network, are working together to encourage people engaged in these efforts to meet, share experiences, and solve shared problems. These meetings, called Solutions Labs, took place in nine U.S. cities in 2010 and gave more than 700 thinkers and doers from more than 300 diverse organizations the opportunity to explore future directions in sustainable business. Overall, the meetings reflected the maturing of sustainability in the United States. This report highlights the ideas discussed.

Contents	Notes & Resources
0 Nationwide Overview	<p>This 27-page report summarizes discussions from GIBN's nine 2010 Solutions Labs. It includes content from interviews with conference organizers and from related blog posts.</p> <p>See http://www.gibn.org for more information. Contact Dave Witzel (dwitzel@edf.org) or Odin Zackman (odin@digin.org) to get involved.</p> <hr/> <p>Excerpts from this report should be attributed as follows: Jaclyn Pitera, "2010 Solutions Labs Series Summary Report," AltaTerra Research, February 2011.</p> <p>Electronic copies of the full report are free to conference registrants and sponsor organizations. They are also available for purchase for US\$80 at www.AltiTerra.net. (Free, one-minute registration is required.)</p>
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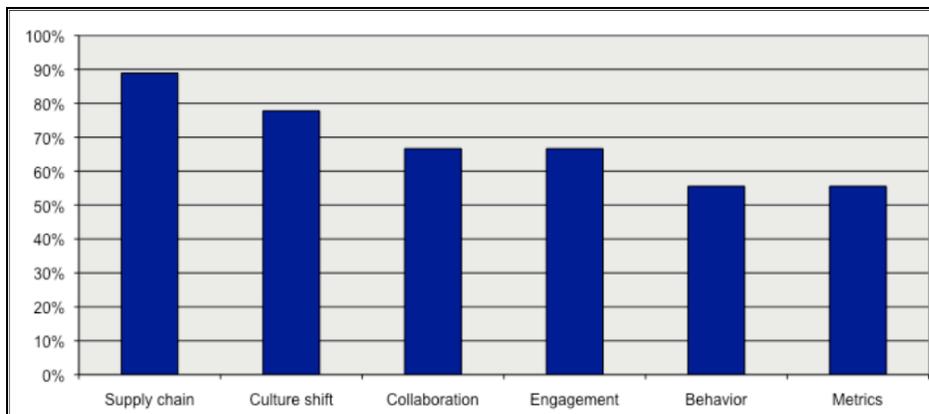
Overview and Example Insights

At the nine Solutions Labs held throughout the United States in 2010, sustainability practitioners from 300 commercial, academic, government, and nonprofit organizations discussed how they are helping their organizations to be more environmentally sustainable. Several high-priority issues emerged, including:

- **Supply chain**—Creating standards for environmental and social sustainability to increase supply chain transparency (topic at eight events).
- **Culture shift**—Institutionalizing sustainability in corporate culture (topic at seven events).
- **Collaboration**—Working with groups in one’s sector, industry, or company (topic at six events).
- **Engagement**—Engaging stakeholders and creating partnerships (topic at six events).
- **Behavior**—Encouraging more-sustainable and energy efficient behavior (topic at five events).
- **Metrics**—Measuring and reporting sustainability performance (topic at five events).

The topics shown in the bar chart below were selected for breakout discussions by attendees at two-thirds or more of the meetings across the country.

Top Six Sustainability Practitioner Priorities by Discussions at Share of Events: 2010



Source: AltaTerra Research

Examples of leading practices and perspectives on these issues included the following:

- **Supply chain**—An effective sustainable supply program is transparent, simple, and easy to adopt. It also motivates suppliers to measure, report, and improve their performance.
- **Culture shift**—Institutionalizing sustainability is linked to demonstrated buy-in and leadership from the C-suite, challenging goals, internal change agents, and creating company-wide policies.
- **Collaboration**—Employee engagement and collaboration across various divides can foster business or product/service innovation.
- **Engagement**—When engaging stakeholders, give priority to those whose goals are most similar to your organization’s and engage them the most.

Overall, the meetings reflected the maturing of sustainability in the United States. Organizations leading on environmental issues have made initial accomplishments, often in energy efficiency and carbon reduction, and are now looking outside their own operations to the supply chain and to wider constituencies. Inside their organizations, they are incorporating sustainability into long-standing

processes and programs. Organizations that are newer to sustainability are likewise benefiting from a growing body of experience and related products and services.

0 Nationwide Overview

The Green Innovation in Business Network (GIBN) 2010 Solutions Labs series was organized to encourage knowledge sharing and network building to support people addressing sustainable business challenges in the United States. Among the organizers were Environmental Defense Fund (EDF), Dig In (as lead facilitator), and Ashoka. Solutions Labs are one-day, discussion-oriented events for which participants help determine the agenda. The nine Solutions Labs in 2010 gave more than 700 participants from more than 300 business, academic, governmental, and nonprofit organizations the opportunity to explore ways to make their organizations more sustainable and their work more effective. See <http://www.gibn.org> for more information about the Solutions Labs.

With the exception of the Boston, Chicago, and Fayetteville Solutions Labs, the events did not have set topics. In Boston, the event was organized around energy efficiency solutions; in Chicago, around fleet efficiency; and in Fayetteville, around retail supply chain sustainability. In addition, the presenters at the Solutions Labs were subject matter experts and industry practitioners who were asked to be conversation catalysts or inspiring speakers to foster attendee brainstorming and collaboration. Despite a wide range of speakers and topics across the nine locations, a number of common themes emerged.

0.1 Practitioner Priorities

Listed below are the issues and themes that were most important to conference participants across the country, as indicated by their choice of discussion topics.

- How to create a green supply chain standard for environmental and social sustainability, increasing transparency, engaging suppliers, and dealing with untraceable commodities (topic at eight events).
- Institutionalizing sustainability, including steps companies can take to shift corporate culture to sustainability (topic at seven events).
- Collaborating for sustainability, and the cross-sector, cross-industry, and intracompany strategies that have worked to foster collaboration (topic at six events).
- Strategies for engaging stakeholders and creating partnerships, including with whom and how to engage so that partnerships are mutually beneficial (topic at six events).
- Encouraging more-sustainable and energy efficient behavior, involving customers, consumers, and employees, and the use of social media (topic at five events).
- Measuring and reporting sustainability metrics, including what to measure and report, top stakeholder concerns, and items important for the green business case (topic at five events).
- Critical importance of making the green business case for companies beginning their sustainable business path (topic at four events).
- Necessity of solutions for promoting sustainable consumption (or sustainable production and consumption) as a fuller, healthier lifestyle, rather than one of scarcity, and creating innovations that are convenient (topic at four events).

Practitioners from industry, consulting organizations, and academia echoed the breakout session topics. They offered many ideas about behavioral changes, including employee, general, and energy efficiency behaviors. Other topics discussed were the elements of a successful sustainable business strategy, how to implement the strategy, and what is needed for product, service, and business model innovation.

0.2 Typical Solutions Lab Format

The Solutions Labs were conducted using an “unconference” format. Breakout session topics generally were not introduced by the event organizer but created ad hoc by participants before and during the event. The length of the conference (one day) and type of facilitation tools used to encourage discussion and collaboration stayed roughly consistent among the Solutions Labs. See Figure 1 for a typical Solutions Lab program format; this one is for the San Jose event. In the agenda, the “INNOVATE! Presentations” item was the period during which industry practitioners or subject matter experts inspired or challenged conference participants’ thinking prior to brainstorming sessions.

Figure 1. Sample Solutions Lab Agenda

Latest Agenda		
Time	Topic	Objective/Details
8:30 AM	Arrival	Registration and Breakfast
9:00 AM	Opening	Introduce day and welcome Thank supporters and team Welcome/comments from: · Amy Skoczlas Cole, eBay (5) · Beth Trask, EDF (5)
9:20 AM	Introductions	Meet the participants, hear about expectations
9:40 AM	Framing	Explain format, goals
9:50 AM	INNOVATE! Presentations	Gil Friend, Natural Logic (5) Amy Skoczlas Cole, eBay (5) Peter Perrault, NetApp (5) Questions, Feedback, Discussion (15)
10:30 AM	Theme Tables/ Breakouts	Participants explore a single theme of choice for 45 minutes Initial theme suggestions include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How IT can enable innovation for sustainability • Energy efficiency • How corporations engage stakeholders in sustainability

11:30 AM	Theme Tables II and Design Session Prep	Participants explore a single theme of choice for 45 minutes Meet in initial design teams on issues surfaced during theme tables Preview design sessions
12:30 PM	<i>Lunch</i>	Informal networking Tours of eBay campus/sustainability innovations
1:15	INNOVATE! Presentations	Maisie Greenawalt, Bon Appetit (5) Rupesh Shah, Intuit (5) Neal Gorenflo, Shareable.net (5) Questions, Feedback, Discussion (15)
1:45 PM	Design Charrette	75 minutes for discussion and presentation of learning preparation Develop potential solutions to sustainability challenges...and actionable next steps
3:00 PM	<i>Break</i>	
3:15 PM	INNOVATE! Forum	Share key learning and new innovations/solutions
4:00 PM	Large Group Debrief	Share what was learned & possible actions/next steps
4:30 PM	Thanks and Reflections	Key learning, proposed action steps, and network expansion ideas Thank supporters, participants
4:45-6:00 PM	Networking Reception	Continued informal networking

1 Practitioner Perspectives

Across the nine Solutions Labs, a diverse group of subject matter experts and industry practitioners gave inspiring presentations or catalyzed discussions on sustainable business topics. For a full list of these speakers, see Host & Practitioner Speakers in Section 3: Conference Supporters. Listed below are example themes from these speakers.

- Appeal to the human characteristics of ego, competitiveness, and desire for simplicity to encourage people to change their behavior and use a more sustainable product, service, or business practice (Dan Ariely, author of *Predictably Irrational* and professor at Duke University, at Durham Solutions Lab).
- Sustainable product and business model innovation requires transformational technology, designing for durability, and empowering employees (Amy Skoczlas Cole, eBay, at San Jose Solutions Lab).
- Managers must move beyond just energy efficiency for transformative sustainable product and business model innovation (Peter Perrault, NetApp, at San Jose Solutions Lab).
- A sustainability strategy or responsible business approach should be strategic, include big goals, and focus on the right business activities (Ben Packard, Starbucks, at Seattle Solutions Lab).
- It is important to challenge intuition and perform proper analysis when implementing sustainable business practices (Kevin Hagen, REI, at Seattle Solutions Lab).
- Rather than piecemeal efficiency solutions, we need a systems-level vision of how energy efficiency can help people create a low-carbon future (Peter Senge, founding chair of Society for Organizational Learning and senior lecturer at MIT, at Boston Solutions Lab).
- Employees who are given feedback and rewarded for their environmental activity become more engaged (David Douglas, formerly of Sun Microsystems, at Boston Solutions Lab).
- Tying performance reviews and bonus structures to sustainability actions helps to involve diverse employees in a company's sustainability activities (Elaine Strunk, Saunders Hotel Group, at Boston Solutions Lab).

Dan Ariely, author of *Predictably Irrational*¹ and professor of behavioral economics at Duke University, recommends that environmental proponents appeal to the human characteristics of ego, competitiveness, and the desire to make efforts easy when developing behavior-changing products, services, or business practices. For example, Dan said, “People who drive a Prius smile more while they drive.” This is because driving a Prius appeals to their ego—they feel good, they like the positive attention they get for caring about the environment—and, as a result, they have changed their behavior to be more environmentally beneficial.

In addition to appeals to the ego, Dan also recommends tapping into peoples' competitiveness. There are many great examples about how people care about a competitive challenge, even if they do not normally care about the content of the activity. For instance, many companies create challenges around energy efficiency, such as energy savings treasure hunts. These types of competitions are successful because

employees who may not care about saving energy do care about bragging rights or the reward obtained, and they will work hard to find energy reductions.

In addition, when creating environmentally beneficial products or services, it is important to consider how a consumer can use the product or service with the same, or less, effort than required by the traditional product or service. People in general want convenience and simplicity, so accounting for this when developing a substitute product or service invites wider acceptance.

Amy Skoczlas Cole, the director of eBay's Green Team, states that sustainable product and business model innovation requires transformational technology, designing for durability, and empowered employees. Because they are so close to day-to-day business practices, employees are resources for innovation in business improvement. When employees are empowered to act and share their ideas, especially when they are recognized or rewarded for them, they are more likely to participate.

By designing for durability, companies create opportunities for more-sustainable consumption. The business model eBay employs extends the useful life of products that already exist. While this is positive environmentally, a challenge remains in how to get consumers to "buy less stuff, when retailers and manufacturers make money when people buy stuff." One idea is to take the product concept and turn it into a service through which a consumer leases rather than owns a product. This arrangement would lessen negative environmental impacts by encouraging more product reuse and, ultimately, proper disposal. Creating more-sustainable consumption is a challenge because many people prefer to buy cheap goods rather than pay more upfront for a good, long-lasting product.

"Innovation can't be dictated from the C-suite. It has to happen from the bottom up."

—Amy Skoczlas Cole,
Director of Green Team,
eBay

Sustainable innovation can be propelled by transformational technology, an example of which is Google's PowerMeter, a free, online tool that helps home utility bill payers see their monthly energy consumption. Increased visibility of energy usage data by means of metering technology helps people use less energy, thus fostering behavioral change.

Peter Perrault, Green Giant at NetApp, said that for sustainable product and business model innovation, we need to move beyond energy efficiency. He talked about NetApp's reputation for energy efficiency in data storage and management, which is great for helping its customers save energy and money. As Peter pointed out, however, every bit of data that is transferred on the Internet has a carbon footprint. His challenge is to figure out how to use IT to accelerate sustainability and move beyond efficiency.

Ben Packard, the vice president of Global Responsibility for Starbucks, thinks that a responsible business approach should be strategic, include big goals, and be focused on the right business practices. Being strategic in crafting a responsible business approach requires filtering the many possible sustainability business practices and choosing the few that have the most positive impact on the company's core business. After these practices have been determined, several questions must be answered: Do the company's employees and customers feel an emotional connection to the business practice? Is there viability and resilience for the practice within the supply chain? Does the practice reinforce the company's desired competitive position? Are there third-party experts and knowledgeable certifiers from whom the company can learn?

Ben stated that it is important to shoot high and be transparent in setting responsible business goals. In the past, Starbucks' glossy CSR reports had a lot of rear-view reporting that no one was reading. Now the company has set 13 big goals and focused its creativity on solving those problems. In addition, it is reporting progress on these goals transparently and online. Because of this enhanced communication and engagement, stakeholders are now taking issues directly to Starbucks.

Asking the right questions is important as you develop your responsible business approach. For example, Starbucks asked where its greatest impact was in its carbon footprint. The company learned that 12 percent of its carbon emissions come from coffee growing, so it is taking steps to reduce this impact through Conservation International's work with coffee farmers.

Kevin Hagen, the director of Corporate Social Responsibility at REI, thinks it is important to challenge intuition and perform proper analysis when it comes to implementing sustainable business practices. Intuition can be wrong, but it's important to remember that it is not always wrong; it's what got sustainability into corporate thinking in the first place. At REI, they first thought that their greatest carbon impact was product transportation (importing from Chinese manufacturers), but it was actually employee transportation, which accounts for 14 percent of their carbon footprint. Another example is that the company thought green energy would be more expensive than conventional energy, but REI has saved more than \$100,000 from renewable energy projects, in part because prices of traditional energy sources have risen.

Peter Senge, founding chair of the Society for Organizational Learning and senior lecturer at MIT, believes that instead of piecemeal efficiency solutions, we need a systems-level vision of how energy efficiency can help create a low-carbon future. Piecemeal measures by themselves are not the solution to a cleaner economy that reduces absolute carbon emissions.

For example, efficiency benefits are quickly overshadowed by growth; implementing efficiency measures that produce real climate benefit requires fundamental changes to organizations, and executives must be willing to embrace and lead this change. Peter recommends having a large group of change agents to foster the behavioral shifts required for our low-carbon future, because these fundamental changes must take place nationwide.

"Rationality doesn't inspire change. Rationality allows us to do what we're already doing better. We need vision, passion, and creativity to make the fundamental changes we need for our economy."

—Peter Senge, founding chair of Society for Organizational Learning and senior lecturer at MIT

David Douglas, formerly the chief sustainability officer at Sun Microsystems, thinks employees need more feedback and rewards for their energy efficiency actions. For example, if your employees saved the company \$30,000 over the holiday by turning off lights, announce that fact and treat them to an ice cream social. People will be happier and more willing to see what else they can do to help make the company more energy efficient.

Elaine Strunk, environmental program manager at Saunders Hotel Group, said that one way to involve a diverse group of employees in a company environmental program is to incorporate sustainability practices into their performance review and bonus structure. When she did that at the Saunders Hotel Group, employees took a step back and looked differently at how they operate.

2 Regional Event Analyses

The nine GIBN Solutions Labs covered in this report took place across the United States between January and November 2010. Listed in Table 1 are the cities or regions that hosted these events. We analyzed breakout sessions for each city or region and identified common topics as well as some unique themes. In addition, we included example ideas discussed in the sessions. Highlighted within these ideas are partnership connections, case study examples, and resources to check out.

Table 1. 2010 GIBN Solutions Labs Locations

DATE	LOCATION
January 28	Durham, NC
May 21	New York City, NY
May 27	Washington, DC
June 17	Twin Cities, MN
July 15	San Jose, CA
August 5	Chicago, IL
August 10	Seattle, WA
September 16	Boston, MA
November 5	Fayetteville, AR

2.1 Durham, North Carolina

The first Solutions Lab of 2010 took place in North Carolina at Duke University's Fuqua School of Business on January 28. There were 77 attendees. The most common topics in the Research Triangle included sustainability metrics, behavior change of consumers and other stakeholders, and making the business case for environmental sustainability. See Table 2 for examples of breakout session topics and the link below for more detailed conference notes.

<http://greenbusinessinnovators.wetpaint.com/page/Research+Triangle+2010+GIBN+Solutions+Lab>

Some breakout sessions at the Duke Solutions Lab were devoted to topics not discussed in other regions. These unique topics included life-cycle analysis, the value of green labels and certifications, consumer behavior change, whether metrics can change behavior, and the possibility of turning the Research Triangle into a hotbed of social or green enterprise innovation, much as Silicon Valley is a hub of venture capital and cleantech.

"Companies collectively are at the beginning of the sustainability curve—even with all that has already been done. The Solutions Labs have been good for participants to explore ideas and brainstorm for innovation."

—Odin Zackman, *Dig In*

Some Research Triangle participants agreed to meet after the conference to continue collaborating and developing solutions on certain topics. Among these topics were the convening of a roundtable of nonprofit and business representatives to discuss policy opportunities and ways to partner, and exploring the idea of the Research Triangle's becoming "the green Silicon Valley."

Table 2. Durham Breakout Session Illustrative Topics

Durham Breakout Session Illustrative Topics
Green business case (twice)
Sustainability in financials (integrated reporting)
Sustainability knowledge sharing
Consumer behavior change (twice)
Sustainable consumption
Metrics (twice)
Disruptive technology
General behavior change (twice)
Business stakeholder partnerships
Financing for green business
Life-cycle analysis
Green supply chain
Research Triangle social enterprise hub
Necessity for sustainability certifications

Examples of the ideas discussed in the Research Triangle Solutions Lab:

Corporate collection of environmental metrics can increase sustainability awareness. Collecting metrics, establishing a baseline, and benchmarking other products or companies provides stakeholders much-needed context for how a company is doing. Metrics also allow employees to see the effects of their actions more clearly.



Life-cycle thinking at its most basic takes into account “resources in and waste out” at every stage of a product’s life. Life-cycle analysis (LCA) involves understanding which details are assumed when results are looked at, knowing what boundaries of analysis are used, and making sure an LCA is peer reviewed. Life-cycle analysis follows ISO methodology 14040, and environmental product declarations (EPDs) and labels follow ISO 14025. Third-party LCA verifications can be performed by organizations such as Scientific Certification Systems.² An example of an open-source LCA tool is earthster.³

Communicating the value of sustainability can include quantifying its effects in company financials. An emerging topic in valuing corporate sustainability activity is how to integrate sustainability impacts into company financials. No universally accepted mechanism is currently available. Conference participants were not sure whether it should be measured in goodwill or in some other form of triple-bottom-line reporting. Participants also discussed the first official regulation in this area, the SEC ruling that public companies must disclose climate change risk in annual reports.

Some think that game-changing technologies are necessary for a low-carbon economy and a sustainable future. Participants discussed game-changing technologies that create fundamental rather than incremental behavior change, improve efficiency, are systematically better, do not have to be brand-new ideas, undergo accelerated adoption, are easy to use, open new markets, and change individual and corporate behavior.

Examples of game-changing technology discussed, not necessarily all green examples, included Google, iPhone apps, software as a service, intelligent transportation, smart grid technology, and Project Get Ready,⁴ an initiative of the Rocky Mountain Institute, which helps develop game-changing plug-in vehicle technology by linking businesses, communities, and technical partners with ideas and their business cases.

2.2 *New York, New York*

The 2010 Solutions Lab in New York City took place at Bloomberg on May 21. There were 94 participants. The most common topic was collaboration: how to collaborate effectively to advance sustainability and, specifically, how to create cross-sector collaboration. See Table 3 for a list of breakout session topic examples and the link below for more detailed conference notes.

<http://greenbusinessinnovators.wetpaint.com/page/New+York+2010+GIBN+Solutions+Lab>

Table 3. New York Breakout Session Illustrative Topics

NYC Breakout Session Illustrative Topics
Sustainability & community development—food
Green business case
Collaboration for sustainability (twice)
Investing for green innovation
Shifting corporate culture
Sustainable production & consumption
Sustainable education & leadership development

A topic that was unique to New York’s Solutions Lab was investment in green innovation, specifically, private equity.

Examples of ideas discussed in New York’s Solutions Lab:

The sustainability business case should focus on economic arguments. The green business case must be anchored in economic arguments and include intangibles, such as increased employee morale and better brand perception. It is important for a company’s senior leadership to understand the business case so that executives can buy in to sustainability actions. Sustainability improves the bottom line, but a company has a further incentive to act sustainably to mitigate the risks of impending legislation. Many participants think sustainability value should be monetized, but companies do not all agree on which metrics should be measured or how value can be best portrayed; solving this is especially important to attracting responsible investors.

Collaboration for sustainability inside an organization often begins with a green team; externally, it is more difficult to structure. Corporate green change agents often organize green teams to build sustainability awareness at a grassroots level; often ideas are generated for corporate sustainability actions. Cross-sector or intrasector corporate collaboration can take place if companies have a common objective.

Some proactive people are organizing for sustainability face-to-face with consumers. For example, a participant shared a story about how one homeowner who was getting an energy audit encouraged 14 others to act. Ten audits were completed.

At a level higher, some organizations are trying to get groups of consumers to act. For example, One Block Off the Grid⁵ brings neighbors together and helps pool money to install solar energy projects.

Another program that is trying to foster community activism is “How Green Is My Town?” run by nonprofit Grassroots Environmental Education.⁶



Changing corporate culture to be more sustainable often requires executive buy-in, an audacious goal, internal advocates, and programs and policies to enable change. Participants said that top-level support was necessary for organizational change and that executives are often persuaded to act by grassroots-level, internal advocates—who may be even more integral for the change process. A company needs to have a shared sustainability vision and a policy that includes a BHAG—a Big, Hairy, Audacious, Goal—that it is unclear how to achieve. An example is Wal-Mart’s goal to create zero waste.⁷

In addition to advocates and goals, internal processes, policies, and programs that are tailored to the company must be established. Programs may include competitions for waste reduction and rewards for good employee ideas. Policies may include sustainability-based performance evaluations for employees and sustainability training for new hires. Processes may include sustainability metrics collection, mitigation, and reporting; integrating Design for the Environment into product design; branding; and sustainability communication processes among different employee groups and hierarchy levels.⁸

2.3 Washington, D.C.

The 2010 Solutions Lab in Washington, D.C., took place at George Washington University on May 27. There were 65 attendees. Topics included shifting corporate culture, greening the supply chain, integrating sustainability into the education system, and supporting green entrepreneurs. See Table 4 for examples of breakout session topics. For a video from the Solutions Labs in Washington, D.C., see <http://greenbusinessinnovators.wetpaint.com/video/10662606/Solutions+Lab+2010+Washington+DC+by+GreenRoadsTV>. See the link below for more-detailed conference notes.

<http://greenbusinessinnovators.wetpaint.com/page/Washington+DC+2010+GIBN+Solutions+Lab>

Table 4. Washington, D.C., Breakout Session Illustrative Topics

D.C. Breakout Session Illustrative Topics
Sustainability knowledge sharing
Shifting corporate culture
Support for green entrepreneurs
Stakeholder engagement
Behavior change for conservation
Collaboration for sustainability
Greening supply chain
Sustainability in education

Examples of ideas discussed in the Washington, D.C., Solutions Lab:

To have a fundamental mindset shift toward sustainability, it is important to instill systemic change in the educational system. This is especially true for kindergarten through twelfth grade, since children are sponges at this age. Some challenges in accomplishing this are the difficulty of instilling a long-term, sustainable mindset into a short-term, sound-bite culture; schools' focus on test results; school systems strapped for cash and in survival mode; and the need for advocates within the school and school system administration. Interestingly, Generation Y college students are more sustainability minded than other age groups and are making sustainability-based choices when they shop and vote.

There are opportunities to incorporate sustainability thinking into primary and secondary education. These ideas include creating environmental education advertising campaigns using popular celebrities, using schools as laboratories (e.g., having a green roof, a vegetable garden, energy efficiency demonstration projects, field trips), creating mobile schools that have no physical buildings, developing hands-on activities to build awareness of community service, creating after-school programs, and incorporating sustainability education into curriculum. Many of these ideas promote sustainability as fun and will help prepare children for a future resource-constrained, green economy. In addition, changing their behavior will have a ripple effect on the behavior of their parents.

Individuals are not generally as effective as governments in shifting corporate behavior toward sustainability. Consumers can influence companies to act, but many consumers still will not pay a premium for green products. Mainstream consumer culture must change so that companies can achieve scale in making green products, otherwise they will continue to be a premium. A consensus reached at the D.C. Solutions Lab was that individuals, in their roles as customers, employees, and stakeholders, do not, in general, act on their stated values.

Government legislation, or the threat of regulation, is one of the main reasons for a company to move toward sustainability. Many shareholders are still focused on bottom-line results, and if more become sustainability-conscious investors, they will have more influence. Studies have shown that although employees want to work for a green company and value programs such as composting, recycling, and teleconferencing, they will still work for a company, regardless of its sustainability policy.

Stakeholders have both “stick” and “carrot” tools to encourage corporations to act sustainably, but they do not often use a carrot. Common stick tools include regulation enacted or likely to be enacted in the near future, shareholder activism from single-issue advocacy groups, and negative corporate public relations following a negatively perceived social or environmental sustainability event. Carrot tools

include increased corporate value in the eyes of sustainability-minded institutional investors, private investors, and shareholders; the offer of improved supplier standing from large customers demanding better environmental and social performance from their suppliers; and employees at all levels who catalyze a corporation toward improved sustainability.⁹

2.4 Twin Cities, Minnesota

The 2010 Solutions Lab in Minnesota took place at Best Buy headquarters in Richfield on June 17. There were 79 participants. The breakout session topics ranged from greening the supply chain to sustainability education for practitioners. See Table 5 for examples of breakout session topics and the link below for more detailed conference notes.

<http://greenbusinessinnovators.wetpaint.com/page/Minnesota+2010+GIBN+Solutions+Lab>

Table 5. Twin Cities Breakout Session Illustrative Topics

Twin Cities Breakout Session Illustrative Topics
Sustainable product R&D
Shifting corporate culture
Greening supply chain
Metrics & measurement
Stakeholder engagement
Engaging employees
Business case & sustainability in financials
Sustainability education (for practitioners)

Some breakout sessions at the Minnesota event were different from those of other regions. These unique topics included sustainable product research and development, behavioral change specifically for employees, and sustainability education for practitioners.

Participants at Minnesota's Solutions Lab clearly articulated key ideas and next steps for some of their breakout session topics. These topics included employee engagement, sustainability and the profit motive, educating consumers and consumer behavior, and stakeholder engagement. For more details, see Table 6.

Table 6. Minnesota Solutions Lab Example Breakout Session Topics, Key Ideas & Actions

Topic	Key ideas	Ways to reinforce key ideas
Employee engagement	Shift mean toward sustainability: Do not focus on engaging every employee Do not make engaged employees focus on sustainability 100%	Hold a competition (e.g., Minnesota had a “Biggest Loser” competition, where the goal was for employees to lose weight & be healthy) Encourage employees to develop their own sustainability goals (i.e., a voluntary, personal sustainability plan)
	Every employee is different: Tailor message for department or individual Convey what is in it for them	Collect ideas from employees that would make their positions or practices more sustainable Deliver frequent, tailored communication Incorporate sustainability into employee performance reviews (omitting it makes it seem an unimportant responsibility)
	Go viral: Create initiatives that are self-sustaining, given limited resources of sustainability department	Establish a microgrant fund (e.g., \$1,000–\$10,000) to sponsor employee-led initiatives
Sustainability & the profit motive	Show that sustainability is a fundamental component of profitability & stakeholder value	Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) should be adjusted so that sustainability-related savings are recognized in the present GAAP should also be adjusted so that positive & negative externalities are recognized on financial statements Sustainability should not be in a silo but be part of an integrated company strategy
Educating consumers & changing behavior	Reframe consumption: Consumers currently are not acting on their stated values when purchasing Sustainability is about living better, not just a buying a green product Shift sustainability language from “sacrifice” or “scarcity” to “healthy, happy & more fulfilling”	Use social media for building awareness & reframing Develop cross-sector collaboration with businesses, NGOs, government, etc., so that stakeholders get a consistent message Activate consumers—use a more active term than “consumers” that motivates them to take greater responsibility
Stakeholder engagement	Listen to stakeholders: Address their concerns as much as possible to avoid negative PR & maintain brand value Collect their innovative ideas, unique knowledge & ability to anticipate risks	Prioritize stakeholders who have goals most similar to the company’s & engage them the most Engage stakeholders at local, national & international levels, making sure message is consistent Use social media as a way to collect ideas for innovation & potential risks while reaching a large stakeholder audience Perform due diligence with stakeholders to make sure it’s a good fit; otherwise, hard to disengage

2.5 San Jose, California

The 2010 Solutions Lab in San Jose took place at eBay headquarters on July 15. There were 89 attendees. Topics ranged from greening the supply chain to small business and sustainability. See Table 7 for examples of breakout session topic categories and the link below for more detailed conference notes.

<http://greenbusinessinnovators.wetpaint.com/page/San+Jose+2010+GIBN+Solutions+Lab>

Table 7. San Jose Breakout Session Illustrative Topics

San Jose Breakout Session Illustrative Topics
Green business case
Collaboration for sustainability
Stakeholder engagement
Shifting corporate culture
Behavior change through social marketing
Energy efficiency
Greening the supply chain
Sustainable production & consumption
Policy & sustainability
Small business & sustainability

Silicon Valley is well known as a technology innovation hub, especially for computing and information technologies, and increasingly for clean technologies. Not surprisingly, one of the unique breakout sessions in San Jose concerned behavior change through the use of web-based social marketing tools. Another session was on sustainability and policy.

Examples of ideas discussed in San Jose's Solutions Lab:

Institutionalizing sustainability involves the business case, education, and empowerment. At HP, a tailored case for each business unit is linked to shifting corporate culture. At eBay, all employees participate in a sustainability innovation idea contest. They vote on the winning idea, which gets exposure to company leadership and is implemented. The winning idea for 2010 was a reusable shipping box. Other conference participants gave examples of institutionalizing sustainability through new-hire training, performance reviews, and acquisition of a sustainable company.

"It's hard to build a business case to do more based solely on what might have gone wrong but didn't, due to a risk avoidance-based approach to corporate responsibility. But when customers, investors and prospective employees flock to you because you do good, go above and beyond ... that will really accelerate sustainable behavior."

—Kevin Moss, Head of
Corporate Social
Responsibility, BT Americas

A big, complex problem is sustainable production and consumption. This topic was introduced at several other Solutions Labs, too. The problem statement is how to drive sustainability in production and consumption at the corporate, marketplace, and individual level and whether to use carrot or stick approaches. Sustainable consumption may require decoupling current societal views of affluence and a high standard of living from materialism. Sustainable production should be based on the concept of cradle-to-cradle product design and manufacturing, but the question of how to get there remains unanswered. Also, if it is not possible to achieve 100 percent sustainability, can offsets be created?

Intuit and eBay collaborated in an ad hoc group at the San Jose Solutions Lab to explore the challenges and opportunities of helping small businesses become more sustainable. Urban Solutions, a Bay Area nonprofit, is also active in this effort. The group identified some challenges with small businesses and sustainability, such as that small business owners are busy and do not understand the value of green processes. Some levers identified are to create a centralized place with credible sustainability information and to focus sustainability messaging on health as a motivator and also as a way to make money and save money.

“People and companies inherently want to do good. But often they lack the resources and education to do better. We need to provide access to resources (best practices, tools) and information to suppliers down to the lowest tier level, and give them the opportunity to improve and excel.”

—Ephi Banaynal de la Cruz, Director of Sustainability Strategy, SAP

Meaningful and empowering transparency is an integral component of a green supply chain. Elements of a transparent supply chain include a simple, easy-to-adopt standard; data on standards compliance and environmental and social metrics of suppliers; and supplier incentives to report and improve. Current issues with implementing greener supply chains include opaque supply chains that manufacture goods cheaply; the likelihood of cost increases as a result of transparency and supplier improvements; uncertainty regarding incentives for suppliers far down the chain; and inability to trace some commodity materials, such as palm oil, tin, and gold, that are integrated into a product. Those interested in collaborating on a greener supply chain standard can contact BSR, which is facilitating standards setting (Marshall Chase, mchase@bsr.org).

2.6 Chicago, Illinois

The 2010 Solutions Lab in Chicago took place at the Illinois Institute of Technology’s Stuart School of Business on August 5. There were 79 attendees. This Solutions Lab was unique in that the GIBN organizers purposely focused on fleet efficiency and followed that discussion with topics introduced by participants. Topics ranged from behavior change to data management and technology solutions for sustainability. See Table 8 for examples of breakout session topic categories and the link below for more detailed conference notes.

<http://greenbusinessinnovators.wetpaint.com/page/Chicago+2010+GIBN+Solutions+Lab>

Table 8. Chicago Breakout Session Illustrative Topics

Chicago Breakout Session Illustrative Topics
Data to drive sustainability
Collaboration for sustainability
Stakeholder engagement
Shifting corporate culture
Energy efficiency
Greening supply chain & sustainable production/consumption
Behavior change in general
Technology solutions for sustainability
Making freight movement more efficient

Examples of ideas discussed in Chicago's Solutions Lab:

Embedding new ideas into corporate culture requires both trust in the promoters of the ideas and a structured implementation program. It is important to establish trust with employees by having visible senior-level leadership and a visible sustainability program in general. Sustainability activities should be integrated into employee roles and not be “extra credit” that is hard for them to accommodate. Sustainability programs should be tailored to department or individual interests, especially when they involve working with outside stakeholders.

Many think that access to data will promote sustainability, but people question what to measure. Many people are not aware of the tools available to alleviate some of this confusion, to which the many green labels and certifications add. Among the tools for clarity are the B Corporation standard, a sustainable business rating system, and the Good Guide,¹⁰ for increasing consumer awareness of sustainable products.

2.7 Seattle, Washington

The 2010 Solutions Lab in Seattle took place at Seattle University on August 10. There were 72 attendees. They discussed topics similar to those of other sessions but also those distinct to Seattle industry interests: green buildings; logistics, policy, and finance for a regional food system; annual sustainability reporting; corporate carbon footprint reductions; and sustainability as a competitive advantage. See Table 9 for examples of breakout session topic categories and the link below for more detailed conference notes.

<http://greenbusinessinnovators.wetpaint.com/page/Seattle+2010+GIBN+Solutions+Lab>

Table 9. Seattle Breakout Session Illustrative Topics

Seattle Breakout Session Illustrative Topics
Green homes & buildings
Transforming organization & shifting corporate culture
Greening supply chain
Employee engagement & training
Sustainability investing & stakeholder engagement
Logistics, policy & finance for regional food system
Energy efficiency
Collaboration for sustainability
Annual sustainability reporting
Corporate carbon footprint reduction
Sustainability as competitive advantage

Examples of ideas discussed in Seattle's Solutions Lab:

Saving money is the primary incentive for most corporations to implement energy efficiency measures. Stakeholders involved with energy conservation include the sustainability team, IT, facilities, finance, and (potentially) manufacturing or environmental health and safety—and all are motivated by the bottom line. To make the economic case for energy efficiency, it is important to gather resource metrics, go after the most easily achieved efficiency improvements first, and show successes along the way.

Traditional farmers' behaviors and farm subsidy policy are two examples of hurdles to achieving a local, healthy food system. Many traditional farmers are uninterested in learning about new, high-tech farming tools, are unresponsive to marketing, and are slow to collaborate. This is a hurdle for large buyers trying to access smaller farmers.

Farming policy is still written to promote large-scale, traditional agribusiness. Less policy is written to promote small farmers and/or those engaged in sustainable farming practices. One result of subsidies is that externalities and other true costs realized along the value chain are not incorporated into food pricing. Natural, organic food is thought to be expensive, but if the price of traditionally farmed food reflected real costs, that would not be the case.

Seattle Solutions Lab participants believe sustainability can be a strategic approach to market advantage.

Strategies for increasing market advantage include external communications that build on an authentic sustainability brand and/or creation of sustainable internal business practices. An example is Costco's seafood sustainability practices. The company acted because of perceived customer and vendor demand and CEO inspiration. As a result, it has developed a brand identity in the sustainable

On changing consumer behavior: "I would argue that it is a matter of convenience and creating smart, low-impact designs that make it easy to embrace change. In fact, change that is designed so well that we barely notice not only has the opportunity to lessen consumption but, I would also argue, the ability to increase positive interactions."

—Haley Drage, Account Manager,
Social Innovation Practice,
Waggener Edstrom Worldwide

business space and educated consumers about sustainable seafood. The tactics the company used were appropriate messaging, signage, sampling, coupons, CEO talks with customers, business policy, and an article in a widely read Costco magazine about a local fisherman who used sustainable practices.

Ideas for helping companies reduce their carbon footprint:

- Allow telecommuting to reduce costs in facilities and transportation (virtualization costs less).
- Reduce employee travel.
- Improve energy efficiency of buildings.
- Implement a cleaner mix of fuel for corporate fleets.
- Redesign products and services to incorporate life-cycle thinking.
- Reduce e-waste; design for low-impact end-of-life management.
- Utilize government incentives for reducing corporate footprints.

2.8 Boston, Massachusetts

The 2010 Boston Solutions Lab took place at Microsoft New England Research and Development Center on September 16. There were 95 attendees. This Solutions Lab was unique in that the GIBN organizers purposely focused on energy efficiency and followed that discussion with topics introduced by participants. See Table 10 for examples of breakout session topic categories and the link below for more detailed conference notes.

<http://greenbusinessinnovators.wetpaint.com/page/Boston+2010+GIBN+Solutions+Lab>

Table 10. Boston Breakout Session Illustrative Topics

Boston Breakout Session Illustrative Topics
Motivating public about energy efficiency
Improving energy efficiency in office buildings
Corporate collaboration toward energy efficiency
Leveraging partnerships for energy efficiency
Water conservation & energy efficiency
Barriers to sustainability (root causes & big picture)
Greening operations & supply chain

As a result of the preset focus, this event covered many more energy efficiency topics than did other Solutions Labs. Although a couple of Solutions Labs discussed the general topic of energy efficiency, the Boston event specifically addressed motivating the public to be more energy efficient, improving office building efficiency, collaborating for efficiency, leveraging partnerships for efficiency, conserving water and energy, and identifying barriers to sustainability.

Peter Senge discussed the need for a systems approach and a vision for energy efficiency, rather than piecemeal solutions. According to Aisha Husain of the Pew Center on Global Climate Change, some aspects of a systemwide vision that emerged during the day were establishing energy efficiency as a

social norm, creating business models that support efficiency investments, and designing strategies for more effectively communicating the benefits of energy efficiency.

Ideas for fulfilling the energy efficiency vision fell into two broad categories: current leading practices and emerging or “out of the box” ideas. The leading practices discussed may be helpful to those new to energy efficiency and sustainability planning, and the emerging ideas can help promote long-term energy efficient behaviors and benefits.

- Leading practices for energy efficiency:
 - When proposing an energy efficiency project for leadership approval, have a detailed time frame and work plan outlined.
 - To get more efficiency projects approved, continuously monitor energy use and give leadership progress reports.
 - To improve supply chain energy efficiency, clearly communicate requirements to suppliers, help them find resources to implement improvement measures, and audit them to ensure compliance.
- Emerging ideas for energy efficiency:
 - Motivating the public about energy efficiency could be focused on a kindergarten through twelfth grade energy efficiency curriculum in which parents would learn from their children.
 - Improving building energy efficiency could also involve students, including them in energy audits and implementation measures for school buildings.
 - To gain senior corporate leadership buy-in for efficiency projects, an audit could be conducted (normally at no cost), then the business case could be made by the savings potential.
 - Creating clear employee educational communications can increase efficiency (for example, a sign next to the office printer: “Are you sure you need to print this?”).
 - Better understanding the water-energy nexus (that water is the more critical resource, and water use takes energy, and vice versa) can foster innovations such as water-free laundry.¹¹

2.9 Fayetteville, Arkansas

The 2010 Solutions Lab in Fayetteville took place at the University of Arkansas on November 5. There were 88 attendees. This Solutions Lab was unique in that the GIBN organizers purposely focused on sustainability in the retail supply chain and followed that discussion with topics introduced by participants. One especially unusual topic was the impact that manufacturing has on biodiversity. See Table 11 for examples of breakout session topic categories and the link below for more detailed conference notes.

<http://greenbusinessinnovators.wetpaint.com/page/Fayetteville+2010+GIBN+Solutions+Lab>

Table 11: Fayetteville, AR, Breakout Session Illustrative Topics

Arkansas Breakout Session Illustrative Topics
Prioritizing sustainability & shifting corporate culture
Greening the supply chain
Green business case & assessing progress with data & metrics
Impacts of products on biodiversity
Greening operations
Collaboration for sustainability
GHG reductions
Educating the consumer

Examples of ideas discussed in Fayetteville's Solutions Lab:

Many companies are trying to start collaborations for sustainability but do not know where to begin. For example, they are not sure how to find people who may be working on the same issues in a separate organization. Do any organizations provide matchmaking? Other points discussed were the need for sharing knowledge on an open technology platform (something that can spur innovation and endure when people change positions), collaborating to set standards, and working to increase transparency and validation.

The most important thing when measuring a company's carbon footprint is to just get started. Many companies are confused about which framework to use for metrics collection because they do not know which stakeholders care about which standard. The standards for carbon footprint metrics are similar and easy to change among. It is important to just get started, because without measuring a baseline carbon footprint, you do not know if you are improving. In addition, it is necessary to monitor to make sure you are not regressing.

Consumer demand and a level playing field are necessary if companies are to develop more-sustainable products. Companies that are making sustainable products often need to charge a higher price to cover costs and so can lose business to other companies that produce cheaper, less-sustainable products. Regulation can help level this uneven playing field. The consensus in Fayetteville was that for companies to be effective in selling more-sustainable products, consumers must be educated to understand the practicality of what is being sold. In addition, retailers have major pull in the environmental quality of products that consumers buy.

Many corporations do not understand the impacts of their products on biodiversity. Biodiversity, in a general sense, is the number of species of plants, animals, and other living things in a particular place. The greatest threat to biodiversity is the change in land use from natural landscapes to agriculture.

A company can start addressing this problem by knowing the geographic reaches of its agriculture-based supply chain and knowing which regions have biodiversity issues. Next, a company can learn about certifications for which biodiversity is the main criterion. Nonprofits in this field can help. Companies should utilize the nonprofits' knowledge and use certifications to guide sourcing policy.

For a glimpse of the Arkansas Solution Lab see the video clips below:

- “Green Business Talk Show: Sustainability and the New Business as Usual,” Michelle Harvey, Lea Jepson, Greg van Buskirk, Zach Freeze: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WnBnklcQl20>
- “Building Sustainability into Your Business,” Elizabeth Sturcken, Catherine Greener, Chip Jones, Sean Stephan: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8NhRRG-8tsY>
- “Assessing Sustainability,” Vonda Lockwood: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=avZ1ug0qaE0>

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Optyva (Seattle)
eco-maven (Seattle)
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About GIBN

The Green Innovators in Business Network (GIBN) is a national network of business changemakers learning and innovating to create a sustainable economy. Through participant-driven events known as Solutions Labs, which are complemented by teleconferences and online interaction, GIBN members share lessons in, challenges to, and solutions for making business more sustainable. The network strives to accelerate interaction and innovation to launch the next generation of sustainable business. GIBN connects practitioners working on sustainability in large corporations and in a wide variety of small and medium-sized businesses, government agencies at all scales, and nonprofit organizations in partnership with business, as well as academics and consultants serving the sustainable business community.

See <http://www.gibn.org> for more information about the Solutions Labs, and contact [Dave Witzel at EDF](#) or [Odin Zackman at Dig In](#) for further details about getting involved with the Solutions Labs.

About AltaTerra Research

AltaTerra is a research consultancy specializing in sustainable business and the commercial marketplace for clean technology solutions. Through independent research reports, executive education events, and advisory services, AltaTerra helps forward-looking organizations capitalize on new green-market opportunities and improve resource efficiency in their operations. From its headquarters in Silicon Valley, AltaTerra has been serving a global base of corporate, institutional, and government clients since 2007. For more information, visit www.altaterra.net.

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