

TOURISM
BUSINESS
ESSENTIALS



SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

The essential guide to operating an environmentally sustainable tourism business in BC.

Sustainable Tourism

This guide provides information on how tourism operators can ensure their business is environmentally sustainable. A number of case studies from across British Columbia show how various tourism operators have initiated environmental practices that have both improved their bottom line and generated business. Tourism-specific environmental certification programs, along with descriptions and information for various related resources in British Columbia are also provided.

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Using this Guide

This guide was created to serve as a resource for tourism operators in British Columbia. Its purpose is to help build more sustainable tourism businesses and communities in BC, by providing practical solutions, tools and resources. It includes background information on key topics, important definitions and concepts, and BC-based case studies to better understand the application of some of the key concepts described.

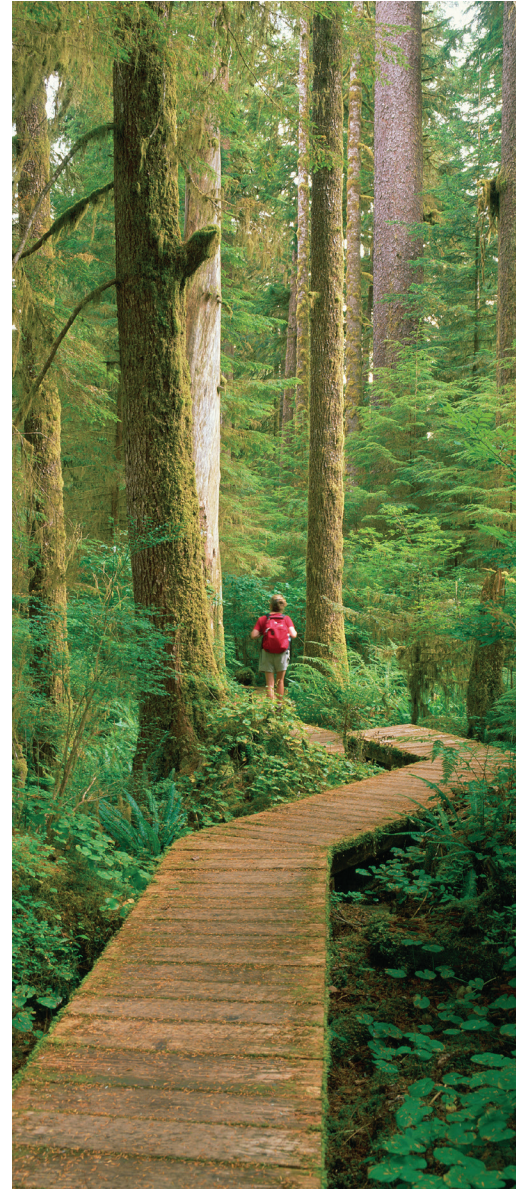
The approaches to sustainable tourism development discussed in this guide can be scaled up or down. Whether you operate a business on your own, or you are part of a larger organization, the information and tools in this guide are applicable to all tourism operators.

Each chapter contains:

- Where possible, specific examples from real BC tourism operations to best illustrate the chapter's messages.
- A checklist to recap the key points of the chapter.
- A list of resources and references where you can find out more about each particular topic.

In the spirit of more sustainable practices, we invite you to read this guide online, and share it electronically, printing only the resources (worksheets, tables, etc.) you wish to keep on hand.

Let's get started!



1

Introduction

Defining Sustainable Tourism

Simply put, sustainable tourism is “**the development of a region’s tourism industry in such a way as to not damage or deplete the resources ... that make the region attractive to tourists.**”¹

Building on this definition, sustainable tourism is a means to “protect and sustain the world’s natural and cultural resources while ensuring tourism meets its potential as a tool for poverty alleviation.”² According to the United Nations Environment Programme this type of tourism development should:

- make “optimal use of environmental resources,”
- “respect the socio-cultural authenticity of host communities,” and
- “ensure viable, long-term economic operations.”³

Triple Bottom Line (TBL): The Business Case for Sustainable Tourism

The concept of sustainable tourism is on the minds of organizations around the world. But while many are concerned about the future of the planet, they wonder whether it makes business sense to pursue sustainability.

An 11-year study by Harvard University found a strong case for enhanced business performance as a result of sustainability practices. They saw that “socially responsible and sustainable corporations had sales growth four times and employment growth eight times that of “shareholder first” companies.”⁴ Clearly, sustainability and business are compatible concepts.

One way to account for the results of the Harvard study is the concept of *Triple Bottom Line*. First coined in 1994 by John Elkington, Triple Bottom Line (TBL) argues that companies should measure their performances in three distinct ways.⁵ The first measurement is the traditional profit and loss account, second is an account of social responsibility, and third is an account of environmental impacts. According to *The Economist*, the “triple bottom line thus consists of three Ps:

profit, people and planet. It aims to measure the financial, social and environmental performance of the corporation over a period of time. Only a company that produces a TBL is taking account of the full cost involved in doing business.”

Since the original concept of Triple Bottom Line was developed – utilizing economic, social and environmental factors – others have come forward suggesting a Quadruple Bottom Line (with economic, social, cultural, and environmental⁶, or economic, social, environmental, and climate⁷ components). These are very valid and generally accepted ways of measuring sustainability; however for the purposes of this guide, we will use the original concept, Triple Bottom Line, as it is at the core of what we are trying to address. This next section discusses each “bottom line” in more detail.

Economic Impacts

Tourism is an economic force to be reckoned with. According to the Government of Canada, tourism activity raised CAD \$31 billion in gross domestic product (GDP) in 2011, representing nearly two per cent

¹ The Intrepid Traveler. Travel-Industry-Dictionary.com. (2009). *Sustainable Tourism*.

² Global Sustainable Tourism Council. gstcouncil.org. (2011).

³ United Nations Environmental Programme. unep.fr. (2012).

⁴ Strandberg Consulting. (December 2009). *Business Case for Sustainability*.

⁵ *The Economist*. (November 17, 2009). *Triple Bottom Line*

⁶ SDS Consulting. (May 7, 2005). *What is Sustainable Development?*

⁷ United Nations World Tourism Organization. (December 3, 2007). *Promoting Climate Friendly Travel*.

Triple Bottom Line (TBL): The Business Case for Sustainable Tourism

of Canada's GDP.⁸ That same year in British Columbia, tourism generated CAD \$13.4 billion in revenue, an increase of 1.4 per cent from 2010 and a 39 per cent increase since 2001.⁹ That is significant growth for a 10-year period. The increase in tourism revenues in 2011 shows the resilience of British Columbia's tourism industry given significant challenges such as the global economic recession and the appreciation of the Canadian dollar.

But tourism is not just big news here at home. In a recent report, the United Nations cited tourism as a key agent for economic development in the world's least developed countries. Most of the economic benefits they found apply to all communities engaged in tourism development. That is because:

- Tourism is a product used where it is made, creating direct opportunities for local tourism businesses and indirect benefits to businesses who sell additional goods and services to visitors (e.g., salon services, retail outlets, etc.).
- Tourism has the potential to support other local industries by providing flexible jobs that can complement other types of seasonal employment.
- Tourism is labour intensive, and provides a wide range of employment opportunities especially for women and young people – from the highly skilled to the unskilled.
- Tourism is perfect for small and micro entrepreneurs, because start-up costs and barriers to entry are generally low.
- Tourism provides not only material benefits but also cultural pride. It also creates greater awareness of the natural environment and its economic value.
- The infrastructure required by tourism, such as transport, communications, water supply,

sanitation, public security, and health services, can also benefit communities.¹⁰

These last two points, regarding greater environmental awareness and overall social benefits, indicate the ways in which economic benefits from tourism can trickle over into the other bottom lines. Next let us look at how tourism impacts the natural environment.

Environmental Impacts

The physical environment, particularly in BC, is a key feature of our tourism product. Unlike resource-based industries, or the typical retail environment, we operate as part of our surroundings. And as our industry grows, so does the impact on BC's natural resources. If these resources continue to deteriorate, we will not be able to deliver on our brand promise. Ultimately, visitor numbers will drop, as will our revenues.

Recently, the tourism industry has begun to shift attention to the specific issue of climate change as a paramount concern in the discussion around tourism's environmental impacts. According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) this is because the sector is highly sensitive to climate change. One needs only look around BC communities to see examples of this sensitivity: ski hills at risk of losing their snow base, coastal communities under threat from severe storms, forest infestations, and dwindling wildlife are a few impacts we have experienced. At the same time we experience these challenges, tourism is among the causes of climate change, "primarily due to emissions resulting from energy use in buildings and transportation."¹¹ Estimates suggest that tourism outputs create 5 per cent of overall greenhouse emissions in the world.¹²

⁸ Destination Canada. (2012). *Tourism Snapshot 2011 Year-in-review: Facts & Figures (6th edition)*.

⁹ Tourism British Columbia. (2012) *Value of Tourism in British Columbia: A Snapshot of 2011*.

¹⁰ United Nations World Tourism Organization. *Report of the WTO to the United Nations Secretary-General in preparation for the Review of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010*.

¹¹ United Nations World Tourism Organization. (December 2007). *Promoting climate friendly travel*.

¹² United Nations World Tourism Organization. (December 2007). *Promoting climate friendly travel*.

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Triple Bottom Line (TBL): The Business Case for Sustainable Tourism

Many people talk about an organization's carbon footprint. While not the only measurement of environmental sustainability, the "footprint" is a popular tool because it relays the impacts of climate change by "illustrating the amount of greenhouse gases produced in our day-to-day lives through burning fossil fuels for electricity, heating and transportation" as measured in tonnes (or kilograms) or carbon dioxide equivalents.¹³

Given our awareness of the impacts of climate change, the BC tourism industry can take steps to reduce our footprint, along with implementing other environmentally sensitive practices.

Social Impacts

Not only does BC's tourism industry rely on the natural environment, our success is connected to people and communities across the province. Many studies have demonstrated the link between tourism, people, and culture. Consider these statistics:

US Travellers :

- Nearly a third (62%) of US travellers surveyed in 2003 say it is important they learn about other cultures when they travel.
- Half (52%) seek destinations with a wide variety of cultural and arts events/attractions.
- Nearly half (49%) prefer trips with small-scale accommodations, run by local people.

UK Travellers:

- Most (81%) British tourists agree their trip should include visits to experience local culture and foods.
- Nearly half (42%) of British tourists look for the quality of local social, economic and political information available.
- More than a third (37%) identified opportunities to interact with local people as an important factor.¹⁴



A Word on "Greenwashing"

If you are reading this guide, you are probably ready to do something practical to help reduce your organization's impacts on the environment. But not every business owner is as meticulous as you are. Through the 1990s and until today, a number of tourism businesses have made environmental claims that cannot be justified. These types of claims became known as "Greenwashing" - the process of overstating the benefits and understating the negative impacts of a business with the goal of seeming "environmentally friendly" to consumers. Because so many consumers are now wary of businesses that slap an "Environmentally Friendly" sticker on their marketing campaigns, it is all the more important that honest businesses take steps to follow the advice in this guide. By implementing, communicating, and monitoring the impacts of your work in the economic, environmental, and social areas of your business, you will leave customers knowing that you truly are committed to being environmentally conscientious.

¹³ Carbon Footprint. carbonfootprint.com. (2011).

¹⁴ Center on Ecotourism and Sustainable Development, The International Ecotourism Society. (April, 2005). *Consumer Demand and Operator Support for Socially and Environmentally Responsible Tourism.*

Triple Bottom Line (TBL): The Business Case for Sustainable Tourism

As you can see, the stronger our communities and the more satisfied our residents, the more we have to offer our visitors. It is often said that tourism is a “people” industry, and measuring these social impacts is becoming all the more important.

We understand that tourism can have a powerful impact on our economic, environmental and social bottom lines. But what about our customers? Are they willing to put their money where their conscience is?

Consumer Demand

The short answer to that question is “yes”. A 2010 International Green Brands Survey indicated the global appetite for sustainable products and services is high. According to the results, over 60 per cent of consumers want to buy from environmentally responsible companies.¹⁵

This move towards more responsible purchasing habits is evident in the tourism marketplace. We only need to look to the hotel sector to see evidence of a shift in consumer preferences and habits. In a 2007 Condé Nast Traveler Survey, 75 per cent of travellers believed hotels should be responsible for helping to relieve poverty in the local community. Seventy-four percent said they would be willing to pay \$3 or more to stay at such a property, and 35% were willing to pay \$10 or more. In the same survey they found 96 per cent of their readers believe hotels and resorts should be responsible for protecting the environment they operate in, and 74 per cent said a hotel’s environmental policies influence their decision to stay there.¹⁶

According to Tony Pollard, Hotel Association of Canada president, “more and more Canadian travellers are calling for hoteliers to look at their environmental offerings.” The January 2011 *Travel Intentions Survey* found that 37 per cent of travellers saw environmental initiatives including water recycling and energy efficiency as important, and 30 per cent stated a hotel accredited by an environmental certification program is important to them. Twenty-seven percent said the ability to purchase carbon credits is very important, up six per cent from 2010. And finally, 45 percent would pay \$1 or more to offset their stay at a property with carbon credits.¹⁷

As an increasing number of visitors are willing to choose more sustainable tourism operations over the competitors, these businesses are seeing an increase in visitor spending. Operators with sustainable initiatives will pull in more revenue, while experiencing an additional benefit: decreased operating costs.

¹⁵ WPP. wpp.com. (June 8, 2010). *Survey identifies varied green beliefs and behaviors among global consumers.*

¹⁶ Condé Nast Traveler. (May, 2007). *The Power of Travel.*

¹⁷ Hotel Association of Canada. (January, 2011). *Canadians Drive to the U. S. For Less Expensive Airline Tickets: Latest Results From 2011 Canadian Travel Intentions Survey.*

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Decreased Operating Costs

Many operators find these cost efficiencies happen in two key areas: facilities and HR savings. The first area makes sense – as you are decreasing the amount of money spent on energy, water, materials, and waste disposal, you are saving money. We detail ways that you can implement these practices in [Chapter 5](#). The second stream of savings will come when you attract and retain higher-quality staff and/or volunteers to your organization, further detailed in [Chapter 4](#).

To demonstrate the ways a business can decrease operating costs, and increase visitor spending, here is the first of our BC-based case studies.

Homegrown Example: Eye of the Wind

Sustainable Tourism Becomes an Attraction at Grouse Mountain

In September 2010, the Eye of the Wind turbine at Grouse Mountain was officially approved for power generation. The launch of this project represented a fusion of sustainability and tourism business practices.

But beyond a means to achieving more sustainable power production, the Eye of the Wind is a unique tourism experience, complementing Grouse Mountain's significant year-round attractions. According to Grouse Mountain in March 2012:

The Eye of the Wind is a large wind turbine – so large that you are able to ascend the 20-storey high tower via an elevator contained within its supporting shaft. You exit into a 36-person viewPOD™ atop the tower, suspended directly below the hub of the massive 125-foot (38-metre) long blades. The viewPOD is encased in glass, including a segment of the floor. The closest corresponding experience would be flying in the clear Plexiglas nose bubble of a jet helicopter – except this bubble is approximately 30 times larger.

The views from The Eye of the Wind are of the jaw-dropping variety. All of Vancouver and its busy harbour, the Coastal Mountains (including the twin peaks known as The Lions) and a vast, green wilderness spread out before you.

The view – 360 degrees of it – is spectacular. From here, sunrises and sunsets are more spectacular, as are the mists that seasonally enshroud the city and the silver-gray storms that blow in off the Pacific. Just being here is like walking on the wind.

Grouse Mountain has created a distinctive landmark and attraction on their grounds, and power generation from the turbine now offsets 25% of their annual energy costs.

Trends

Implementing more sustainable tourism practices can help reduce our environmental footprint, enhance our societies and bring stability to our economies. It is also a way to attract consumers, and reduce operating costs. But beyond these benefits is the fact that sustainable tourism is no longer a new concept – and many global, national, and local leaders are already taking on this challenge. We used to encourage sustainability as a way to lead the market; now it is the standard.

Global Trends

As mentioned earlier, the UNWTO now sees tourism as a vehicle for change the world over, particularly in developing economies. Recently the Adventure Tourism Development Index (ATDI) named the following as the Top Ten Developing Countries for Sustainable Tourism: Lithuania, Botswana, Latvia, Bulgaria, Chile, Slovenia, Estonia, the Czech Republic, Israel, and Slovakia. All of these destinations feature hard and soft eco-adventure, national parks and protected areas, and interpretive cultural programs.¹⁸ Sustainable tourism, however, has long been a priority in some of the world's other "mainstream" destinations, including Costa Rica, New Zealand and Australia.

National Trends

Canada has also responded to the global demand for future sustainable development strategies. Not only does the federal government now have a policy for future Canadian development, several federal ministries including Environment Canada also have their own policies and strategy documents outlining criteria for future projects.¹⁹

Our national tourism leaders are taking note of this agenda. Produced by the Destination Canada, Tourism Industry Association of Canada (TIAC) and Parks Canada, *The Green Your Business: Toolkit for Tourism Operators* is stocked with user-friendly, accessible and practical tips. Former Destination Canada President and CEO Michele McKenzie explained the "toolkit will deliver steps that SMEs can begin implementing today to help promote greener tourism practices."²⁰ Many of the practices suggested in the toolkit have been incorporated into the chapters that follow.

By now we hope you are convinced, more than ever, that adopting better sustainability practices makes sense for BC's tourism industry, and for your business. With global, national and provincial tourism leaders taking note of the sustainability agenda, now is the time for action. It is up to individual organizations to improve, in any way they can, they way they do business.

¹⁸ Pozoni. (March 17, 2011). *The Top Ten Developing Countries for Sustainable Tourism*.

¹⁹ Government of Canada. (October 2010). *Planning for a Sustainable Future: A federal sustainable development strategy for Canada*.

²⁰ Tourism Industry Association of Canada, Destination Canada, Parks Canada. (2008). *Green your business: A toolkit for tourism operators*.

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The Six Step Process of Improving Your Sustainability Practices

The rest of this guide is committed to helping you make positive changes to the way you do business through the following six steps:

1. Select a model that works for you.
2. Choose a program leader and set your goals.
3. Involve and educate your workforce.
4. Implement your plan.
5. Communicate with customers and your community.
6. Measure your progress.

The following chapters will outline each step in further detail. We hope the information that follows will assist you in taking steps towards creating a more sustainable future for BC's tourism industry, and the planet.

Checklist

- Remember that sustainable tourism development incorporates economic, social and environmental impacts – the Triple Bottom Line (TBL).
- The tourism consumer of today values businesses that incorporate genuine sustainable practices into their operations – and are willing to pay extra for it.
- Making changes can help you cut costs in terms of your facilities and your HR practices.
- Sustainable tourism can even become a main attraction of your business, as in the case of the Eye of the Wind on Grouse Mountain.

Resources

Global Sustainable Tourism Council

www.gstcouncil.org

A global initiative dedicated to promoting sustainable tourism practices around the world.

Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria

www.gstcouncil.org

A set of 37 voluntary standards representing the minimum that any tourism business should aspire to reach in order to protect and sustain the world's natural and cultural resources, while ensuring tourism meets its potential as a tool for poverty alleviation.

United Nations World Tourism Organization: Sustainable Development of Tourism

www.unwto.org/sdt

Provides policy guidelines, tools, poverty reduction initiatives, cultural tourism elements, and destination-specific undertakings – all related to the sustainable development of tourism the world over.



2 Select a Model That Works for You

Choosing a Model That Works for You

Just as financial management systems are a part of business, so are programs that support environmental and social responsibility. These can be translated into strategies that include:

- improvement of indoor environmental quality
- effective use of site resources
- reduction in the use of energy, water and materials
- management of waste (water and solids)
- use of environmentally responsible building materials
- incorporation of sustainability principles and innovation into human resources (recruitment and training)
- forging stronger connections with the host community.

As you learned in the previous chapter, sustainable tourism development is no longer a new concept. Tourism businesses in jurisdictions around the world have changed their impacts, and you can benefit from their experience by reviewing a range of existing models and choosing a program that works best for you.

Generally speaking, your organization can make use of two different, and complementary, types of strategic resources: toolkits and certification programs. The rest of this chapter outlines these in greater detail.

Toolkits

Toolkits are hands-on resources created to guide you through very specific actions that can transform your business, sometimes with immediate results. As in [Chapter 5](#) of this guide, most feature a range of initiatives that can be adapted in-house by members of your team. These can be a great first steps towards sustainability – they represent helpful advice that does not cost a penny!

The following toolkits are just a few of the resources available to you and your business:

Green Your Business: Toolkit for Tourism Operators

The Tourism Industry Association of Canada, Destination Canada, and Parks Canada
www.tiac.travel/Library/documents/green_your_business_toolkit.pdf

A collaboration between TIAC, Destination Canada and Parks Canada, this book aims to provide practical tips and sound guidance to the Canadian tourism industry. It places special focus on small and medium-size enterprises (SMEs). Stocked with user-friendly, accessible and practical tips, readers

may undertake as many, or as few, of the toolkit's suggestions as their time and resources allow.

LiveSmart BC at Work

www.livesmartbc.ca/green_business/index.html

The Government of BC's LiveSmart at Work program provides small businesses with four types of resources and inspiration:

1. *Helping Small Businesses Go Green and Save*: the BC Hydro Power Smart Product Incentive Program helps small and medium businesses upgrade to approved energy efficient technologies, reducing up-front capital costs and creating long-run operational cost savings. For more information visit www.bchydro.com/incentives.
2. *Resources for Corporate Greening*: find resources for making green choices, including information about energy assessments, workshops, rebates and incentives, tools and funding opportunities.

3. *Free Actions*: the site lists 15 free actions to discover how easy it can be to reduce your greenhouse gas emissions at work.
 4. *Success Stories*: the following case study, from one of Oliver's community tourism attractions, Tinhorn Creek vineyards, is one of the many inspirational profiles on the site.
- information and materials in an attempt to increase environmental awareness in the accommodations industry. Members receive a toolkit and the Catalogue of Environmental Products, containing information on energy and water saving products, shampoo and body wash product dispensers, recycling containers, etc. Member fees are US \$1 per guest room plus \$200 per year.

Green Hotels Association

www.greenhotels.com

The Green Hotels Association, based in Houston, Texas, is a non-certification program that provides access to

Homegrown Example: Tinhorn Creek Vineyards

Saving Two Kinds of Green¹

When Sandra Oldfield decided to attend the [Climate Smart workshops](#), she worried it would be too expensive to implement sustainability initiatives at Tinhorn Creek Vineyards. In reality, the opposite was true.

"One of the most surprising things we learned when we went through the program was how it would translate into better cost efficiencies in our company's bottom line," said Oldfield, head of operations at the Oliver vineyards.

The winery was already beginning to operate with a sustainable mindset when executives recognized their goals coincided well with those of the Climate Smart program, which focuses on equipping businesses with the tools and knowledge to profitably reduce their greenhouse gas emissions.

The workshops offer comprehensive, business case-based training, taking businesses through the process of creating an emissions inventory and developing reduction strategies with a focus on cost savings and brand lift. Online tools and technical assistance help measure and reduce carbon footprints.

Businesses enrolled in the program join a group of 10-15 enterprises for three, half-day workshops over 10 weeks run by climate change experts.

"It was very valuable to talk to employees from businesses so different from your own because they would mention ideas you wouldn't even think of."

[Climate Smart workshops](#) focus on three important steps:

- Measure: monitor your GHG emissions
- Reduce: make goals and choose strategies
- Leverage: work toward becoming carbon neutral and communicate initiatives.

"The measuring exercise is cathartic and makes you look at everything more holistically," said Oldfield. *"You really start to recognize where the most energy is spent and you can begin to target the energy bottlenecks."*

¹ Government of British Columbia. (December 2010). *LiveSmart BC Community Feature*.

2 Select a Model That Works for You

General Certification Programs

Having made strides towards better practices, the certification process is designed for businesses wishing to achieve third-party validation of their tools and strategies. Certification can be a rigorous and expensive step, as it generally involves compliance with strict national or international standards. The advantage to certification is that, when completed with a credible organization, it provides a "seal of approval" that visitors and tour operators can trust. Each operator will need to determine if certification is applicable to their business.

The following programs are geared towards all businesses. Where possible, costs of participation at the date of publication have been included.

Global Reporting Initiative - GRI

www.globalreporting.org

The Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) is a network-based organization that pioneered the world's most widely used sustainability reporting framework. GRI is committed to the framework's continuous improvement and application worldwide. GRI's core goals include the mainstreaming of disclosure on environmental, social and governance performance. Organizational Stakeholders (OS) can join on a sliding scale, based on turnover, from €100 to €10,000.

The following case study features a GRI reporting stakeholder, Canadian Mountain Holidays, who use the GRI standards along with home grown programs to create their own road map to sustainability.

Homegrown Example: Canadian Mountain Holidays

Specializing in heli-skiing and heli-hiking, Canadian Mountain Holidays (CMH) is an adventure tourism operator that has a set vision and goals for sustainable tourism. Their regular report "Moving Towards Sustainability" details their initiatives to achieve a triple bottom line for environmental, social and fiscal sustainability.

In their 2010 report CMH outlined the following initiatives:

- **Storytelling:** sharing sustainability stories – both successes and failures – with guests, helping CMH "become more accountable and more rigorous in our level of commitment. Telling our story has also helped us to engage others."
- **Reporting to GRI Standards:** "Companies such as Apple, Coca Cola and Unilever are using the standard now, but we are aware of few – if any – tourism companies in North America that are reporting to GRI Standards."
- **The Second Nature program:** committee members are responsible for leading changes in offices and lodges such as changing lighting (installing motion sensors for lights, and changing bulbs to compact fluorescents where possible), minimizing flying time (monitoring the number of hours helicopters fly compared to number of metres skied), and educating guests (lodge managers introduce guests to Second Nature goals by discussing ways they can play a part in minimizing their own footprints).

Continued on next page

General Certification Programs

- **SnowBase:** a tool initially used for guides to track and analyze snow, weather and snow stability data, SnowBase has been used since 2008 as a tracking and decision-making tool to ensure that animals are not displaced from their chosen habitats in winter or summer. At the end of each season, a review is done to ensure that guides and pilots have been properly and effectively using the company's wildlife procedures.

As you can see, CMH considers wildlife management, forest and plant communities, noise reduction, energy conservation, and waste management in setting operating guidelines for bringing guests to the wilderness mountain ecosystems of British Columbia. Their staff help to integrate business development, operations, research and training with the company's sustainability goals. Measuring their progress in achieving sustainable actions was a key to CMH winning the Tourism Industry Association of Canada's Sustainable Tourism Award and the Environmentally Responsible Tourism Award in 2004.

To get more inspirational ideas, read the report in full at www.canadianmountainholidays.com

Green Star Inc.

www.greenstarinc.org

Green Star is a non-profit organization that encourages organizations to adopt techniques of waste reduction, energy conservation and pollution prevention. Standards are designed for organizations of all types and sizes. The fee for becoming a national member is approximately CAD \$1,800. This funding provides the relevant regional Chapter with samples of Green Star Program materials and other support materials. These materials can be reproduced and used in administering the program at the local level.

International Organization for Standardization (ISO)

www.iso.org/iso/home/standards/management-standards/iso14000.htm

The ISO is a network of the national standards institutes (non-governmental organizations) in 149 countries that coordinate the system and publish the finished standards. ISO 14001 conformance means the same thing worldwide and is understood by financial organizations and insurance companies when evaluating environmental performance. Certified ISO auditors can verify that an environmental management system is in place and is operational.

Homegrown Example: Sun Peaks Resort and ISO 14001 Certification

According to Sun Peaks Resort in May 2012, the Resort was the first all-season recreational resort in North America to be certified in 2004 under the International Organization for Standards ISO 14001. Sun Peaks Resort Corporation recognizes that maintaining the natural environment is essential to maintaining the quality of life they enjoy now and wish to protect for future generations. Sun Peaks has incorporated environmental management practices into all stages of development including planning, construction, operations, and maintenance, resulting in their 2006 Tourism BC Environmentally Responsible Tourism Award. Visit www.sunpeaksresort.com to learn more about their organization.

2 Select a Model That Works for You

General Certification Programs

LEED Canada: Canada Green Building Council

www.cagbc.org

The LEED Canada designation for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design for new construction or major renovations recognizes high performance design, construction and operational practices that reduce environmental impacts.

The Natural Step (TNS)

www.naturalstep.ca

The Natural Step Canada works with organizations to pioneer sustainable solutions. Through learning programs and a suite of advisory, coaching, training, and process facilitation services, TNS translates the fundamentals of sustainability into practical steps businesses and communities can take to achieve lasting change.

Tourism-Specific Certification Programs

These certification programs focus specifically on tourism-related businesses. Where possible, costs of participation at the date of publication release have been included.

Green Globe

www.greenglobe.com

Green Globe is an international certification program for travel and tourism businesses. The program was developed by the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) and has regional offices in England, Australia and Puerto Rico. The goal of Green Globe is to apply clear standards based on ISO 14001 and the Earth Summit's Agenda 21 for sustainable development.

Upon entry into the program, companies have six months to decide whether or not to pursue certification. There are three stages leading to certification: entry and commitment, environmental management system and independent verification. The cost runs between CAD \$1,125 and \$22,500 (depending on size and scope).

EarthCheck

www.earthcheck.org

EarthCheck is the leading benchmarking, certification and environmental management program used by the travel and tourism industry. EarthCheck recognises 39 sectors in the travel and tourism industry and helps operators to monitor, measure and manage their environmental, social and economic impacts.

The EarthCheck Company Standard consists of six key steps that establish the foundation for the journey to sustainable tourism practices. This process has two distinct stages: Benchmarking and Certification.

Annual Fee: \$3,600

IBLF Tourism Partnership

www.tourismpartnership.org

This non-profit program was developed by a group of hotel executives in an attempt to promote continual improvement in environmental performance by the industry worldwide. Headquartered in London, the program currently represents over 8,000 hotels worldwide. Tourism Partnership attempts to:

- provide practical guidance on how to improve environmental performance, and how it relates to a successful business operation
- develop practical environmental manuals
- recommend systems for monitoring improvements in environmental performance and for environmental audits
- encourage observance of the highest possible standards of environmental management
- exchange information widely and highlight examples of excellent practice.

Costs are associated with the various manuals, videos and guidance papers provided by Tourism Partnership.

Hotel Certification Programs

These programs focus specifically on the hotel sector. Where possible, costs of participation at the date of publication release have been included.

Audubon Green Lodging Program

www.auduboninternational.org/green-lodging

The Green Lodging Program awards an Eco-rating, based on the extent of the environmental measures undertaken, with regards to water quality and conservation, waste minimization, conservation and energy efficiency. Annual program membership fees are based on the number of rooms the lodging facility has.

ECOTEL

www.ecotelhotels.com

HVS Sustainability Services is an environmental services company that operates the ECOTEL program based on five evaluation areas:

1. solid waste management
2. energy efficiency
3. water conservation
4. employee education and community involvement
5. environmental commitment.

There are three levels of criteria – Primary, Secondary and Tertiary – with the first inspection taking place after the primary criteria are met. Hotels usually take 18 - 24 months to prepare before the certification inspection. ECOTEL only certifies 100 hotels at a time; it is possible to lose certification if a hotel does not adjust to the biennial criteria updates. There is a base fee of CAD \$15,000 for inspection. HVS will make multiple trips to the hotel if necessary, and the fee will not exceed \$25,000. Certification is good for two years, after which time the hotel will be re-inspected at a minimal fee.

Green Key Eco-Rating Program

www.greenkeyglobal.com

The Green Key Eco-Rating Program is a graduated rating system designed to recognize hotels, motels, and resorts committed to improving their fiscal and environmental performance. Through a partnership between the Green Key Eco-Rating Program and Natural Resources Canada, the Green Key Eco-Rating Program identifies hotels eligible for up to CAD \$250,000 funding for energy retrofit planning and projects. Based on the results of an online environmental audit, hoteliers are awarded a 1-5 Green Key rating and given property-specific guidance on reduced utility consumption, employee training and supply chain management.

Hoteliers benefit from powerful sales, marketing, public relations, and team building opportunities, not to mention positive feedback from guests. Participating properties also benefit from use of the Green Key logo and listings on the Green Key website, the Federal Public Works and Government Services Accommodation Directory, as well as in various provincial accommodation guides including the Destination BC online *Approved Accommodation Guide*. Membership in the Green Key Program must be renewed on an annual basis in order to maintain your status as a rated property and to continue receiving the benefits associated with membership. Canadian properties pay CAD \$350 (plus tax); companies wishing to register 10 or more properties may be eligible for a discount.

2 Select a Model That Works for You

Food and Beverage Certification Programs

BC SPCA Certified Program

www.sPCA.bc.ca/welfare/farm-animal-welfare/sPCA-certified/

SPCA Certified is an innovative farm certification and food-labelling program dedicated to improving farm animal welfare standards in Canada. In response to growing concern for farm animal welfare, the BC SPCA developed SPCA Certified – the consumer’s assurance that farm animals are raised to the BC SPCA’s high animal welfare standards. Restaurants can choose from certified BC products including eggs, poultry and cheese.

Green Table

www.greentable.net

This Vancouver-based organization was the first to offer local restaurants a “made-in-Canada” way to go green. Since 2007, more than 100 operations across British Columbia (and beyond) have joined the Green Table Network (GTN). Membership in GTN is not only open and available to all restaurant and foodservice operators, but to everyone who supports and sustains them, including equipment manufacturers, municipalities and other levels of government, suppliers

and distributors, public utilities and service providers, growers and artisan producers, trade and professional culinary associations. At the time of writing, the GTN was preparing to launch a 2.0 version of the program, including a new app.

Ocean Wise

www.oceanwise.ca

Ocean Wise is a Vancouver Aquarium conservation program created to educate and empower consumers about the issues surrounding sustainable seafood. Ocean Wise works directly with restaurants, markets, food services, and suppliers ensuring that they have the most current scientific information regarding seafood and helping them make ocean-friendly buying decisions. The options are highlighted on their menus and display cases with the Ocean Wise symbol, making it easier for consumers to make environmentally friendly seafood choices. The Ocean Wise logo next to a menu or seafood item is an assurance that the item is a good choice for keeping ocean life healthy and abundant for generations to come.

How to Choose the Right Program?

We have thrown a lot of resources, tools, and frameworks your way. At the same time, the list we have provided just scratches the surface of available toolkits and certification programs.

So how do you make a decision as to which to use? The following are some tips on making the process easier:

1. **Determine what is already being used in your region.** Ask fellow businesses and community stakeholders what methods they have tried, and review references from these groups. Not finding the answers you need? Many organizations now openly discuss their sustainability practices online or in public reports.

Keep in mind that your community or tourism organization may already be using a specific system.

2. Once you have narrowed down your options, **ask your customers what actions they would value most.** Use a simple survey format listing potential actions, and include one open-ended question asking “What One Change Should We Make to Be More Sustainable?” Offer a prize for the best answer. Keep copies of the survey in high traffic areas (printed on recycled paper), and post a copy of the survey online using one of many free

How to Choose the Right Program?

online survey tools. You may be surprised to find out that your customers might not value an expensive certification program, but they would like you to use unbleached toilet paper! This is a great first way to engage them in the process (see [Chapter 6](#) for more information).

3. Feeling overwhelmed? **Contact your closest college or university tourism management program.** Students (the future leaders of our industry) are tapped

into sustainability practices and can help you research, and select, a method as part of a project or volunteer opportunity. For a list of these schools, visit www.linkbc.ca.

The options for sustainability actions can seem overwhelming, but you do not have to do everything overnight. As you will see in [Chapter 5](#), simply changing the light bulbs around your site can make a big difference. The next step – choosing a leader and setting goals – will help make the process even easier.

Checklist

- Take a moment to think about your business needs, and your resources.
- Carefully review potential programs before signing up.
- Remember: whether you are picking up your first toolkit, hiring a student team to create a management framework, or using a ready-made certification program – pick the method that works best for you and your business.

Resources

Ecotourism Handbooks on Certification
CREST (formerly CESD), in collaboration with Rainforest Alliance and The International Ecotourism Society (TIES), has produced several handbooks on the topic of ecotourism and certification can be found on their website www.ecotourism.org/certification-and-standards:

- *A Simple User's Guide to Certification for Sustainable Tourism and Ecotourism* (PDF)
- *Practical Steps for Funding Certification of Tourism Businesses* (PDF)
- *Practical steps for Marketing Tourism Certification* (PDF)
- *Financing Tourism Certification* (PDF)

Fostering Innovation in Sustainable Tourism
<http://web.viu.ca/sustainabletourism/>

This partnership between Vancouver Island University, the University of Northern BC, Thompson Rivers University, and the College of the Rockies works to diffuse innovation and build capacity in sustainable tourism practices within rural regions of BC by showcasing innovators, sharing their practices and providing tools to build the competitiveness of the province.

One Percent for the Planet

www.onepercentfortheplanet.org/en/

Since 2002, One Percent for the Planet has inspired members of the business community to contribute one per cent of sales to environmental groups around the world. In return, this growing alliance of companies is given the opportunity not only to see their self-worth rise, but their net worth climb as well.

3 Choose a Program Leader and Set Your Goals

Who Should Lead the Charge?

You have made the decision to make changes, and have ideas from your peers and customers as to how to proceed. Now comes the time to decide whether you, or someone else, should be the leader in your organization's sustainable tourism program.

You might choose to lead the program yourself. Perhaps you are an owner-operator working solo, or with a team that fluctuates over the year. You might have the passion, the vision and the time to oversee and carry out sustainability-related projects. And for the time being, you might be the best person for the job.

In many cases, however, it makes sense to inspire other members of your team to take on the sustainability agenda. For one thing, while you need to be apprised of developments and milestones, your time and energy might be better spent overseeing operations as a whole. For another, and most importantly, if you give your team a chance to initiate better practices, you will experience exponentially more powerful results.

The following example from Fairmont Hotels demonstrates the ways in which a team-led strategy executed by staff can produce effective results for the organization as a whole.

Homegrown Examples: Fairmont Waterfront Hotel

Culture allows us to continually rethink and improve our operations

In 2010, and again in 2012, Fairmont Waterfront's twenty year commitment was recognized by the Tourism Industry Association of BC (formally Council of Tourism Associations) as the recipient of the Delta Hotels Environmentally Responsible Tourism Award.

According to Fairmont Waterfront, as of June 2012, the hotel's multi-faceted Green Partnership Program includes initiatives such as managing a rooftop apiary of 500,000 honeybees, growing its own herbs, fruits and vegetables for the hotel's kitchen, and leading the industry in waste management, energy and water conservation.

"We're delighted to receive this award and be recognized by our industry as a proponent of a sustainable business model," says General Manager, Ian Pullan. "Whether it's our Green Team implementing a new guest initiative or our food and beverage team making a decision to replace a product with our own signature rooftop honey, we know that the hotel's culture allows us to continually rethink and improve our operations."

Fairmont's Green Partnership has been the company's award-winning environmental program focused on minimizing the impact of hotel operations on the environment. The Program sees implemented initiatives including:

- The installation of two Electric Vehicle (EV) charging stations where hotel guests' electric cars receive complimentary valet parking, and hybrid vehicles receive 50% off.
- Conversion to Compact Fluorescent Lighting in much of the hotel, projecting to save 6000,000 KWH or about CAD \$37,000 per year.
- Awarded Five Green Keys and Four Green Meeting Keys by the Green Key Eco-Rating Program.
- Introduction of heart of the house composting, with the goal of integrating a composting option for hotel guests.

For more information on Fairmont's Green Partnership program, visit www.fairmont.com/environment.

Who Should Lead the Charge?

If you choose to go with the team-based approach, be sure to keep the following tips in mind:

Select a leader from within your organization. In some cases you may wish to create a position and have interested parties apply – these types of leadership roles can be coveted by staff members. Or, it may be easier to start by appointing a member of your team who inspires trust amongst his or her peers.

Work with that leader to create a small working group. Keep the numbers low at the beginning to ensure efficiency; other interested parties can join once elements of the strategy are in place.

Set terms for serving in the group. This will depend on the degree of seasonality of your business – try to ensure a minimum of six months so team members can see results from their actions.

Consider having the inaugural team name themselves. Try to move away from terms like “Green” and “Eco” and consider a name that encompasses financial, social, and environmental improvements.

Invite the group to work through this guide with you. They can help set the goals for the first phase of improvements.

Specific Measureable Results: It's Goal Time!

Once you have determined who should take the lead, it is important to understand what specific aims your sustainability strategy will strive to achieve. As mentioned in the first chapter, customers are keen on businesses that genuinely make changes to improve their economic, social, and ecological performance. They are also wary of greenwashing. To avoid the latter, set goals that are specific, measurable, and produce tangible results. Each should contain: a measurable target (e.g. dollars, pounds, number of people), and a timeframe for implementation of the tactics.

While reading this section, we invite you to flip forward and scan through the next two

chapters. These feature examples of practices you can implement and will help give you ideas about the tactical aspects of your plan.

The following case study illustrates the way a tourism business can set goals, and reach them, in each of the three bottom lines of reporting: economic, social, and ecological. The exercises that follow will help you set a minimum of two goals in each of the three bottom line areas. Feel free to copy the worksheets and make revisions – they are not set in stone, and you will likely update them as your targets are met, or exceeded!

3 Choose a Program Leader and Set Your Goals

Specific
Measureable
Results: It's
Goal Time!

Homegrown Example: The Vancouver Convention Centre

Setting Goals and Breaking Records

The Vancouver Convention Centre not only exceeds expectations in service standards, but has also integrated a number of unique, green features in its construction that has resulted in positive attention from meeting planners and architects around the world.

According to Jinny Wu, Communications Manager for the Vancouver Convention Centre, a very visible example of the Centre's environmental and conservation commitment is its six-acre (2.4 hectare) living roof – the largest in Canada and largest non-industrial living roof in North America. The roof is designed to imitate Pacific Northwest Coastal grassland, landscaped with more than 400,000 indigenous plants and grasses from the region and provide a natural habitat for birds, insects and four resident beehives. The expanded facility also features a restored marine habitat built into the foundation, attracting a diverse range of marine species while improving the water quality in the area dramatically.

Other activities as part of the extensive environmental program include recycling and food and beverage management; energy conservation; seawater heating and cooling; and on-site water treatment. Further, the Vancouver Convention Centre West building was the first convention facility in the world to receive LEED® (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Platinum certification.

The Vancouver Convention Centre is not short on prestigious awards and accolades. Just a few of the recent awards include:

- International Association of Congress Centres (AIPC) Quality Standards Certification, Gold Level (2011)
- AIPC Innovation Award (2011)
- American Institute of Architects' Committee on the Environment's Top Ten Green Projects (2011)
- IMEX Green Supplier Award, Silver (2011)
- Professional Convention Management Association's Environmental Leadership Award (2010)
- Sustainable Architecture & Building (SAB) magazine's Canadian Green Building Awards (2010)
- American Institute of Architects (AIA) Honour Awards for Interior Architecture (2011)
- Architect Magazine's Annual Design Review - Bond Citation (2010)

Beyond this impressive work, the convention centre is making its mark economically. Conferences and events that attract delegates and exhibitors from outside of British Columbia generate significant economic spin-offs. Out-of-town visitors bring increased business to hotels, restaurants, services and attractions across the city and province. The Convention Centre hosted a record 666 events in fiscal 2012 (April 1, 2011 to March 31, 2012).

"One of our distinct selling features as a destination is around green practices and stewardship of the environment," said Tourism Vancouver's past chair Geoffrey Howes. "Vancouver is renowned for its approach to sustainability and the convention centre is a leading example of these practices. It's a message we proudly take to the international marketplace, and one that is embraced by our meeting planner customers."

Worksheet

Sustainability Goals for: _____

Economic Objectives

e.g. Goal: Save \$1,000 in energy costs per quarter.

e.g. Tactics: Update lighting, and review HVAC systems, as per chart on page 32. Improve efficiency of hot water system as per chart on page 35. Implementation will take three months.

e.g. Measurement/Target: We will use the BC Hydro account statements from the three prior years to determine our average energy costs per quarter. After the implementation period, we will begin comparing our costs against these benchmarks. Our new energy costs should be at least \$1,000 less expensive per quarter. All savings will be used to fund the purchase of energy efficient replacement appliances until upgrading is complete.

Your Turn...

Goal: _____

Tactics: _____

Measurement/Target: _____

Ecological Objectives

e.g. Goal: Reduce water use by 50% by the end of the fiscal year.

e.g. Tactics: In Q1, the team will conduct a sweep of all water systems to repair leaks, install aerators on all faucets and showerheads, and dams in all toilets. In Q2, we will purchase and install a rainbarrel system on our gutters and use this for laundry, washing vehicles, and irrigation; members of our team will re-landscape the front grounds using native ground cover. In Q3 we will upgrade half of our toilets to low-flow systems. In Q4, we will start a guest education campaign to reduce their water use.

e.g. Measurement/Target: We will contact the municipality and get water readings for the last two years. Using these as a benchmark, we will target new use at 50% of the average of the last two years.

Your Turn...

Goal: _____

Tactics: _____

Measurement/Target: _____

3

Choose a Program Leader and Set Your Goals

Worksheet

Social Objectives

e.g. Goal: To engage with one tenth of our community's residents in the next two months.

e.g. Tactics: We will host our first annual open house next month, welcoming the community to have input into our new sustainability strategy. We will also reach out to the Chamber of Commerce, our local Destination Marketing Organization (DMO), Kiwanis, Rotary, and several key charities and invite them to a special meeting to review our plans once they are done. Every month, each employee will receive 3 hours off (paid) to volunteer with the local charity or cause of their choice. We will document these and other initiatives on our Facebook page and Twitter account, and make virtual contact with as many residents as possible.

e.g. Measurement/Target: Based on the 2006 census, our town is home to 10,000 people. That means we have to reach, directly or indirectly, 1,000 people. We will track this by keeping a "community engagement list" in Excel, ideally capturing contact data for each of our new friends.

Your Turn...

Goal: _____

Tactic: _____

Measurement/Target: _____

It is Almost Time for Action

If you have followed the advice in this Chapter, you have taken the first step in a journey that should lead to better financial, social, and environmental returns for your organization. Before we move on to potential tactics, it is important to think about the role this new direction will play in your human resources strategies. We have seen that committed teams across BC are achieving results – next we will learn how you can tie your sustainability practices into the culture of your organization.

Checklist

- Decide who will oversee the sustainability plan for your organization. This will depend on the business' size, seasonality, and your own commitments.
- If pulling together a team, consult a team building resource like TeamPedia (see resources section) to help bring the group together.
- Review later chapters for inspiration and pencil in 2-3 goals for each sustainability objective area (economic, social and environmental). These goals can change – the important thing is you start somewhere!
- Goals need to be specific, measurable, and realistic. Envision small steps to start.

Resources

Tourism Industry Resources

www.destinationbc.ca/resources

Destination British Columbia has created a series of industry resources including information and templates for creating a strategic plan.

OnStrategy

www.onstrategyhq.com

OnStrategy is an online tool which can assist you in the development of a strategic plan. Assess your competitive position, develop strategies, assign goals and actions, track performance, produce flawless plans, and achieve outcomes.

TeamPedia

www.teampedia.net

TeamPedia is a collaborative encyclopedia of free team building activities, icebreakers, teamwork resources, and tools for teams that anyone can edit. The site is designed for a wide audience including: team leaders, trainers, teachers, and managers.



4 Involve and Educate Staff

Achieving a Sustainable Workforce

The success or failure of your sustainability initiatives will depend on how well they are sewn into the culture of your organization. Employee knowledge of sustainability principles will vary, depending upon the size of your business. The most important step is to ensure all employees have a basic level of awareness and understand how their job impacts the community, your profitability and the natural environment.

Now that you are taking on the challenge of improving your performance in these areas, it is in your best interest to build a team with

strong work practices and values – a team that will stick with your business as you achieve your goals, and create even greater ones. This chapter will discuss the three key components of a sustainable HR strategy: attraction, training and retention. The first step is attraction, also known in HR circles as “recruitment”.

Working by yourself for now? Keep these suggestions in mind as you work with suppliers, volunteers, and other service providers.

Recruiting the Best of the Best: Sustainability Culture

If you are going to build the best team, you will have to start by selecting the best players. For the last few decades, these players have traditionally been part of the Baby Boom generation (people born between 1946 and 1964). However, the face of tomorrow's workforce has been changing and skilled Baby Boomers are leaving the workforce in ever-increasing numbers. In the US, this amounted to a 30% retirement increase in the last decade over the previous.¹ With roughly a third of the labour force exiting the workforce soon, a new generation, known as Generation Y (aka: Generation Connected, Generation Net, the Millennials) is stepping into the void. Whatever you choose to call Generation Y, they represent the bulk of the upcoming workforce: those born roughly between 1978 and 2000.

This shift in the employee target market from Boomers to Generation Y has a profound impact on the HR recruitment strategies your business should be using. And the good news is, by improving your sustainability practices you will automatically be more attractive to this market!

One of the key characteristics of Generation Y is they have been raised inside of the sustainability paradigm. For many, there has never been a time when households did not recycle, for instance. A study called *The Beliefs and Values of Teens and Tweens Today* recently countered media portrayals of Generation Y as “irresponsible, lazy, and morally corrupt,” and instead characterized them as “responsible to themselves and others.” The same study found that this group “exhibit[s] a strong sense of community and global responsibility in their attitudes toward environmental stewardship,” and that 78 per cent of students in grades 7 - 12 agree “that everyone has a responsibility to take care of the environment.”²

The Triple Bottom Line is a concept this generation can get behind. In fact, it is the way they already view the world. In the results of an IBM study repurposed under the title *Millennials and the New Corporate Leaders - Social Responsibility Is Essential*, Irving Wladawsky-Berger, a former senior executive at IBM, shared that Generation Y “understand implicitly and intuitively that economies,

¹ Kip Harell. (September 3, 2008). *Millennials: Your next generation workforce*.

² Lauren Mackay. (April 2010). *Generation Green - why Gen Y and the Millennials are greener than you'll ever be*.

Recruiting the Best of the Best: Sustainability Culture

societies, governments and organizations are made up of interconnecting networks.” He also noted that “among the nine leadership traits CEOs and students could choose from, students placed a higher emphasis on only two leadership qualities – global thinking and a focus on sustainability. Students were 46 per cent more likely than CEOs to view global thinking as a top leadership quality. And they were 35 per cent more likely to include sustainability in the top three.”³

Additional Resources

Tourism Business Essentials – Employees First

Destination British Columbia has developed a FREE *Employees First* guide that provides information on how to attract, retain and develop an effective workforce. Developed in partnership with go2, the guide offers insights on great people practices from leading tourism operators as well as templates that enable you to put this knowledge to work. In today’s challenging labour market, learn how to put employees first and reap the rewards in your tourism business and on your bottom line.

For more information on other *Tourism Business Essentials* guides and workshops, visit the [Programs](#) section of the Destination BC corporate website.



It goes without saying then, that the following practices will help you to attract and recruit this next generation of tourism leaders:

- As you adopt more sustainable practices, share these widely with potential employees through your website, and in interviews.
- Incorporate interview questions that highlight your Triple Bottom Line initiatives (as developed using this guide), and ask them for their ideas on ways these could be expanded and improved. Their ability and interest to engage in your sustainability strategy at the interview stage will indicate their capacity to join the effort.
- Encourage current staff to speak openly, in person and online, about their involvement in your sustainability planning.
- Offer staff an incentive for referring a qualified candidate to come in for an interview.

By incorporating these tips into your hiring practices, you will not only attract the bright young minds of tomorrow, you will inspire your current team members to do better.

Once you have the right team in place, your job is empowering them to help your business perform well along the measures established in the last chapter. One of the keys will be in-house training and development.



³ Tom Foremski. (June 22, 2010). *IBM Study: Millennials And the New Corporate Leaders - Social Responsibility Is Essential*.

4 Involve and Educate Staff

Training and Development

A successful training program is one that aims to motivate and empower you or your team through the use of innovative and interactive training tools. Each person must be aware of sustainability plans and policies within your organization. In fact, this information should be provided to anyone involved in company operations, from permanent staff to contractors and suppliers, volunteers, and caterers. As part of the goal setting process, ask your sustainability team to develop and record the following:

- your organization's principles of sustainable development
- a commitment from senior staff members
- the policies and procedures related to your environmental management systems
- an understanding of the social/community engagement component
- the financial impacts of improved social and environmental operations.

These points will be informed by the economic, environmental, and social measurables your team sets out in the worksheets from [Chapter 3](#). Once agreed to and finalized, they should be included in your training/operations manuals.

As a next step to documenting your sustainability plans and policies, assemble your current staff and ask them the following types of questions to determine:

- What are they passionate about?
- What can they commit to?
- What will your sustainability commitments look like on the ground?
- How will you reduce your environmental impact in day-to-day operations?
- What local or global charities or social initiatives will your organization support, and how?
- What types of financial savings do you expect to yield, and where will these funds be invested?

The answers to these questions should be recorded, in plain English, and added to your training manual. Each year, plan (or have your sustainability team plan) to host a session where you go through the manual in its entirety, with special focus on the sustainability components.

Once your team has a record of the commitments, remember to keep their passion for learning alive. Generation Y (as with most people) thrive on new challenges, new information and new skills.

Continuing Education and Engagement

Education is an important contributor to awareness and motivation in every business.

Ways to promote engagement include:

- Inviting team members to post creative reminders about policies and objectives around the workplace (through signage) and online (through a YouTube video, a Facebook page, or other means of online communication) – fact sheets should be posted in relevant places (i.e. paper recycling tips in office areas, water saving ideas in the laundry room and energy conservation tips near light switches) and encourage team members to make these messages funny, relevant, and to refresh them often.
- Setting a protected monthly meeting time for staff to get together and discuss sustainability issues (on your dime).
- Providing information on various environmental themes along with information sheets.
- If staff email exists, sending out short “tips” that can be applied both in the workplace and in the home.

With the right staff and a training program in place, the final step is to ensure you hold on to your dream team through retention programs.

Retention and Incentive Programs

The time and effort put into recruitment and training of staff can be squandered if staff turnover is high. Your economic, social, and environmental performance will be enhanced the longer you can retain your top-notch team. As discussed, *internal* incentives for staff retention include continuing to attract the best employees possible, and keeping all team members engaged. You may also want to consider *external* incentives, which may include:

Cash Incentives. Some organizations have introduced cash incentives for contribution to environmental and social programs. An example of a cash incentive program could be allowing staff to keep a portion of money received through recycling efforts.

Rewards. Consider partnering with other tourism businesses in your area to create rewards packages, or trading rewards items in the form of gift certificates. For example, you could offer your top sales agent a “Weekend Getaway” package each season, made up of gift certificates from businesses in a neighbouring community.

Awards. Provide awards to groups or individuals who contribute successful ideas resulting in social or environmental programs and money saved. The type of award could continue the trend, such as contributing to the cost of the employee’s home water/power saving features for those staff members being recognized.

Suppliers. It is important to recognize the efforts of suppliers and contractors who may be changing their procedures in order to comply with the operation’s environmental policy. See [Chapter 5](#) for more information on suppliers.

Whistler Blackcomb is a great example of a company who trains staff within their Zero Footprint program, which contributes to strong retention rates.

To learn more about retention programs and techniques you can implement in your business, read [Chapter 7 of the Tourism Business Essentials – Employees First – guide](#).

4

Involve and Educate Staff

Take Care of Your People, and Thrive

The sustainability of your organization depends on environmental protection, fiscal responsibility and a strong social network, of which your staff team is a key part. By attracting the best new industry leaders, offering training and participation in sustainability efforts, and retaining top performers through incentive programs, your organization will have the right people to sustain your business in a conscientious way.

Checklist

- Remember that the workforce of tomorrow is mostly comprised of Generation Y: a group well known for seeking responsible, sustainable employers.
- Give staff reason to be inspired through your triple bottom line initiatives and community connections.
- Keep staff involved in the conversation, and welcome their ideas.
- Consider your staff your most precious resource, and they will help you do the rest.

Resources

GLOBE Foundation: BC's Green Economy – Securing the Workforce of Tomorrow
<http://bcgreeneconomy.globeadvisors.ca>

The GLOBE Foundation of Canada is a Vancouver-based, not-for-profit organization dedicated to finding practical business-oriented solutions to the world's environmental problems. This report is the culmination of the second phase of an in-depth analysis undertaken by the GLOBE Foundation to identify the core components of the green economy in British Columbia, and to gauge the potential economic and work force opportunities and associated challenges in building the province's low-carbon future.

Network for Business Sustainability: Embedding Sustainability in Organizational Culture

nbs.net/wp-content/uploads/Executive-Report-Sustainability-and-corporate-culture.pdf

This document provides a framework and best practices for incorporating sustainability practices into an organization's culture. It features models and examples from large and small corporations.



5 Implement Your Plan Through Better Practices

Taking Action: Better Practices

The principle of better practices involves making the changes you can, as you can, to move in a positive direction. Only you can decide what is “best” for your business given the unique financial, social and environmental climate in which you operate. That is why we are providing the following list of actions to choose from. These tactics represent the knowledge contained in dozens of websites, guides and workshops. We have done the legwork by combining them all for you.

We invite you to highlight options that are a good fit for you, and use these as the first tactics in your sustainability plan.

Each chart covers one of these improvement areas:

- energy
- water
- waste management and recycling
- purchasing and sustainable procurement
- community engagement and social responsibility.

The following charts lay out tactics applicable to all tourism businesses, followed by additional tips (where these exist) specifically for accommodations, food and beverage, meetings and events, and the transportation sector.



Energy

A decrease in energy consumption through reduction of use, or using more efficient features, is one of the easiest ways to save money. While the cost of energy continues to rise, so do the number of alternatives and resources that are available to mitigate the operating costs of your business.

Business Type	Practice	Tactics	Benefits and Extra Tips
All	Make your building, and your overall practices, more energy efficient.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop simple energy-management checklists and post in common areas. • Put computers to "sleep" when not in use. • Assign responsibility between shifts and at end of day for turning off equipment, exhaust fans, lights, and computers. • Use proper insulation and reflective roof coverings. 	Each computer that "sleeps" when not in use during the day can save \$25-\$75 per year. Do not forget to shut them down completely when you are closed!
All	Update and improve lighting procedures throughout your business.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Replace incandescent bulbs with compact fluorescents (curly bulbs). • Install dimmer switches and photoelectric cells. • Use motion sensor switches for bathrooms, hallways, common areas, and outdoor spaces. • Clean lighting fixtures and bulbs to ensure they continue to perform as designed. • Replace signage and accent lighting (exit signs, open signs, exterior signs, coloured accent lights, down lights, and menu boards) with LEDs. • Use smart lighting design in parking lots. • Look for the light: reconfigure areas such as meeting spaces and dining areas to maximize natural daylight. • Keep windows and glass clean to ensure maximum brightness. 	<p>Incandescent bulbs have been phased out, making this a good time to rethink lighting systems.</p> <p>Upgrading lighting saves you money. For instance, simply replacing a neon "OPEN" sign with an LED unit will save approximately \$400 in energy and replacement costs.</p>
All	Maintain and repair HVAC (heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems), and call in experts when needed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check your "economizer" (which draws in cool outside air), the damper should open and close appropriately. • With a thermometer, check the return air to your air-conditioner, and air coming out of the register nearest the unit: a difference of less than 14°F (7.8°C) or more than 22°F (12.2°C) means you need to call a professional. • Change filters monthly – the more pollutants around your business, the more frequent changes should be. • Check cabinet panels once per quarter, these should be tight. • Clean condenser coils quarterly and remove debris. • Check airflow using your hand, if restricted, call a technician in to clean. 	Save as much as 50% on your building's energy bill simply by ensuring your HVAC economizer is not stuck in the fully opened position.

Energy

Business Type	Practice	Tactics	Benefits and Extra Tips
All	Over time, replace appliances with more energy-efficient units.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Think BIG: refrigerators, freezers, laundry machines. • Think SMALL: toasters, hair dryers, hand dryers. • For more information on purchasing or upgrading appliances refer to: www.bchydro.com/powersmart.html 	The purchase of a new dishwasher or other appliance may pay for itself within a year or two through energy savings.
All	Consider alternative sources of energy .	Alternative power sources include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • solar power • wind power • tidal power • wave power • geothermal power • groundsource heat. 	Think back to the Grouse Mountain example – if there are ways to enhance your tourism offerings, while pulling in alternative power sources, take advantage of these.
Accommodations	Reduce energy loss from guest rooms.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask staff to turn off lights and turn down heating/air conditioning when rooms are unoccupied. • Install window film to lower heating and cooling loads and reduce glare in guestrooms. • Install drapes and shutters, and use this when room is not in use to trap warm air in winter and keep heat out in summer. 	While the guest of yesterday expected to walk into a fully-lit, temperature-controlled room, today's guests now expect to activate these settings once they take possession of the room.
Accommodations	Reduce energy loss from pools and hot tubs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use pool and hot tub covers when closed. • Closely monitor pool and tub use and change operating hours according to peak use times (e.g. close early if not in use). • Consider implementing a solar heating system. • Plant trees and shrubs around the pool to decrease wind that can cool the pool. • Ensure sauna and steam room doors are properly sealed and turned on only when in use. • Install low flow showers leading into the pool and a timer system so they do not get left on. 	Once installed, the operating costs of solar pool heating systems are almost zero while the operating costs of a gas pool heater can range from \$500 to \$1500 per month.

Energy

Business Type	Practice	Tactics	Benefits and Extra Tips
Food and Beverage	<p>Reduce immediate energy use by turning off equipment when not in use, and keeping it in good repair.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During the day, turn off back-up fryer and broiler. • At night, turn off dishwashing equipment, dish machine exhaust hoods, and the dishwasher booster heater (may be a separate switch). • Turn off the heater/defogger on your display – in the fridge – if condensation becomes an issue, simply switch it on again. • Inspect refrigerator, freezer and hot-food holding cabinet doors, replace worn gaskets and make sure doors are aligned properly. • Place strip curtains on walk-in refrigerators and freezers. • Repair or replace broken control panels, knobs, and switches on ovens, steamers ranges, griddles, and broilers. • Inspect conveyor washer curtains, make sure these are intact and long enough to prevent heat from escaping the wash chamber. 	<p>Restaurants tend to operate with narrow profit margins. Achieving just a 20 per cent reduction in energy costs will translate directly into an additional one percent in profit.</p> <p>In many cases, maintaining and replacing equipment will also lead to a safer kitchen.</p>
Food and Beverage	<p>Over time, replace equipment in favour of new, more efficient options.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Switch to a variable-speed hood controller (a sensor alters the hood's operation in response to smoke, etc.). • Consider induction cooktops. • Switch from traditional steamers to self-contained or "connectionless". • Replace older model ice makers, selecting the right size for your capacity needs. • Update the evaporator fan controllers in walk-in coolers (devices are now available to slow fans when full cooling capabilities are not necessary). • Look for demand-defrost systems for your freezers, which initiate defrosts only when they are needed. 	<p>Save 15-30% on your energy costs and enjoy better performance.</p> <p>Visit Energy Star at www.energystar.gov for more information about products and upgrades.</p>
Transportation	<p>Burn less fuel and produce fewer emissions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use online map services to create different routes, and test these to find the most efficient ones in terms of distance/drive time. • Consider placing GPS in all company-used vehicles to monitor use for future decision-making. • Encourage staff and guests to bike and/or use transit to reach your workplace – start by doing this yourself! • Service and maintain all vehicles as directed in owner's manual. • As vehicles age, replace them with hybrid, biodiesel or other more efficient models. • Do not idle vehicles. 	<p>Cut idling, save money and breathe easier. Prolonged warm-up idling is not necessary for diesel engines: the quickest way is to drive at regular speeds. Gas engines need no more than 30 seconds to warm up, and idling for more than 10 seconds costs more than turning off an engine and restarting it.</p>

Homegrown Example: The Coast Kamloops Hotel and Conference Centre Saves Over CAD \$80,000 Per Year in Energy Costs

According to Director of Sales, Angela Tasker, The Coast Kamloops Hotel and Conference Centre is a 203-guest room and conference facility. When the property was originally built, it broke ground with its environmental stewardship programs. To conserve energy and reduce greenhouse gas emissions, the hotel replaced the HVAC system in 2004 with 36 solar collectors (108-square metre collector area), a 2,250-litre solar hot water storage tank, and heat recovery system. The reduction in the use of fossil fuels is equivalent to taking 289 vehicles off the road: emissions were reduced by 623 tonnes per year. The annual fuel savings of \$80,555 paid back the system in 4.5 years – allowing the hotel to enjoy free renewable energy. (When this property was initially opened it was the Best Western Kamloops Hotel).

Homegrown Example: Pacific Sands Beach Resort Uses the Earth to Keep them Warm

Pacific Sands Beach Resort on Vancouver Island’s west coast demonstrated their commitment to the environment with their resort expansion in 2004. According to Lara Kemps, Resort Manager, the new eco-friendly design features an energy efficient geexchange system for heating, cooling and domestic hot water, using pumps to extract heat from the ground and circulate it in winter, and remove heat from the buildings in the summer. This system takes advantage of the earth’s constant temperature of 12°C. By using 62 per cent less energy than an electric baseboard system with individual hot water tank, the payback period for Pacific Sands’ geexchange system is six years. The savings will continue for decades.

Water

In BC, we use about 490 litres of water per person per day, more than 150 litres above the Canadian average. Water management challenges associated with the hospitality industry include growing demand, the possibility of rising prices, uncertainty regarding accessibility (tapping into new sources), and inefficient equipment. It is equally important for those with their own water supply (i.e. a well) to conserve water – if demands on your well exceed supply, there will be costs associated with accessing a replacement source.

Business Type	Practice	Tactics	Benefits and Extra Tips
All	Improve the efficiency of hot water tanks and heaters.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sure water heater is set no higher than 140°F. • Cover the first several feet of pipe leaving the heater with inexpensive tube insulation, and wrap heater in an insulated blanket, available at most hardware stores. • Repair water leaks (both hot and cold). • If your heater has a vent damper, make sure the motor’s switch is in the “on” position and it closes when burners are off. • Flush hot water tanks twice annually to remove solids and sludge (this extends the life of your tank). • When replacement time comes, upgrade to a high-efficiency model such as a "tankless" (instantaneous or on-demand) heater. 	<p>Though high-efficiency models often cost a little more up-front, they will save approximately \$400 per year in fuel expenses for a small establishment and substantially more in a large business.</p> <p>Stop leaks and save money. Plugging a hot leak losing 0.2 gallons/minute would save you around CAD \$1,700 per year.</p>

Water

Business Type	Practice	Tactics	Benefits and Extra Tips
All	<p>Reduce wasted water by keeping items in good repair and replacing key equipment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fix leaking taps. • Check toilets regularly: ensure water is not leaking from tank to bowl. • Install inexpensive toilet dams in all toilet tanks to reduce water consumption. • Install or retrofit water-saving toilets. • Install or retrofit low flow showerheads. • Install or retrofit aerators or flow restrictors on all faucets. • Set up cards in guest rooms describing ways guests can help to conserve water: turn taps off while brushing teeth; use the plug and fill the sink for washing; take a shower instead of a bath. 	<p>Low flow showerheads replace some water with air to produce a forceful spray. These showerheads save between 37 per cent and 68 per cent of the water previously used, and will lower your utility bill!</p> <p>A family of four using low flow toilets saves up to 100,000 litres of water per year. Upgrading your facilities will save many times that amount. Cannot upgrade now? As a first step, place a large pop bottle filled with water in toilet tanks.</p>
All	<p>Improve “greywater” content and re-use.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use nontoxic cleaners, sanitizers, paints, pesticides, etc. throughout your business. • Harvest rainwater and re-direct this water into flushing toilets, laundry, grounds keeping, and washing vehicles. • Capture greywater from sinks, showers, and laundry facilities, treat, and re-use as above. 	<p>Greywater is the run-off from washing processes. Keeping this clean and using it again helps save water, cut costs, and protect local streams, shores, and other bodies of water for your guests to enjoy.</p>
All	<p>Improve blackwater management.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blackwater is a term for water containing human waste. • In remote resorts or water-based adventures, proper sewage disposal is imperative: the discharge of sewage from pleasure craft is prohibited in designated waters and vessels must hold and pump out at specific sites. • RV owners should switch to non-toxic biological products to treat effluent and control holding tank odours. 	<p>Most operators use municipal sanitary sewage collection or septic facilities. Learn more about how your blackwater is treated and what you can do to help reduce your impacts (keeping certain items out, etc.). This will help keep the collective system running properly, and longer.</p>

Water

Business Type	Practice	Tactics	Benefits and Extra Tips
All	Landscape your way to reduced water use.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Switch to drought-resistant native plants in garden areas. • Consider replacing conventional lawns with natural grass seed that is bred to require no water (“Eco-Lawn”). • Water traditional lawns only once every 7–10 days. • Upgrade to water-saving sprinklers (save up to 2,300 L/day). • If water is in short supply, install a drip irrigation system. • Use a simple “clay pot” irrigation system: dig a hole beside plants and place an unglazed porous pot in each hole (plug drainage holes), cover, and fill pots every 4–8 days. 	Reduce water and staff costs by keeping landscaping as natural and native as possible.
Accommodations	Upgrade your laundry facilities .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start a linen (both towels and sheets) re-use program in all guest rooms. • Use biodegradable and phosphate-free detergents. • Use dryer balls instead of fabric softening chemicals and/or sheets. • Upgrade to high efficiency washing machines and dryers. • Install an ozone laundry system. 	Laundering uses large amounts of water, chemicals and electricity; adds wear and tear to linens; and slows down your staff. A towel and linen re-use policy saves approximately \$1.50/day, per room. In a hotel of 50 rooms, that is CAD \$27,375 a year!
Accommodations	Keep your pool clean with a clear conscience .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Switch to slightly salted pools instead of chlorine; these are less harmful and require less maintenance (ask your pool representative). • Or switch to a U/V or ozonation system (ask your provider). 	Increase guest enjoyment, and save thousands of dollars per year on chlorine.
Food and Beverage	Upgrade your dishwashing area .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purchase or rent an NSF certified dishwasher to consume less than one gallon/rack. • If using a high-temperature washer, install a gas booster heater. • Install low-flow sprayers to reduce the amount of hot water used by 50 per cent or more without compromising cleanliness or slowing down the dishwashing process. • Use the dishwasher only when fully loaded. • Turn the water heater down when the kitchen is closed, turn back up approximately two hours before re-opening. 	Just by substituting a low-flow spray valve for a valve flowing at 11 litres per minute for two hours a day will save over 162,700 litres of water and approximately \$600 to CAD \$600 to \$700 annually.

Water

Business Type	Practice	Tactics	Benefits and Extra Tips
Transportation	Wash with care.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wash vehicles with biodegradable cleansers, and use greywater as mentioned above. • If automated washing is necessary, look for businesses with greener practices. 	Your guests will appreciate a clean vehicle, and this speaks to your brand. But do not waste time, effort and water: wash only as truly needed.

Homegrown Example: Mount Washington Alpine Resort Wins Awards for Water Use Reduction

According to Don Sharpe with Mount Washington Alpine Resort, the resort has initiated several steps to conserve water, including: using recycled greywater in the toilets and urinals; conducting water conservation education sessions for village condo owners at strata council meetings; and introducing landscaping that uses indigenous plant species requiring little watering. These efforts, among others, have resulted in the resort's water consumption being reduced from 114 million litres per year to 82 million litres per year. The BC Tourism Awards recognized these efforts and in 2002, Mt. Washington won the Tourism BC Starfish Award for Environmentally Responsible Tourism (www.mountwashington.ca).

Waste Management

Reduce, reuse and recycle: it was the battle cry of the 1990s. Today's waste management practices extend beyond the 3R's to include composting, creative donations, carbon management, and other cost-saving initiatives – all designed to reduce the amount of toxins and garbage put back into our ecosystems.

Business Type	Practice	Tactics	Benefits and Extra Tips
All	<p>Reduce the amount of paper used in your business and properly process used paper for recycling.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use recycled paper products (with high post-consumer recycled content) that are either unbleached or bleached using a chlorine-free process. • Eliminate paper invoices (send all records electronically). • Flatten all cardboard and set aside for purchasing or free removal (depending on resources in your community). • Return flattened cardboard boxes to suppliers. • If you use a lot of cardboard, consider sharing the expense of a baler with neighbouring businesses. • Decline phone books unless necessary for your operations. • Print on both sides of the page. • Print only when necessary. • Use a white board, chalk board or display board to post staff memos and internal communications. • Circulate no more than one hard copy of work instructions to each department. • Donate magazines to medical offices or community centres. • Re-use folders, envelopes and other stationery wherever possible. • Provide collateral that adheres to the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) of Canada. 	<p>Every tonne of post-consumer recycled paper equals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 17 trees saved • 50% less energy consumed • 60% less water consumed • 35% less water pollution emitted • 75% less air pollution emitted <p>Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certification tracks products from the forest to the shelf. All FSC products are verified by third-party Certifiers to meet FSC's rigorous requirements through the FSC Forest Management (FM) and Chain of Custody (CoC) certification systems. Visit www.ca.fsc.org to find products for your business.</p>
All	<p>Make it easy for employees and guests to properly dispose of their waste.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In every room, office, and public area, provide a place to put paper, newsprint, glass/containers, and organic waste according to your municipality's recycling program. • Make containers attractive, and clearly mark on each of the types of waste to be disposed of, using both pictures and words. • If your business is on the move, use a "leave no trace" mentality ensuring nothing is left behind. 	<p>Visitors to Charlottetown, PEI often remark on how easy it is to recycle and compost everyday waste using convenient bins on every street corner. The island's Waste Watch Program produces some of the highest waste diversion figures in North America www.iwmc.pe.ca/annualreports.php.</p>

Waste Management

Business Type	Practice	Tactics	Benefits and Extra Tips
All	Reduce your emissions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage staff to use public transit by providing bus passes or setting up a carpool. • Host meetings via teleconferencing, email or on the phone to avoid travel costs. • Use a carbon offsetting program such as Gobi carbon management (as detailed in Chapter 2). 	Moving forward, your business may encounter significantly increased pressure to reduce your contribution to climate change. Proactively demonstrate responsible practices to remain competitive in the marketplace.
Accommodations	Donate , rather than discard, used items.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Donate used soap and shampoo to people in need through www.cleantheworld.org. • Donate leftover guest amenities, old furniture, soft goods (carpets, curtains), electronics, and appliances. 	Cut waste disposal costs while additionally helping others.
Food and Beverage	Switch to reusable products and habits.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide reusable items such as cloth napkins, drinking glasses, mugs, and ceramic dishes. • Invest in restaurant linen (either to be laundered on-premises or by a reputable firm). • Eliminate individual sugar packages and creamers, condiment containers and disposable cups. • If disposable flatware is necessary, replace it with a biodegradable alternative (wood or corn-based plastics). • Replace takeaway containers with recycled or biodegradable options. • Print menus on recycled paper and laminate for longer use. If appropriate, create a rewards program for customers who bring their own mug or dishes. • Use fountain beverages when possible – they generate less waste and are less expensive. • Plastic straws and stir sticks should be replaced with biodegradable options or eliminated. • Recycle all drink container bottles or return for refund. • Ask service staff to use hand held computers or scrap paper for taking orders. 	Switching to reusable options? Do not forget to cushion dish handling areas in your kitchen and service areas with rubber mats. In addition to providing safety and comfort for staff, these can help reduce breakage if plates and glasses slip to the ground.

Waste Management

Business Type	Practice	Tactics	Benefits and Extra Tips
Food and Beverage	Manage food waste carefully.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor plates as they come back to the kitchen – adjust your offerings accordingly (smaller portions, eliminating garnishes that go uneaten and other food saving methods). • Store food at the right temperature to minimize spoiling. • Date all food and employ a FIFO (first in, first out) rotation system. • Donate unused food to a local non-profit organization such as Food Runners (details on the right). • Use a compost bin to transform waste food into garden fuel: hire a company to pick up compost (if this service is available in your area), or start your own using either a homemade or commercial bin. • Consider a kitchen grease recycling program: grease can be converted to biofuel and is now traded as a commodity in many markets. 	<p>The Vancouver Food Bank's Food Runners pick up perishable food items destined for the bin, creating 1.25 million meals for people in need (www.foodbank.bc.ca).</p> <p>At the Fairmont Hotel Vancouver, composting resulted in a 50 per cent reduction in overall material weight, which, with a lower fee for compost pickup, means an annual savings of CAD \$5,280. http://rcbc.bc.ca/files/u6/Fairmont_SuccessStory.pdf</p>
Meetings and Events	Skip traditional formats and save.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use an online registration system to reduce paper waste and capture delegate information more efficiently. • Offer "build your own" delegate packages, saving staff time and allowing guests to choose what they want and need. • Skip individual delegate programs by posting the schedule online in advance (for guests wanting to carry their own copies) and providing large, poster-sized schedules in each room (which can also serve as conversation hubs). • Skip attendee lists in favour of an online list. • Purchase recycled name-tag holders and/or lanyards. • Re-use tags and lanyards – ensure a high collection rate by offering a prize drawn from the tags collected at the end of the event. 	<p>Online registration systems increase organizational efficiency and allow you to contact delegates to offer “calls to action” including booking pre-and-post activities.</p> <p>Most delegates are tired of all the “stuff” that comes with attending an event. Demonstrate leadership in these areas, save money, and have more satisfied guests!</p>

Purchasing

Make an impact through reducing the amount you buy, and choosing the most ethical products you can. When in doubt, this checklist can help you evaluate potential purchases before making them:

- Is the product necessary?
- Can it be bought in bulk?
- What aspects might harm the environment?
- Does it contain recycled content?
- Can it be re-used, remanufactured or recycled?
- Is it energy efficient and/or water efficient?
- Does it contain excess packaging? Is there a way to avoid packaging?
- Is it natural, organic, chemical-free, synthetic-free?
- Has it received any type of environmental certification or ecolabelling?

Business Type	Practice	Tactics	Benefits and Extra Tips
All	Buy better paper.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be critical of paper that claims to be recycled but is fuzzy on details – you are looking for a high percentage of post-consumer waste. • Papers made from grass and straw (Esparto), leaf fibres (Manilla) or hemp reduce the volume of wood used for pulp and are often less expensive. • Look for chlorine-free paper (chlorine contains toxins harmful to fish and ecosystems). 	Paper is still a necessary part of your business. From toilet paper to printer paper, buying the right stuff up front sends a positive signal to staff and guests.
All	Order products with lesser impacts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use a recycled product directory (see right) to determine which products and suppliers are the best option for you. • Shipping counts: ban Styrofoam chips for packaging fragile supplies. • Buy office and guest amenity products that contain recycled material. 	The Recycled-Content Product Directory lists thousands of products containing recycled materials as well as information about manufacturers, distributors and re-processors: www.calrecycle.ca/gov/RCPM

Purchasing

Business Type	Practice	Tactics	Benefits and Extra Tips
All	Upgrade your building with care.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construction and renovations should be done in consultation with the Canada Green Buildings Council, who administer the LEED program. • Purchase recycled materials whenever possible. • Seek out second-hand materials from online classifieds (like Craigslist) and/or businesses like Habitat for Humanity’s ReStores (see right). 	<p>Over 65 ReStores across Canada accept and resell quality new and used building materials. Funds generated are used for Habitat homebuilding projects, and redirects material that would otherwise end up in a landfill. www.habitat.ca/en/community/restores</p>
All	Retail with care.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If your hotel has a gift shop, purchase mementos for re-sale that are hand-made in your community. • For additional offerings, consider fair trade products, found on directories like www.fairtradefederation.org/memwhl.html • If taking photographs of guests, display these on a screen and print only if purchased or requested. 	<p>Today’s guests prefer authentic souvenirs like artwork and artisan food products. Sourcing these will also help connect you to local business partners, strengthening your connection to the community.</p>
Accommodations	Skip the “little hotel soaps” and add a local flair.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buy guest amenities in bulk and use refillable hair and skin care dispensers in bathrooms and pool/hot tub areas. • Purchase locally-sourced hard and soft goods including: decor, bedding and hair and body care. • For coffee, tea, and other products from overseas, ensure these are organic and fairly traded. • Offer basic comforts in-room, with additional products and amenities available by calling the front desk. 	<p>Beautiful antique and creative product dispensers can add to ambiance while reducing overhead and waste generated by packaging. Create framed signage to explain to your guests how “skipping the little soap” is making a difference.</p>

Purchasing

Business Type	Practice	Tactics	Benefits and Extra Tips
Food and Beverage	Source ingredients carefully.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inspect all food items on delivery for spoilage/ damage and return wasted products before they hit your kitchen. • Produce ingredients on your property, such as fruits and vegetables, herbs, honey, edible flowers, eggs, and other micro-farmed products. • Purchase outside farm products from establishments certified under the BC SPCA farm welfare program www.sPCA.bc.ca/welfare/farm-animal-welfare/spca-certified • Purchase seafood from OceanWise certified sources. • Shop at local farmers markets, and use in-season regional ingredients whenever possible. • Purchase all food products in bulk. • Ask suppliers to deliver food in reusable food totes. • Consider fair trade and organic choices as preferable when purchasing from outside your region. 	<p>Show customers you care by sharing these choices with them on menus:</p> <p>The BC SPCA Certified label assures customers products come from farms adhering to the SPCA's animal welfare standards.</p> <p>The Vancouver Aquarium Ocean Wise label denotes more sustainable seafood choices.</p>
Meetings and Events	Pick the right venue.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the venue has an established commitment to sustainability and suggest they too “tell their story” during your event. • Food and Beverage suppliers should be engaging in the activities outlined earlier here: vegetarian options, locally-sourced ingredients etc. 	<p>With more and more companies embracing a Corporate Social Responsibility agenda, providing better meeting options will help give you a competitive edge over other, more traditional suppliers.</p>

Community Engagement

This critical piece ties your environmental and economic performance to the community in which you operate, and the planet as a whole.

Business Type	Practice	Tactics	Benefits and Extra Tips
All	Ask your guests to take part, and reward them for doing so.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide guests with bicycles, walking maps, and information on public transportation. • Before they arrive, ensure guests know how to reach you by transit, or offer a lower-emissions “Welcome Shuttle” from the airport or bus depot. • Take a percentage of guests’ rates and donate this directly to their choice of local charity (provide a brief description of each at point-of-sale). • Creatively reward guests for engaging in sustainability efforts. 	Sustainable actions become a fun part of a visitor’s experience. For instance, the Copenhagen Crowne Plaza offers a free meal to guests who generate 10 watt hours of electricity on the gym bicycle.
All	Give your time and expertise to those in need.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choose a community organization, and encourage staff to donate a certain amount of their time by giving them time off to contribute. • Choose a “sister company” with less experienced management and staff (either a local or international business in your field) and offer mentorship services to their organization. • Co-host events on your property with a local charity. 	As outlined in the previous Chapter, community engagement is a great way to attract, and retain, excellent staff.
All	Reach out to potential community business partners.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through your local destination marketing organization or Chamber of Commerce, obtain a list of businesses in your community, and organize a get-together to discuss a mutual referrals program. • Give business to provincial and national parks in your region, either through referrals or by including them on your itineraries. • Get to know your local First Nations and ask them how you can better connect visitors to their community. 	Networking with other community businesses will ensure your business remains an integral part of the local economy.
All	Host an open house to share your better practices.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invite the community to visit your location once a season to hear about the innovations you have been implementing. • Award prizes to attendees who come up with the best idea for the next quarter. 	Local residents are a key source of potential consumers. Let them get excited about your new directions, and tell their friends and visitors about your efforts.

Community Engagement

Business Type	Practice	Tactics	Benefits and Extra Tips
Accommodations	Attract the right business.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proactively offer discounted meeting space to local not-for-profit organizations. • As mentioned under “waste management”, donate used furniture and blankets to a homeless shelter or other deserving enterprise. 	Become known as “the place for meetings and events” in the not-for-profit sector by donating space that would otherwise sit idle during off-peak times.
Food and Beverage	Connect with a cause.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a “dining for the cause” meal. • As mentioned under “waste management”, share food with a local food bank and encourage staff to bring in additional non-perishable donations to match. 	Raise awareness of your food and beverage operations by partnering with a charity for a “proceeds donated meal” during an otherwise slow period.
Food and Beverage	Celebrate your sustainable choices.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use certification labels when participating in programs. • Offer vegetarian and lesser-impact options and highlight these to guests. 	Use the menu as your platform to publish information (on recycled paper) about your purchasing choices.

This is Just the Beginning!

These tactics are designed to get you and your staff thinking about ways you can improve your sustainability practices. Now that you understand the types of practices to implement, go back to the goals in [Chapter 3](#) and review and enhance these to form your sustainability strategy for the coming months. Once you are under way, the next two chapters will help you measure and communicate your progress with customers and key stakeholders.

Checklist

- Review the tactics and benefits from this chapter with your sustainability team. Choose quick wins, and perhaps some challenging tasks, and add these to the worksheets in [Chapter 3](#).
- Do your own research to discover additional practices in the areas of energy, water, waste management, purchasing, and community engagement. Depending on your business, there may be other key areas (wildlife management, snow monitoring and manufacturing) that require direct attention in your plans.
- Review and revise your goals as new research and practical suggestions reach your ears and remember that new staff and community members are a great source of new information.

Resources

101 Things to Do with Your Old Stuff

www.metrovancouver.org/services/solid-waste/SolidWastePublications/101Things.pdf

Dubbed a “money-saving guide to reusing, repairing & renting goods in the Lower Mainland.” While the guide was intended for people living in this region, most suggestions can be applied in almost any community.

BC Hydro Power Smart

www.bchydro.com/powersmart.html

BC Hydro’s Power Smart program is designed to help British Columbians reduce their energy consumption. Their site is filled with tips for businesses of all sizes.

BC SPCA Certified Program

www.sPCA.bc.ca/welfare/farm-animal-welfare/sPCA-certified/

SPCA Certified is an innovative farm certification and food-labelling program. In response to growing concern for farm animal welfare, the BC SPCA developed SPCA Certified – the consumer’s assurance that farm animals are raised to the BC SPCA’s high animal welfare standards.

5 Implement Your Plan Through Better Practices

Resources

Energy Star

www.energystar.gov

ENERGY STAR is a joint program of the US Environmental Protection Agency and the US Department of Energy helping educate the public and industry about energy efficient products and practices. The Energy Star rating system is a standard in North America. This website features information about products and buildings and plants, as well as tips for home energy use reduction.

Forest Stewardship Council of Canada – FindFSC

<https://ca.fsc.org>

The Forest Stewardship Council allows businesses to search for FSC (Forest Stewardship Council) Certified forests, wood, pulp, paper and other products/services in Canada.

Fair Trade Federation

www.fairtradefederation.org

The Fair Trade Federation (FTF) is the trade association that strengthens and promotes North American organizations fully committed to Fair Trade. Their website features a searchable database of products, from accessories to yarn.

Green Your Business:

Toolkit for Tourism Operators

http://tiac.travel/Library/documents/green_your_business_toolkit.pdf

The Tourism Industry Association of Canada, Destination Canada and Parks Canada produced this toolkit containing guidelines and tips for the Canadian tourism industry with a focus on small and medium-sized businesses.

Living Water Smart

www.livingwatersmart.ca

This launch page for the provincial water preservation strategy features action tips, information about the *BC Water Sustainability Act* and water use laws, as well as documents the progress made on various water issues.

Purchasing a Fuel-Efficient Vehicle (Transport Canada)

<http://oee.nrcan.gc.ca/cars-light-trucks/buying/17765>

This page offers information about the most fuel-efficient vehicles, the EnerGuide label, tips on buying a vehicle, fuel consumption ratings, and a tool to select and compare different makes and models and rank the fuel efficiency of vehicles sold in Canada.

ReStore

www.habitat.ca/en/community/restores

ReStores are building supply stores run by Habitat for Humanity affiliates that accept and resell quality new and used building materials. Shopping at a ReStore is a socially conscious decision, as funds generated are used to fund Habitat homebuilding projects.

State of California Recycled Product Directory

www.calrecycle.ca.gov/RCPM

This website is designed for California consumers, businesses, recycling and waste-hauling industries, non-profit organizations, educational facilities, and others. Although designed for California, the information can be used in other jurisdictions.

6 Communicate with Customers and Community

Networks and Relationships

In the previous chapter, we briefly touched on the importance of community relations in your overall sustainability plan. Stakeholders must be made aware of your efforts if these are to be supported, and attracting new customers will generate the new business to support your economic bottom line.

The first step is to create powerful networks and relationships with stakeholders including:

- your local DMO (destination marketing organization)
- Chamber of Commerce
- community action groups such as Kiwanis or Rotary
- First Nations
- Not-for-Profit organizations directly related to your sector
- additional community groups
- residents.

The means to creating these relationships have been highlighted in previous chapters, and include:

Hosting open houses to showcase your sustainable tourism initiatives. Inviting community leaders, customers, residents, and other stakeholders to share in your successes and offer suggestions on taking your action plan to the next level.

Coordinating meetings between stakeholder groups. Your organization can become a community leader by gathering together the groups listed above, and encouraging a sharing of sustainability plans in the three

performance areas. Together, you can come up with collective goals on how to grow the local economy, how to protect local ecosystems, and how to be a welcoming, safe and active society.

Offering your services/facilities to local groups for fundraising and events. Most not-for-profit organizations need help in the form of meeting space (rehearsal space or venues for events like Annual General Meetings [AGMs]). They can also use your support in the form of donations for fundraisers, including gift certificates for products and services. Reach out to these organizations and budget a certain percentage of your marketing budget to giving back.

Giving your staff paid time to volunteer at a community organization. This can be one organization supported by the whole team, or you can allow each team member to choose the organization they would like to support. Make sure that volunteer commitments are incremental (in addition to other efforts staff undertake on their own), and encourage staff to wear branded clothing (or their uniform) when out in action.

Holding competitions between staff at your organization and another. Pit your team against another in an initiative such as an ecosystem clean-up challenge or a food drive for a local food bank. Keep the competition friendly, and invite local media organizations to join you.

6 Communicate with Customers and Community

Public Relations

The types of relationship building exercises outlined above are the groundwork for powerful Public Relations (PR). The Canadian Public Relations Society defines PR as:

“The strategic management of relationships between an organization and its diverse publics, through the use of communication, to achieve mutual understanding, realize organizational goals, and serve the public interest.” (Flynn, Gregory & Valin, 2008)¹

The key to successful PR is to develop and craft key messages about your sustainability initiatives, and ensure these reach your “public”. Here are several steps to assuring this is a well-managed process:

Decide what key messages and stories you would like to share about your initiatives.

With your sustainability team, answer these basic questions: who is taking action, which actions, when, and what will the results be for the community and travellers? Create simple statements, document these, and share them with your whole team.

Appoint someone from your organization to serve as a spokesperson to share these ideas externally with media and community. Depending on your size and resources, you may serve as key contact, or have a member of the sustainability team step into this role.

Develop a Press Kit of materials with:

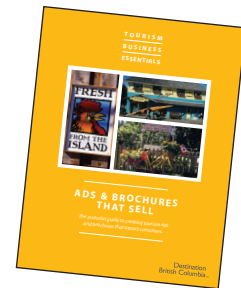
- A basic press release with key messages (Google “Press Release Format” for examples).
- Documentation on your programs (specific details and evidence of change) and (if appropriate) information about external certification programs – the more facts you provide, the less likely you will be accused of greenwashing.
- High-quality photos of your property, and your team in action (replacing equipment, donating food, etc.).
- Contact information for your spokesperson.

Additional Resources

Tourism Business Essentials – Ads & Brochures that Sell

Destination British Columbia has developed a FREE *Ads & Brochures that Sell* guide that provides information on two important business tools – brochures and print ads. Whether you do it yourself or work with a designer, this guide will help you understand how to create compelling, attractive promotional material, and how to avoid common mistakes along the way.

For more information on other *Tourism Business Essentials* guides and workshops, visit the [Programs](#) section of the Destination BC corporate website.



¹ Canadian Public Relations Society. cprs.ca. (2011)

Have the spokesperson distribute the above tools through the following channels:

- local media
- on a dedicated page on your website (“Sustainability Achievements”)
- to community, regional, and provincial destination marketing organizations (e.g. Destination BC)
- as part of an invitation to travel media (writers, bloggers, etc.) to visit your property, and
- in collateral specifically aimed at the travel trade for use in trade shows (see resources at end of chapter).

Empower staff to talk about their own participation, but invite them to direct enquiries to the spokesperson. Having this point person involved in all conversations about your business will ensure your message is well-managed. To that end, discuss a “crisis management” plan with the spokesperson so you are prepared in the event of a challenge – be it a bad review online, a negative article, or reaction to a local environmental disaster.

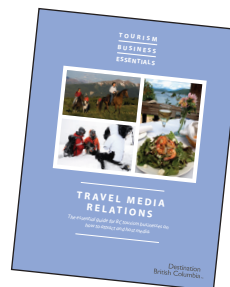
While these PR efforts will go a long way to sharing your successes with the public, it is important to remember that sustainability good news stories should be incorporated into all of your traditional promotional initiatives as well.

Additional Resources

Tourism Business Essentials – Travel Media Relations

Destination British Columbia has developed a FREE *Travel Media Relations* guide that provides information on how to build long-term relationships with the media and how to assist them to produce a good story.

For more information on other *Tourism Business Essentials* guides and workshops, visit the [Programs](#) section of the Destination BC corporate website.



6

Communicate with Customers and Community

Advertising Your Sustainability Efforts in a Responsible Manner

Your business likely already employs marketing promotions' tools including a website, printed collateral, signage and other advertising materials. Moving forward, it is important to incorporate sustainability messaging into your whole promotions mix, while being mindful of modesty. Today's customers are weary of the words "Green", "Eco", and "Environmentally-Friendly", so review your PR messages and share genuine success stories with customers in the following ways:

- Create a webpage dedicated to sustainability efforts with a simple URL extension (e.g. www.mybusiness.com/sustainability). Ensure your spokesperson keeps the page up-to-date with messages and materials from your PR campaign.
- Once a year, create a poster (on recycled paper) that highlights sustainability initiatives, successes and awards, and frame this for display in a public area.
- Print select reviews, articles and other good news stories, then frame and post in restrooms and guestrooms.
- If you are an accommodations provider with

an in-house television station, create a few image-rich slides per year that illustrate your initiatives. Non-accommodation businesses can use display LED screens in public areas to do the same.

- Ensure all print materials (brochures, pamphlets) adhere to Forest Stewardship Council standards for paper and inks (see [Chapter 5](#)), and indicate this on the materials themselves.
- Update paid and co-operative advertisements with sustainability messages and brands. This could be as simple as announcing an achievement and directing consumers to your website for more information.
- Provide as many feedback opportunities as possible through comment cards, on your website and social media pages, and in person.

The Online World and Social Media

In today's marketing world, the most important part of your PR and advertising efforts will rely on the Internet. Today's world of online marketing will allow your staff the opportunity to get creative and use the technology already at their fingertips (smart phones, apps, etc.) to spread the word.

Social Media: Make Your Voice Heard

Invite tech-savvy staff to take the lead on promoting your efforts through the "places" they already spend their time online. Here are three social media outlets, but if you empower the team to deliver, they will likely add to this list with the hottest new online tools. Ensure all activities are in accordance to your organization's social media guidelines.

- **Facebook.com** If your organization does not already have a general page here, set one up with your brand, name, location, and contact information. Use your Facebook page as the central online platform to post links, pictures, and videos about your new initiatives. Facebook shares these updates with contacts known as "fans": ask staff to become fans, and as your in-person networking improves, invite these contacts to become fans as well.

Do you have web-savvy team members with rich online lives? If not, consider contacting a local college or university to get a team of students to develop your online presence as part of an assignment, or work experience project.

The Online World and Social Media

- **Twitter.com** This micro-blogging site allows you to update followers with posts of 140 characters or less. You can link your Facebook postings to your Twitter account to make it easier to share your message.
- **LinkedIn.com** Similar to Facebook, LinkedIn allows users to connect, but in a more professional context. Once you or a member of your team has a profile and connections to professionals, they can set up a Group (e.g. “New Sustainability Initiatives”) where contacts can update each other.

The popularity of these and other social media outlets is part of an overall shift in the way we use the Internet. Today, sharing positive

messages with potential customers is essential, and consumer voices are louder than ever.

User-Generated Content (UGC)

Over the last few years, online marketing has evolved from a simple “here’s our information, enjoy” type of campaigning, to something called “user-generated content” or UGC, where the average Internet user shapes your organization’s online presence. A recent Australian study outlined ways consumer-generated content is changing the face of tourism marketing. This type of content includes:

- People sharing opinions about destinations, attractions and properties through blogs (weblogs) or other discussion forums.

Homegrown Example: Nimmo Bay Resort

Virtual Helicopter Tour Goes Viral

As a family-owned Heli-Venture operator for more than 32 years, Nimmo Bay has built its operations around principles of sustainability and ecosystem management. According to Georgia Murray of Nimmo Bay Resort, from the design of its floating resort and inter-tidal chalets built onto the rock, Nimmo was designed with minimal impact on surrounding forest or habitat. Eighty per cent of Nimmo’s power is supplied by a small hydro turbine, powered from an on-site waterfall. Human waste is taken care of by a Hydroxyl waste management system and all other solid waste is taken offsite and recycled. The fishery at Nimmo Bay is catch and release and the cuisine is local and fresh.

Purchasing and hiring is done locally and Nimmo has a living, working tourism accord (Wi’la’mola accord) with the First Nations in their area. Employee and guest education concerning the environment are ongoing. Clearly, Nimmo Bay Resort demonstrates leadership in the area of sustainability. But the Resort is also expert at using the Internet to generate interest in their products and initiatives. In 2011, they launched a special interactive tool on their website that went “viral”, with millions of viewers, leading the Huffington Post to state “This might be the coolest thing you see... ever.”

The interactive tool in question allows visitors to virtually fly in a helicopter. Using their mouse, virtual visitors can look up, down and behind themselves as they hover over pristine waterfalls, race down rivers and over oceans, explore 10,000-year-old glaciers, and discover forests, snow capped mountains, and amazing fishing spots. Since its launch, the viral video tool has been passed along to all four corners of the globe, highlighting the natural environment the resort prides itself on protecting, and attracting new traffic to the Nimmo Bay webpage.

View the video, and enjoy the experience, here: www.nimmobay.com/media/360-video/360-video-nimmo-bay-helicopter-resort

6 Communicate with Customers and Community

The Online World and Social Media

- Travellers sending photos or videos to other online users (including family, friends or total strangers).
- Consumers posting reviews of accommodation properties to sites like TripAdvisor.com.
- People using social networking sites such as Facebook.com or YouTube.com to share travel information.²

In a separate study, the authors quantified what we already know: greater and greater numbers of consumers worldwide now “post content” to the Internet, and this volume is growing. They also found:

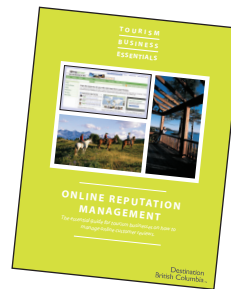
- The most common UGC booking features are the ability to book flights, accommodation and rental cars.

Additional Resources

Tourism Business Essentials – Online Reputation Management

Destination British Columbia has developed a FREE *Online Reputation Management* guide that explores the explosive popularity of social networking and how it relates to the tourism industry. This guide provides information to business operators on how to actively participate in social networking by engaging travellers and generating content, as well as using consumer feedback to strengthen business and to build loyalty and advocacy.

For more information on other *Tourism Business Essentials* guides and workshops, visit the [Programs](#) section of the Destination BC corporate website.



² Carmen Cox, Stephen Burgess, Carmine Sellitto, Jeremy Bultjens. Sustainable Tourism Research Council. (2008). *Users are Doing it for Themselves: How consumer-generated content is changing the face of tourism marketing.*

The Online World and Social Media

- Information on UGC sites can cause travellers to alter their existing travel plans.
- Most consumers are considering information provided on UGC sites along with a wide range of other sources.
- Integrating UGC features into your organization's website should be done with the concerns of travellers in mind. For instance, wherever possible, contributors should provide basic profile information (non-private details such as purpose of travel, etc.) to enable readers to make a decision about the relevance of postings.
- Travel operators should never manipulate content or embellish postings by masquerading as real travellers. Many users are astute enough to see right through these tactics and form negative opinions about organizations that tamper with UGC.
- For the moment, travellers have a preference for websites that allow users to enter (up to) 5 star ratings for individual travel experiences. They are typically well known, have more features and usually only allow UGC reviews rather than general blog comments.³

Given travellers are using five-star UGC sites to make decisions, we recommend you ask your sustainability team to start monitoring these sites specifically for comments about your organization. While your team members should never pose as travellers, they can respond to feedback (either negative or positive) and bring this to the attention of your organization. Find out what your guests are talking about on:

- Trip Advisor (www.tripadvisor.com)
- Epic Trip (www.epictrip.com)

- Travelocity (www.travelocity.com)
- Orbitz (www.orbitzinsider.com)

Another great way to take the pulse of the online environment is an application like Google Alerts (www.google.com/alerts). This service will send you emails alerting you to blog mentions, Twitter mentions, news articles, and web mentions relating to your business and your competitors. If set up properly, Google Alerts will update you hourly, daily or weekly – catching the comments of Internet users as they happen. You can also set up alerts to see what people are saying about your competitors and their sustainability efforts. When setting up your alerts, consider including the following information for your business:

- Your business and brand name.
- Location (e.g. property name and town or area).
- Keywords based on tactics in your plan like “composting” or “food bank.”
- Former names of your business.
- Names of your products (hotel, restaurant, rafting).
- Your competitors (repeat all of the above, using their names).

All of these efforts will ensure your messages are being managed, and your online identity is consistent with your sustainability vision. In the next chapter, we will share more about how to react to information you gather about your online presence.

Conclusion

Sharing your sustainability messages with your community and consumers is imperative, and will build on your existing marketing and public relations efforts. The great news is, whether your business is a well-oiled marketing machine, or you are just launching your first webpage, genuine action-oriented sustainability initiatives are good news stories people will want to share on your behalf. Give the public what they need, and they will share the content for you!

³ Carmen Cox, Stephen Burgess, Carmine Sellitto, Jeremy Buultjens. (2008). *Consumer-generated Web-based Tourism Marketing. For the Sustainable Tourism Research Council.*

6 Communicate with Customers and Community

Checklist

- Get to know your local partners and competitors and invite them to join you on the sustainable tourism journey.
- Develop key messages about your new efforts, and appoint someone to share these through various PR channels.
- Ensure your online presence is maintained, and monitor what your customers are saying about you.
- Allow staff to get creative by using photos, video and other online sharing tools to help your content go viral, according to your social media guidelines.

Resources

Destination British Columbia

[Tourism Industry Programs](#)

[Tourism Industry Resources](#)

The role of Destination BC is to support and promote the business of tourism throughout the province. Destination BC is structured to develop and deliver programs and services that attract visitors to British Columbia and help ensure that the quality of their vacation experience keeps them coming back for more.

PR Channel

www.prchannel.com/dashboard/pr.html

This web portal features links to information for PR professionals including media management, pitching, writing, and tips and tools from PR insiders.

Destination BC Image Bank

www.imagebank.destinationbc.net

This service allows tourism operators around BC to access high-quality pictures and video for use in attracting visitors to BC.

Users are Doing it for Themselves: how consumer-generated content is changing the face of tourism marketing. (2008).

www.sustainabletourisonline.com/93/leverage-marketing/users-are-doing-it-for-themselves-how-consumer-generated-content-is-changing-the-face-of-tourism-marketing



7 Measure Your Progress

Setting up a Documentation System

Throughout this guide we have emphasized the importance of demonstrating the validity of your sustainability efforts. Setting up a documentation system is a great way of ensuring staff and consumers understand your tactics go beyond greenwashing, and are part of an overall strategy to change the way you do business, and improve your impacts. Document the implementation process from start to finish — include all initiatives, objectives, targets, roles and responsibilities, etc. As time goes on and improvements are made, document any changes made to the system as a whole or to any of the individual elements. Most importantly, measure all impacts (both tangible and intangible), record these, and use this data to evolve your plans over time.

Measuring the Tangible

Back in [Chapter 3](#), you (or your sustainability team) set goals based on specific measurements. Now it is time to use these to evaluate your performance. Broadly, there are two types of evaluation, regardless of whether you are monitoring financial performance or environmental performance. The first is called “formative evaluation,” and it refers to checking on how well you are doing mid-process. The second is “summative evaluation,” and it refers to the kind of review you do after a phase of your project is completed.

An example of formative evaluation is checking your cash register tapes daily to get a feel for how well sales are going, while summative evaluation is reviewing your monthly bank-deposit statement to see how well you did after the sales period has finished. In business operations, formative evaluation is normally only used to monitor economic performance. This is mainly because cash-flow is critical to business sustainability, but it is also because we generally only collect information that helps us conduct formative evaluation on financial matters.

Now that we are viewing performance in a different way, we can use any combination of the following types of data to analyze our sustainability performance. On a daily basis, you may wish to consult formative evaluation tools including:

- sales numbers (cash register slips)

- number of bookings/reservations and cancellations for the day
- electric meter readings
- gas meter readings
- fuel receipts
- water-meter readings
- purchasing receipts (paper, light bulbs, office supplies, foodstuffs, cleaning supplies, chemicals, etc.)
- equipment maintenance and replacement receipts (initially these costs might go up, but over time they should decrease)
- waste removal savings (in dollars and/or kilograms)
- guest counts (head counts at paid or public events)
- staff turnout (sick days taken, late arrivals, etc.).

At the end of a set period (monthly, quarterly, etc.), you may wish to review summative evaluation tools, including:

- sales numbers (bank statements)
- number of bookings/reservations and cancellations
- average room night, average guest cheque, average spend per visitor
- electric bills
- gas heating bills
- fuel expenses (supplier statements or categorized statements on your credit card bill)
- water-meter expenses (if your municipality charges for water)

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Step Six – Measure Your Progress

Measuring the Tangible

- purchasing expenses (supplier statements or credit card statements)
- equipment maintenance and replacement expenses (supplier statements or credit card statements)
- waste removal savings (in dollars and/or kilograms)
- guest counts (head counts at paid or public events)
- length of employee service in your organization (in months or years)
- number of volunteer hours contributed.

While initially you may zero-in on the measurements directly related to your specific goals, consider tracking as much of this information as you can as you evaluate your organization's overall performance in the economic, environmental and social realms. Invite your team to think about creative ways to measure your performance, and add to the list. Combine these hard measurements with intangible impressions from your customers and community for maximum impact.

Homegrown Example: Yasodhara Ashram, Kootenay Bay

Setting and Meeting Physical, Environmental and Spiritual Goals¹

Yasodhara Ashram is not your typical tourism destination, it is a vibrant spiritual community where people of all ages live and work together to expand their awareness and bring the teachings of yoga to life. A visit to Yasodhara provides an opportunity for in-depth self-enquiry and harmonious living. They offer a wide range of yoga retreats as well as options for extended stays.

In February 2009, the Ashram received the Tourism BC Environmentally Responsible Tourism Award in recognition of its commitment to ecological-based management in all parts of its operations, from planning and design and building retrofits through to operations, maintenance and guest services. A year earlier, FortisBC had presented the Ashram with its PowerSense Conservation Excellence Award for "outstanding achievement in energy efficiency."

From the Ashram's perspective, environmental action goes well beyond conventional economics. As Don Gamble, the Secretary Treasurer, said in September 2012, "We have been encouraged over the years by the awards for our efforts. We have made great progress with the help of hundreds of donors and many more volunteers. But there is more than first meets the eye. Clearly, sustainability has an inward as well as an outward manifestation."

For the Ashram, it all has more to do with social responsibility and ecological integrity. It is very much in keeping with the basic yogic principle of ahimsa, non-injury. The Ashram accepts that higher capital expenditures are often called for to achieve the necessary benefits, many of which are long term and non-monetary.

The Ashram sits on 115 acres of forested lands on the East Shore of Kootenay Lake. It is like a small mountain village with 15 main buildings, including residences, guest lodges, retreat cabins, classrooms, a library, meditation rooms, a dining hall, a maintenance shop and the Temple of Divine Light, dedicated to all religions.

The Ashram conducted its first full energy audit in 1994. This resulted in a multi-year program for upgrades and retrofits, including re-insulation, weather stripping, improved

¹ Swami Sivananda. (February 24, 2009). *Ashram Receives BC Environmentally Sustainable Tourism Award*.

Measuring the Tangible

lighting and new windows. In the early part of 2004, they developed a more comprehensive sustainability program, bringing in the full range of considerations from menu planning, food ordering and housekeeping, to sophisticated solar and geothermal heating systems. To financially support this initiative, the Circle of Sustainability donor program was introduced in 2007.

Having achieved their previous goals, in 2007 the Ashram made a commitment to be carbon neutral by 2013, their 50th anniversary. The most challenging aspect of this new goal has been guest travel. They estimate guest CO2 emissions at 450 tonnes for every 1,000 guests. In addition to encouraging ride sharing for its regular guests, since 2008 they've been adding a \$4 "carbon fee" for each guest registration. This is dedicated to a carbon offset program.

But if there is one thing to remember – it is not all technology, big investments and complex programs. The Ashram team understands that even the smallest change contributes to the overall goal. As well as expensive geothermal installations and big building retrofits, the sustainability program includes many much simpler measures. They stopped serving orange juice at breakfasts, turning to BC apple juice with a significantly lower carbon footprint. A quarter of all fruit and vegetables used in the kitchen are grown in the Ashram's orchards and garden and a large amount is preserved for winter. Even simpler – drying racks are provided to reduce clothes dryer use.

As the 50th anniversary approaches, the Ashram is in its final discussions with Pacific Carbon Trust. It is obvious that the Carbon Neutral goal will be realized, one more small example of how the essence of spiritual life, awareness and compassion, manifests in daily life.

For more information on Yasodhara and their programs, visit www.yasodhara.org.

Measuring the Intangible

As the Yasodhara example demonstrates, tangible measurements are important, but that is not to say that feelings and guest impressions do not count! As mentioned, today's consumer relies heavily on user-generated content (UGC) to make their travel and purchasing decisions. Our guests are becoming the best source of information about our efforts, and we need to be aware of the way they perceive our operations. You can get a sense of these perceptions by:

- Activating Google Alerts ([Chapter 6](#)).
- Monitoring comments on your Facebook, Twitter and other online media accounts.
- Conducting online surveys with past guests, staff, and community members.
- Providing paper feedback forms (on recycled paper) in high-traffic areas, and on your website ("tell us how we are doing").

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Step Six – Measure Your Progress

Making Changes to Your Plan

How you respond to the information you have gathered is critical. You should approach data with an open frame of mind, and be prepared to accept that numbers may tell a different story than you anticipated, or customers may see you and your product differently than you had intended. If customer responses are not what you expected, or hoped to see, the most important thing is to try to understand what went wrong, and how you might set things right.

Look Up, Drill Down

The first step is to "look up", get a sense of the overall situation, and how your pieces of information fit together. Lay out your data in front of you in a way that lets you see "the big picture". This might mean using a table, chart or graph, or you might find it more helpful to compare data over time.

Next, you need to closely examine the details, or "drill down". This is where you will look at specific metrics that apply to your sustainability plan, and identify other specific patterns in your performance. We suggest you "look up" before you "drill down", as it is easier to shape ideas about trends when looking at the bigger picture, and then find out why these things happened and what you might do about them by looking at all your data for fine-grain detail.

Once this analysis is done, the information can help you to determine how best to address issues and where to direct your efforts, be it focusing on a specific sustainability initiative (such as water use or connections with the community), or adjusting your marketing tactics to ensure guests understand your sustainability actions and can participate accordingly.

Evolve – and Survive

In the natural world, species evolve over time, changing to fit new conditions. In the business world, a parallel process of evolution takes place as operations start up, grow, mature, and either revive themselves or fail.

Your steps into sustainable tourism actions will have an impact on your financial, physical and social performance. By understanding how

to apply your resources in the most effective manner possible, continuous improvement becomes key to avoiding business "extinction" and enjoying the long-term success of your tourism business.

Checklist

- Gathering information involves using multiple sources as effectively as you can – from a simple conversation with a guest, to online surveys, to monitoring the Internet.
- Match the techniques you use to the resources you have on hand, otherwise you may not be able to finish what you start.
- Remember that gathering data is just the first step, it is how you react to the information, and use it in your planning that makes a difference.

Resources

These are just two examples of the many online resources available. For more information and details, please visit www.destinationbc.ca/Programs/Guides-Workshops-and-Webinars.aspx and download Online Reputation Management.

Google Alerts

www.google.com/alerts

Google Alerts are email updates of the latest relevant Google results (web, news, etc.) based on your choice of query or topic. Enter the topic you wish to monitor, then click preview to see the type of results you will receive.

TripAdvisor

www.tripadvisor.com

TripAdvisor features reviews and advice on hotels, resorts, flights, vacation rentals, vacation packages, travel guides, and more, written by travellers, for travellers. Tourism businesses can check here to identify, and respond to, customer compliments and complaints.



8 Over to You

The Future of Sustainable Tourism

Sustainable tourism is no longer just a buzz word, it is a genuine framework within which all operators should be conducting their business. Guests are increasingly demanding our industry take action. According to the *2011 Hotel Association of Canada's Canadian Travel Intentions Survey* results, 37% felt environmental initiatives are important, 36% of leisure travellers and 34% of business travellers wanted hotels to have green products and 25% of leisure travellers and 31% of business travellers said a hotel with an environmental certification program is important to them.¹

Sustainable travel and corporate responsibility are increasingly an important decision factor for visitors, and when it comes to travel, Canadians are not the only ones travelling with

a conscience. Results from the *2011 Travel Trends Report* found that almost half (47%) of TripAdvisor users will consider eco-friendly factors, such as their carbon footprint or “green” hotel policies, when making travel plans.²

We hope this guide has demonstrated that sustainable tourism has moved beyond the “Eco-tourism” and “Green tourism” of the 1990s to encompass tourism development that:

- makes optimal use of your environmental resources,
- respects the socio-cultural authenticity of your community, and
- “ensures viable, long-term economic operations.”

Share Your Success With Us

We appreciate you using this guide. We invite you to read and share your own success stories with BC's tourism industry by contacting the following organizations, as appropriate:

Regional Destination Marketing Organizations

www.destinationbc.ca/BC-Tourism-Industry/Regional-Partners.aspx

British Columbia has been divided into six tourism regions managed by five Regional Destination Marketing Organizations (RDMOs) in partnership with Destination BC. These are:

- **Cariboo Chilcotin Coast Tourism Association**
- **Kootenay Rockies Tourism**
- **Northern British Columbia Tourism**
- **Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association**
- **Tourism Vancouver Island**

Destination Canada

en.destinationcanada.com

Destination Canada is a national tourism marketing organization leading marketing efforts in consumer markets where there is the highest potential for return on investment. Destination Canada works in collaboration with the tourism industry, and the governments of Canada, its provinces and territories, to position Canada as a place where travellers can create unique and extraordinary personal experiences.

Destination British Columbia

www.destinationbc.ca

Destination British Columbia is responsible for training, development, and marketing initiatives related to the tourism industry in BC.

¹ Hotel Association of Canada. (2012). Canadian Travel Intentions Survey.

² www.tripadvisor.com/PressCenter-i329-c1-Press_Releases.html.

Resources

Living Water Smart

www.livingwatersmart.ca

This launch page for the provincial water preservation strategy features action tips, information about the *BC Water Sustainability Act*, and water use laws and documents progress on water issues.

Tourism Industry Resources – Sustainable Tourism

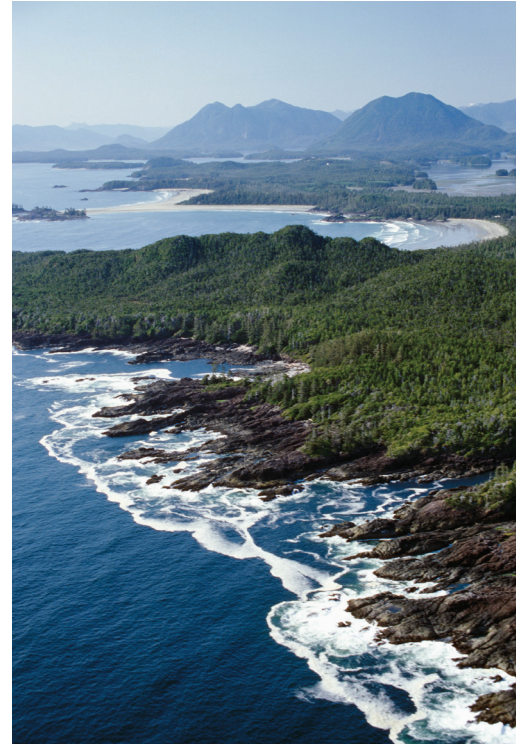
www.destinationbc.ca/Resources/Implementing-Your-Tourism-Plan/Sustainable-Tourism.aspx

This page of the Destination BC corporate website provides tourism businesses, communities and sectors with the information and resources needed to incorporate sustainable practices into their operations. These practices aim to recognize the importance of environmental, economic, social and cultural values.

United Nations World Tourism Organization: Sustainable Development of Tourism

www.unwto.org/sdt/

Provides policy guidelines, tools, poverty reduction initiatives, cultural tourism elements, and destination-specific undertakings – all related to the sustainable development of tourism throughout the world.



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