

Discussion Boards: Leading Organizational Change for Sustainability

Prof. Cynthia Thompson, Baruch College

Week 1: Our Iceberg is Melting

After reading *Our Iceberg is Melting*, ask yourself whether you are living on the proverbial melting iceberg or an iceberg that could melt. Melting icebergs come in many forms: product lines that use too much packaging, colleges that are not keeping up with the changing climate, a business strategy that makes increasingly little sense, a supply chain that relies on water in a country experiencing severe drought, a new strategy whose implementation is fading into the sunset, and so on.

In your current organization, what icebergs are coming your way?

Who in your organization can champion change? What can your role be?

Week 2a: Footprint Calculators: Ideas for your Personal Change Project

This DB provides an opportunity for you to think about the environmental impacts of your personal lifestyle, if you haven't done so already. It's also a good way to start thinking about your Personal Change Project. (I will create a separate DB forum for the personal change project.) Please respond to this post by Thursday, Feb. 8th, and comment on two other posts by Sunday, Feb. 11th.

Here are three calculators to help you evaluate the global implications of your lifestyle.

1. Your individual [ecological](http://www.footprintnetwork.org/en/index.php/GFN/page/personal_footprint/) footprint:
http://www.footprintnetwork.org/en/index.php/GFN/page/personal_footprint/
2. Your individual [water](https://www.watercalculator.org/wfc2) footprint: <https://www.watercalculator.org/wfc2>
3. Your individual [carbon](http://www.nature.org/greenliving/carboncalculator/index.htm) footprint:
<http://www.nature.org/greenliving/carboncalculator/index.htm>

What do the various calculators tell you about your lifestyle? Any surprises? How do you compare to an average American? How do you compare to individuals in other countries? What behaviors have a high impact? How can they be modified to reduce impact? Are there areas of your footprint that you have more or less personal control over?

FYI:

<http://www.activesustainability.com/sustainable-life/the-carbon-footprint-of-everyday-objects/>

<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/environment/freshwater/water-conservation-tips/>

Week 2b: Where is Your Organization in Terms of Sustainability Progress?

Using the **Sustainability Phase Model** developed by Suzanne Benn and her colleagues, describe where your current organization lies. What indicators are you using to make this assessment? (If it makes more sense to use a previous employer, please do. Also, if you work for a large organization and cannot assess the totality of its response to sustainability concerns, then choose a smaller unit within the organization.) What initial ideas do you have for moving your organization (or unit) to a higher level of focus on sustainability?

Week 3: Lewin's Model of Change

Chapters 1 & 2 in Spector's book introduce the concept of organizational change, and in particular, Lewin's Three-Stage Model of Change: Unfreezing, Change, and Refreezing. Why is employee motivation important to behavioral change? Why is it so difficult to motivate employees to change their behavior? How does this relate to the "unfreezing" stage of Lewin's change model? Do you have any personal observations about motivating change in yourself? in your organization? (current or past)

Week 4: Personal Change Project

Now that you have all described your personal footprints, it's time to commit to a change! If you haven't already started, please choose a behavior that you would like to change and make a public commitment here. Once you have posted your intended behavior change, please read the guidelines for the [Personal Change Project, 2018.docx](#)

Be sure to update us on your progress (or lack of) throughout the duration of the semester, using this Discussion Board forum. The Personal Change paper is due April 30th. Good luck!

For additional inspiration, check out the following websites:

[Link](https://www.foodandwaterwatch.org/about/live-healthy/tap-water-vs-bottled-water) for Food and Water Watch: <https://www.foodandwaterwatch.org/about/live-healthy/tap-water-vs-bottled-water>

[Link](https://plasticfreewaters.org/) for Plastic Free Waters: <https://plasticfreewaters.org/>

Week 6: Incremental vs. Transformational Change

Please choose two of the following questions to discuss.

1. What is incremental change? Describe one or two examples of incremental change from your current or former organization. Or, choose another organization that you've read about in the media.

2. Hart and Milstein (p. 218, Benn et al. book) argue that today's corporations must look beyond incremental improvements. Joseph Schumpeter argues that incremental change simply maintains the status quo. Do you agree? Is there a place for incremental change?
3. What is transformational change? Describe an organization that has chosen (or been forced to choose) transformational change.

Week 7a: Visioning the Future

To continue the discussion of your visions of the future, please use this Discussion Board to post the vision (or draft of a vision) that you created in class on Monday. This is a vision created by your team, so choose one person to start the conversation. Please use this space to offer feedback and advice to each other. Remember to review the files posted in Course Documents on how to create a vision. You might also want to review Aman and Alex's presentation: [Futerra for Baruch College, March 2018.pdf](#)

Week 7b: Creating a Personal Leadership Vision

"Leadership vision is an essential means for focusing attention on what matters most; what you want to accomplish in your life and what kind of leader you wish to be. A useful vision has to be rooted in your past, address the future, and deal with today's realities. It represents who you are and what you stand for. It inspires you, and the people whose commitment you need, to act to make constructive change towards a future you all want to see." Stu Friedman, Wharton School

For this Discussion, share your personal vision for the future. Remember that an effective vision motivates others to go beyond "business as usual." Describe your vision in a way that others will understand and be inspired by. Or, at a minimum, it should inspire you to do more toward minimizing your negative impact on the environment and maximizing your positive impact. Even better if your vision, and the actions that would support it, will take you out of your comfort zone. (You can use this worksheet to get you started: [Creating a Personal Leadership Vision, Worksheet.docx](#))

Week 8: An Inconvenient Truth

According to Wright and Nyberg (2017), "corporate environmentalism" seeks to balance the competing demands of the market and the environment (p. 1634). What they call the "new corporate environmentalism" serves to focus on helping firms exceed environmental laws and regulatory compliance. Accordingly, firms approach environmental challenges through

activities such as increasing eco-efficiency both internally and through the supply chain, and by creating new products and services devoted to meeting customer demands that the products and services they buy do not damage the environment. However, Wright and Nyberg's research suggests that this is not an easy path for companies to follow. Why? What are the forces mitigating against change toward sustainability? For you, what is the main take-away from the Wright and Nyberg article?

Week 9: Resistance to Change: Psychological and Cognitive Barriers

On Monday, Dr. Mindy Engle-Friedman led a discussion on psychological and cognitive barriers to change, especially change associated with adapting to climate change. In addition, the article by Mazutis & Eckhardt, *Sleepwalking into Catastrophe: Cognitive biases and corporate climate change inertia*, described three types of bias: perception bias, optimism bias, and relevance bias. To deepen and personalize your understanding of cognitive and psychological biases you have experienced or observed, please answer the following questions.

1. Which of these types of bias have you observed in your own organization? Describe the bias and how it affects your organization's approach (or lack of) to creating a more sustainable (or less unsustainable) organization.
2. Describe the psychological and cognitive barriers you've observed among friends, family, co-workers, and bosses. You might also want to share any barriers you've experienced as you try to change a behavior for your Personal Change Project.
3. What are your "take-aways" from this discussion and reading?

Week 12: Harvard Climate Change Challenge

As described in the syllabus, choose a company or non-profit organization whose operating model is likely to be significantly affected by climate change's physical manifestations and/or related regulation, including threats and opportunities associated with mitigation and/or adaptation. Describe how the organization is likely to be affected, the steps the organization is taking (if any) to address those effects, and describe and justify what additional steps you think the organization should consider implementing. Finally, make recommendations on how they should implement the changes needed. For ideas, read this article about the [Climate Change Challenge](#) required of Harvard MBA students, and then read some of their blogs that describe what companies and non-profits are (or are not) doing to address climate change. Please comment on at least two other blog posts. Word count: Maximum 800.