

# FOSTERING GREEN CHAMPIONS AT WORK TOOLKIT

## A STRUCTURED APPROACH

Improving workplace sustainability requires engagement across the whole organisation. Based on the experience of CitySwitch Signatories and international best practice, the keys to creating a greener office are:

- Securing senior management support
- Setting the identity or 'tone' for green teams and sustainability programs
- Building a team or network of champions
- Creating and using effective communication channels
- Creating a program for staff engagement
- Celebrating, growing and sharing achievements



## Management support and setting the tone

Having commitment and buy-in from the top is essential for success and senior management commitment to improving sustainability should be communicated to all staff. Some ways to show senior management support include:

- A pledge from the CEO
- A formal launch
- Presentation to staff
- Target setting and promotion of the organisation's goals and motivations
- Officially assigning team members to work on improving aspects of sustainability across the workplace
- Integrating sustainability performance measures into KPIs

The identity and tone of the project helps make it recognisable and understandable to staff and it also portrays the organisation's personality internally. Green champion networks do not have to be dry and serious, they can be an opportunity to use humour or 'walk the talk' about company values to employees.

## Green teams or champions

A green team refers to a group of people who meet regularly to increase their knowledge of sustainability issues and act as champions for improvements in the business' environmental performance. Green teams generally work to find low or no-cost ways to minimise negative impacts, and maximise the positive impacts, associated with their business activities. Green teams may also work to provide management with the business case for longer term projects or capital investment. Some general qualities of a green team include:

- Networks need to be inclusive and representative - ensure there is an even mix of champions and a cross-section from all levels
- Team members may represent either their functional team (e.g. sales) or their physical location (e.g. floor or franchise)

## PROFILE OF A TYPICAL GREEN CHAMPION

- ✓ Personal interest in sustainability
- ✓ Enthusiasm for cutting waste / better efficiency
- ✓ A volunteer who enjoys social connection and seeing results
- ✓ Eyes and ears – someone who can observe and identify needs
- ✓ Capacity to act and influence



## TIPS FOR GETTING STARTED

- Advertise for interested individuals via staff newsletters, emails and posters
- Use the first meeting to determine the terms of reference for the group, establish its purpose and what members would prefer it to be called
- Establish the number of times per year the group wishes to meet and also how much involvement they would like in between meetings
- At subsequent meetings, give updates on what the organisation is doing to reduce its environmental and social impacts, and request updates from champions on what initiatives they have commenced in their work areas and how they have helped to increase awareness of the organisation's sustainability objectives and targets
- Record ideas from the green team and plot progress – this information will be vital at a later date to review how much the organisation has achieved and to help celebrate success

- Participants bring their own skills with the key message being that sustainable practice impacts all areas of the business and is a proxy for good practice
- Champions must be empowered to perform – this means support from operational staff and making sure the green champions ‘own’ the projects, ideas and initiatives
- Champions are initiators and implementers of change – they need regular motivation and re-invigoration
- Team members can also become ‘bottom-up’ communicators – providing a point of contact for colleagues to ask questions or raise issues to be investigated
- A team or network can have many names – green ambassadors, green leaders, sustainability network, green team, green champions or even green ninjas!

### What kinds of actions will people need to take?

The actions that will have most impact in any specific workplace can be determined through a structured process tailored to each organisation. Common actions include:

- Switch-off/ shut down computers and monitors at the end of the day
- Turn off area lighting at the end of the day
- Turn off meeting room lights when leaving
- Use smaller lighting zones when working after hours
- Adjust settings on equipment to ‘Energy Saver’
- Use the recycling system correctly
- Consider recycling/reuse for larger office items (e.g. furniture)
- Reduce transport and fleet emissions - walk to meetings, where possible, and replace travel with teleconferencing
- Initiate and implement sustainable procurement policies
- Purchase less consumable waste – e.g. plastic wrapping
- Reduce water use
- Reduce paper use

### Staff engagement program

When considering your program for staff engagement there are a range of techniques. The main kinds of behaviour change and support are:

**Changing social norms.** Management support, public statements, program branding and the existence and actions of green teams or champions all help make action for sustainability the ‘norm’ at work.

**Positive peer pressure and competition.** Friendly competitions can be created between floors, work groups or ‘houses’ where team members can exert positive pressure on their colleagues to do the right thing. Highlighting undesirable or negative habits can also create negative peer pressure against habits that waste resources.

**Feedback.** Feedback can be in the form of daily, weekly, quarterly or yearly sharing of results.

**Rewards.** There are many ways to reward staff through experiences and vouchers, as well as financial incentives via KPIs. The reward or incentive may also be simply increased respect, visibility, credibility or authority.

### A SMART APPROACH – understand your company culture

The culture in organisations is inseparable from engagement and behaviour change. There is an endless variety of methods, language and program identities that CitySwitch Signatories adopt when they develop their own in-house materials. Culture is especially important when designing campaigns and initiatives to motivate staff. Consider:

- Is your workplace already competitive – do you already use comparative results, for example, between teams or locations to motivate people?
- Are your projects and staff more focussed on collaboration and would be discouraged from participating in an overly competitive program?
- Does the culture vary, for example between work areas (technical experts or frontline staff) or across locations (offices in different suburbs or cities)?
- How would people respond to campaigns that highlight when equipment and lights are left on compared to rewarded when they are switched-off?

When designing programs there are options for how they run: they can reward those who do well, or penalise or publicly highlight those who do not perform. Choose wisely! If the program doesn’t fit the workplace culture it can actually be counter-productive, prompting people to actively resist or undermine the measures being rolled out.



### PRO-TIP

Engaging with staff on green issues can be integrated into existing internal communications. There may be different themes each month and sustainability can take a place alongside workplace health and safety, as well as other social, competitive or charity events.

### Communications channels

Existing channels of communications and engagement could include:

- Staff meetings
- Internal newsletters (email or print)
- Intranet
- Internal mail, for notices to teams or individuals

New channels that could be created for green teams include:

- Posters and prompts
- Closed, ‘in-house’ social media solutions like Yammer
- Data displays and computer dashboards for tracking resource use
- Videos made for staff
- Workshops
- Suggestion box



### SEE MORE IDEAS

> Running a Workplace Switch-Off Campaign  
[www.cityswitch.net.au/switchofftoolkit](http://www.cityswitch.net.au/switchofftoolkit)

> Running Workplace Competitions  
[www.cityswitch.net.au/competitiontoolkit](http://www.cityswitch.net.au/competitiontoolkit)

## What's in a name?

The City of Sydney named their green champions networks 'Green Ninjas' and adopted a persona of stealthy, devoted and somewhat anonymous characters. The green ninjas rolled out a project where they checked the recycling bins out of hours, and left rewards for those who did well, and advice for those who needed it, to find in the morning.



**WISE Employment**, a not-for-profit organisation working with disadvantaged community members, has a green champion in each office, whose role is to monitor energy consumption and behaviour, including switching-off computers. In the words of one employee the role was "an opportunity to put my ideas forward and make changes to our office for a more sustainable future," giving her another way to 'make a difference' through her working life.

**SA Department of Communities and Social Inclusion** established a 'Greening Ambassadors' program with 40 ambassadors regularly getting together to brainstorm ideas and spread the 'sustainability word' to their colleagues. They developed their branding with a friendly but strong-looking 'Switchie' logo.



**AMP Capital**, a leading investment firm, instigated their 'Floor Wars' over a six-month period, with strong internal management support and a rather science-fiction themed identity, complete with helmets and Star Wars-esque weapons to fight energy waste.



See the full case studies at [www.cityswitch.net.au/casestudies](http://www.cityswitch.net.au/casestudies)

## A STAGED APPROACH – know where you're going

When embarking on any initiative to save energy and resources in the office environment, the steps are much like any other project management task - scope or measure, plan, act, review and feedback. Green champions can assist with all of these by acting as advocates, communication pathways, and feedback systems to let you know how your internal communications are being received. Based on the experience of CitySwitch Signatories, a big-picture approach is best - make your green champions part of a drive for continuous improvement.

### 1. Short term wins

A visible initiative with measurable impact, for example, a switch-off campaign or Earth Hour activity, helps people quickly see the difference they can make and confirms management support. It is quite common to start with an ad-hoc approach, running with ideas or issues suggested by staff who volunteer early and are engaged with the subject.

### 2. Longer term strategic goals

With good data and feedback loops, green champions will be able to encourage long term improvements. Consider how performance will be tracked and create appropriate systems for monitoring and tracking reductions, for example, energy sub meter data, waste reporting data, paper use, or travel distances.

### 3. Embedding the initiatives into the organisation

Consider the political or social 'glue' that makes initiatives stick and enables changes to become part of 'the way things are done around here'. This may include, for example; updating corporate policies, including resource efficiency actions in the staff induction manual or as part of job descriptions. A green lease or participating in a vertical community in your building can help connect your organisation's objectives to the property manager, building owner and/or other tenants and unlock further potential for collective action.



## SEE MORE IDEAS

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- > Running Workplace Competitions [www.cityswitch.net.au/competitiontoolkit](http://www.cityswitch.net.au/competitiontoolkit)
- > Fostering Vertical Communities [www.cityswitch.net.au/verticalcommunitiestoolkit](http://www.cityswitch.net.au/verticalcommunitiestoolkit)



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## Celebrate, grow and share

It is quite common for a behaviour change program to launch with an initial burst of activity and early achievements, then for activity to fall away.

Some tips and experience from CitySwitch Signatories to keep the momentum going when enthusiasm wanes include:

- Rewards to green team members - fun and rewarding activities such as tree planting or lunches
- Attend events outside the workplace e.g. seminars with peers
- Involvement in an annual event e.g. Earth Hour or Ride/ Walk to Work Day
- Involvement in something indirectly related but of interest e.g. sustainability at home