

Wells Fargo's 5 Best Practices for Engaging Your Green Teams

By *Deborah Fleischer*

Created 2011-01-10 04:45

The banking industry has many challenges on its plate right now. At [Wells Fargo](#), one challenge is how to promote the concept of sustainability to over 278,000 team members (as Wells Fargo calls its employees) and embed sustainability into its operations.

I had the opportunity to speak with Krista Van Tassel, Vice President of Environmental Affairs and Team Member Engagement Manager at Wells Fargo. She highlighted Wells Fargo's most promising employee engagement and green teams practices, including:

- Link green teams to a corporate goal
- Provide posters and templates with a consistent brand
- Recognize achievement and participation
- Link volunteerism to sustainability priorities
- Engage customers

Green Teams at the Heart of Employee Engagement Strategy

[Environmental Affairs](#) at Wells Fargo tackles a range of issues, including operations, products/services, community and team members.

Wells Fargo
green team

At the heart of its employee engagement strategy is supporting over 50 Wells Fargo Green Teams -- communities of practice groups where team members (employees) voluntarily organize around the subject of green. The teams are organized either around a line of business or a geographical region. As Team Member Engagement Manager, part of Van Tassel's job is to provide resources and structure to the program, without stifling the creativity that is a hallmark of green teams.

Five Green Team Best Practices

About a year ago, GreenBiz.com and I released a white paper, [Green Teams: Engaging Employees in Sustainability](#), which identified 10 best practices for green teams. Building on this paper, this piece highlights five of the green campaigns and communications strategies Wells Fargo is using to engage team members.



1. Link green teams to a corporate goal: "We allocated 3 percent of our greenhouse gas goal to team member behavior changes. Around that, we produced a campaign that encourages people to conserve energy and equipped each of our teams with a suite of communications materials to provide on-the-ground education," explained Van Tassel.

In 2010, Wells Fargo also tackled other topics, including recycling and waste reduction, paper reduction and commute options. The formula it used was a combination of internal communications with a consistent brand to reach all employees using existing major line of business portals (each of the 85 lines of business has its own portal), as well as providing green teams templates and materials to execute on-the-ground campaigns.

<!--pagebreak-->



2. Provide posters and templates with a consistent brand: For the energy reduction campaign, each team ended up getting a presentation on Wells Fargo's greenhouse gas emissions and tips for every day action. To support the campaign, it provided the green teams poster templates and fliers with a consistent brand; the best educational opportunity for some team members is to reach people in break rooms. The campaign included a special edition of the monthly newsletter, the Green Guide, focused on energy efficiency, which went out to everyone. In addition, managers were given talking points that they could include at their staff meetings.

Wells Fargo also created a viral element to the campaign by creating stickers that said "Conserve Energy. The stickers were given to teams to use graffiti style, allowing them to tag light switches and computers.

3. Recognize achievement and participation: Wells Fargo commissioned an environmental artist to create a traveling green team trophy out of recycled textiles. The unique trophy will travel from office to office to reward and recognize green team achievements. The trophy was designed by [Suzanne Husky](#), a French American visual artist living and practicing in the Bay Area. It recently traveled to Minneapolis, Minn., in honor of one of Wells Fargo's largest green teams (the team boasts over 800 members). For more details on the award, see the [Wells Fargo Environmental Forum](#).

Using art to engage and raise awareness is a highly underutilized strategy that can be very effective.

4. Link volunteerism to environmental priorities: A big part of the Wells Fargo culture is volunteerism -- employees get two days off a year to volunteer in activities of their choosing. Some of the green teams go out into the community and volunteer, linking volunteerism to environmental priorities, such as a focus on community gardens and beach and river cleanups.

5. Engage consumers: A new initiative is putting Sustainability Agents in its stores to talk to customers about environmental initiatives. Sustainability Agents are Wells Fargo store team members who help support, educate and promote Wells Fargo sustainability practices and help address customers' questions. Each agent is selected by the store manager for the program and they receive corporate training and support.