Building a Social Network to Sustain Commitment to Energy Conservation in Non-profit Organizations

Mirele B. Goldsmith, PhD
Green Strides Consulting
“I can’t think of another initiative state-wide that has been as effective at bringing large non-profits into NYSERDA’s programs.”

Max Joel, Energy Smart Communities Coordinator
Why Community Organizations?

Marks JCH of Bensonhurst

Central Queens Y
How to Change Organizations

• Develop green champions
• Design intervention to change the culture
• Build a social network
Results

- 1,750 light bulbs changed
- 6 solar energy systems
- NYSERDA grants $358,770
- Other grants $544,500
- Annual energy savings $50,000+
How does it work?

• Organizations apply to participate
• 18 month commitment by organization
• Monthly training and retreats for fellows
• Grants for fellow time, energy audit, energy efficiency upgrades, education programs
• Required outputs: 7 areas including green team, energy audit, programs
Green Champions

Experiential Learning
Emotional, Relevant, Immediately applicable
Culture Change

“The fellow has total buy-in from the staff. I’m somewhat surprised. Everyone is busy and when someone asks for something you expect resistance. But there hasn’t been...even from the maintenance department. This has also been an interesting learning experience about how to change the culture of the agency about anything.” CEO
Social Network

• Building social capital through access to resources
• Strengthening existing network and changing social norms
Lessons Learned

• Make it someone’s job
• Transferable to other organizations
• Engage more people at more levels
• Provide more structure and goals
• It is not the $
6 Design Principles for Long Term Impact

1. ENGAGE: People at every level of the organization get support to play their role.
2. PARTICIPATE: People within the organization participate in designing the intervention.
3. GROUP: A group (team, committee) takes responsibility for the project.
4. EVALUATE: There are procedures to collect and use results for improvement.
5. REWARD: Rewards for group and individuals provide incentives to keep going and highlight excellence.
6. NETWORK: Connecting to networks provides experience and resources.
More Information

• Jewish Greening Fellowship Case Study
• Isabella Freedman Jewish Retreat Center – Jewish Greening Fellowship Website
• Flick the Switch: How to Change Employee Behavior (free webinar)

http://www.greenstridesconsulting.com/links/
• Design of sustainability strategies for organizations and associations

• Social marketing campaigns

• Program evaluation

• Interactive training

• SSC Green Auditor