

Business Leadership for a Sustainable Future

WHO IS IT FOR?

UnCommon Sense is a leadership program for businesses, local governments and organizations seeking to operate more efficiently and responsibly. No matter their size or what they do, *UnCommon Sense* helps participants make desired changes in their operations and empowers them to become leaders by example in their communities and industry sectors. The power of peer support is a touchstone of the program; businesses are encouraged to work together and to share what they learn.

THE UNCOMMON SENSE DIFFERENCE

UnCommon Sense is about business development and differentiation, using sustainability as a method to achieve those goals. At the Yellowstone Business Partnership we believe that sustainability comes down to having a big-picture and long-term perspective of well-being – environmental, social and economic well-being. *UnCommon Sense* emphasizes the importance of making sustainable practices a systematic element in all aspects of an organization. The program gives businesses the tools and the support to implement change effectively. In consultation with program advisors each business interprets how the principles and tools best apply to their operations.

ALL ABOUT ACTION

The *UnCommon Sense* program's two-year structure allows participants to fully evaluate their baseline, define needs and objectives, take ownership of the reasons for making change, and assess the impacts of the changes they implement. Action items, or assignments, from each module (see *Program Outline, page 2*) give direction toward where and how to make operational changes. The two-year timeline spaces the information and assignments over manageable six-month periods.

REGIONAL SUSTAINABILITY: AN ECONOMIC IMPERATIVE

There are an estimated 28,000 business in the Greater Yellowstone region, the 27 counties in three states surrounding Yellowstone and Grand Teton national parks. By adopting sustainable practices, each business can help preserve the region's social and natural assets, strengthen the local economy and retain their most dedicated employees – all while enhancing their own bottom line.

The fourth class of *UnCommon Sense*, the Not So Big Class (pictured at right), graduated from the program in April 2011 at the 320 Guest Ranch south of Big Sky, Montana. Read their inspiring stories in the following graduate profiles.



The Yellowstone Business Partnership creates partnerships and programs that enhance the environmental, social and economic well-being of the Greater Yellowstone region.



uncommon
sense

Participation in *UnCommon Sense* has changed the way the community and our clients see us as a company. We wanted to stand out in the community as an example and for our employees to understand how important sustainability is to our core business vision and mission.

—Carli Lyon, AllTrips



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PROGRAM OUTLINE

UnCommon Sense integrates education and peer-support. Participants attend four workshops over a two-year period, monthly teleconferences and small group work sessions. Each module includes training in how to conduct self audits, make operational improvements, and measure and communicate results. Participants are split into learning teams led by an experienced advisor who serves as a resource and coach.

1: Leading the Way

The introductory workshop helps participants understand what it takes to implement systemic changes to incorporate sustainable practices. Businesses gain knowledge about initiating and managing organizational change; they learn how to organize a sustainability working group, identify internal champions, create a sustainability mission statement, and communicate that mission with employees and clientele. They learn about systems creation and data tracking, and how and which data to collect. They learn about the importance of transparency in today's increasingly scrutinizing world.

2: Waste-Stream Management

Module 2 looks at effectively reducing waste, segregating the waste stream, and cost-effectively transferring waste to its next destination. Businesses learn how to identify local and regional waste management resources and how to audit and measure their waste stream. They create a system for reduction/reuse/recycling and communicate their waste management policies with their employees.

3: Responsible Purchasing

Responsible purchasing means to consider what is in the products that are used to operate each business and from where those products come. Businesses learn how to create a purchasing tracking matrix to track information on purchasing habits. They create a purchasing policy and communicate with vendors the implications of their new policy. They also identify products to analyze for preferred alternatives.

4: Social & Community Investment

Module 4 helps businesses build strong social structures to strengthen their businesses AND enhance the social fabric of their communities. Businesses learn how to define social sustainability both inside and outside their organizational walls, and develop a work plan for social sustainability.

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CITY OF BOZEMAN

The City of Bozeman is located in southwestern Montana and has about 39,000 residents. It is home to Montana State University and is a premier outdoor recreation destination. Bozeman was recently named one of the Top 10 Winter Cities by Livability.com.

WHY UNCOMMON SENSE?

In 2006 Bozeman signed onto the US Conference of Mayors' Climate Protection Agreement, and they completed the Bozeman Municipal Climate Action Plan in 2008. The motivation for joining *UnCommon Sense* was to learn from other businesses and develop the leadership skills needed to implement the plan: to reduce emissions by conserving energy and water, diverting waste from the landfill, reducing vehicle miles traveled, and increasing awareness among employees.

THE SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE

Sid Bush and Natalie Meyer were the two *UnCommon Sense* representatives for the City of Bozeman. Bush is the facilities maintenance technician and Meyer is the city's climate protection coordinator. They both felt that having someone in administration and someone in facilities was a good combination for the program. Their internal working group is called the Sustainability Team with a representative from each of the 15 city departments: directors, managers, superintendents, clerks and aides. The group meets monthly and communicates regularly by email.

The Sustainability Team's mission reflects goals outlined in the Municipal Climate Action Plan, to reduce emission levels by 2020 to 15% below 2000 levels. Bush and Meyer felt their biggest accomplishments came in the areas of waste management and responsible purchasing.

WASTE MANAGEMENT

The *UnCommon Sense* waste audit involves getting down and dirty: sorting, by hand, trash produced during one work day, then weighing and categorizing what is being thrown away daily. City Hall was the test site. This audit was eye-opening when they realized that using 35 bags to dispose of 17 lbs of trash (58% of which was recyclable) was really wasteful.

Following this audit, the Sustainability Team recommended the creation of several central waste disposal and recycling areas within each building. Rather than having a custodian empty each trash can, employees are required to empty their personal garbage cans into these central disposal areas as needed. This gives employees the opportunity to



A rain garden at Bozeman City Hall demonstrates natural storm water management practices.



below: Bozeman City Hall Waste Audit revealed some eye-opening results.



consider recycling at two points: when they first throw it away and when they empty their trash into the central waste bin. This plan was adopted city-wide by administrative order.

Within one year this procedure saw a 25-30% increase in recycling rates. 18,000 plastic bag liners were saved, at a cost of \$865 per year. In addition, the city saved roughly 5% (\$6880) on their custodial contract as a result of this streamlined waste-disposal process.

Another success story in waste management is an agreement between the Gallatin Solid Waste Management District, the City Water Reclamation Facility, Streets Department and Solid Waste Division to begin composting approximately 2900 tons per year of de-watered sewage sludge and green waste from tree trimmings. This process removes excess water from the sewage sludge and dramatically reduces the weight and volume of the material, which results in reduced transportation costs and diesel emissions.

RESPONSIBLE PURCHASING

A streamlined purchasing process encourages reduced waste and sustainable choices, such as EPA green seal certified toilet paper, paper towels and cleaning products. Switching to foam soaps has reduced usage by 50%. Paper towel dispensers selected to minimize waste are projected to reduce consumption by 86%.

AUTOMATED UTILITY TRACKING

The city streamlined utility data management through a contract with Gradient Systems to benchmark and provide automated utility tracking software for electricity, natural gas, water, sewer, solid waste and fleet fuel. This helped identify buildings with the greatest opportunity for improved performance.

RAIN GARDEN DEMONSTRATION

In an effort to build awareness of storm water management best practices, the city partnered with the Greater Gallatin Watershed Council to install a demonstration rain garden (at left) at Bozeman City Hall in the spring of 2010. The garden contains a variety of native and adapted species and promotes water infiltration into the soil. The constructed catchment area is lined with cobble and finer gravel, including pulverized glass. The garden is equipped with an interpretive sign to help visitors understand the function of this attractive site amenity.

(Continued on page 5)



ALLTRIPS

AllTrips builds online travel guides for over 30 destinations across the US, focusing on national park areas and outdoor recreation destinations. AllTrips has employees in Jackson, WY; Bozeman, MT; Victor, ID; and Portland, ME.

In January 2011, AllTrips went through a re-branding process. They re-created their mission and vision statements with goals set through the *UnCommon Sense* program, and made sustainability an integral part of the equation: *We empower you to discover, enjoy and protect the places we love.*

WHY UNCOMMON SENSE?

"We had started to implement some sustainability initiatives and were operating primarily as paperless company, but we really wanted to be an example for clients and visitors. We needed extra guidance and better resources if we were going to be a leader in sustainability," said Carli Lyon, communication and events manager and sustainability advisor for AllTrips.

Lyon felt that if they were going to truly make a shift toward sustainability, there had to be a commitment to hold their clients and visitors accountable, and AllTrips had a responsibility to offer best practice examples. "We wanted to be a resource to the community," she said.

ENGAGING EVERY EMPLOYEE

Initially their internal working group consisted of just Communication Manager Carli Lyon and President Tim Bradshaw, but they quickly realized that this work in sustainability was going to affect everyone and require everyone's participation. Gaining buy-in from employees wasn't hard, but making time and coordinating schedules was a challenge. 75% of the AllTrips team is on the road approximately 75% of the year, and the majority of their "office work" is done remotely.

COMPANY POLICIES AFFECT PERSONAL LIVES

One major success Lyon notes is the translation of the company policies into personal lives. While the policies at the company office are mandatory, much of the implementation is occurring at home offices. AllTrips has seen 100% voluntary participation on all fronts. "In January, everyone set goals for 2011. There were three levels: personal goals, such as washing your laundry on cold or turning down the thermostat 5 degrees; home office goals, such as changing computer settings or monitoring/reducing business travel; and goals for AllTrips as a company. In July, we did a six-month evaluation and reviewed everyone's goals in phone and personal interviews. We re-evaluated and adjusted or added goals if some were already met."

AllTrips has goals set up through 2013. For the last part of 2011 there was a big push on messaging to clients and visitors. They offered resources for recycling while traveling, resources for offsetting travel, and planning more



AllTrips volunteer builds a trail.

right: The AllTrips team is all smiles on their company volunteer day.

effectively. They created a "Green Approved" section on their websites, highlighting lodging, activities and other sustainably minded businesses that meet criteria set by AllTrips.

TRANSPORTATION

As a travel-oriented business, transportation is a key focus for AllTrips' sustainability efforts. AllTrips formed a partnership with Linx, a regional transportation network, donating \$10,000 worth of advertising space and posting Linx ads on their Yellowstone websites. In addition AllTrips authored an article explaining how the Linx system works and its significance to Greater Yellowstone. "We started our partnership with Linx as part of our community commitment. We have been working on a constant advertising program with Linx, and have seen huge returns with referrals from ads," said Lyon.

AllTrips has also added a walking/biking information feature on its websites, offering travelers the details on popular destinations within biking/walking distance and promoting bicycle pathways. They include information on public transportation where available.

ELECTRONIC WASTE AND ENERGY USE

During a waste audit of all home offices and the Jackson office, AllTrips realized that e-waste was one of their largest and most toxic source of waste. They put a policy in place making AllTrips responsible for the e-waste of all employees – from monitors to laptops to speakers to cords. In just over a year, AllTrips diverted 50 pounds of e-waste, ensuring that it was responsibly recycled and didn't end up in a landfill or third world country to be dismantled unsafely.

To address electricity requirements, in 2010 they shut down their internal servers and went to shared or dedicated hosting. They have found cloud-sharing to be the most eco-friendly as it allows the servers to be powered down when not in use.

SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY INVESTMENT

The amount of travel involved in working for AllTrips, as well as telecommuting, has made connecting with each other a challenge. As part of the Social and Community Investment module, AllTrips held a company volunteer day and a camping trip. They created an internal blogspot to post ideas, travel info and banter and to share photos or videos of the fun they have together.

GREATEST CHALLENGE AND ACCOMPLISHMENT

AllTrips feels their greatest accomplishment and greatest challenge were intertwined. "It was a challenge to make sure everyone was on the same page and had the same goals in mind, that they understood what we were working toward," said Lyon.

They focused on getting everyone to commit to taking on a portion of the program. "It's important to note that we didn't assign anything," Lyon points out. Everyone listed their first and second choices



and from a voting process everyone got their first choice. Either individually or in teams of two, the AllTrips team set goals or due dates for each module and the associated action items.

MOST UNEXPECTED RESULT

AllTrips completed an EPA Carbon Audit spreadsheet to determine their CO2 emissions per person per year, and they discovered that their emissions were 30% lower than the national average. AllTrips employees averaged 13,847 lbs of CO2 emissions per year – the national average was 20,750 per person.

MOST CRITICAL SUSTAINABILITY ASPECTS WITHIN THE GREATER YELLOWSTONE REGION?

Carli Lyon: Action. A lot of people talk about doing things. There is great information at talks and conferences, but no follow up. It's great for community leaders to go through *UnCommon Sense* and be evaluated. I hope that business and community leaders will seek AllTrips out knowing that we have graduated from *UnCommon Sense* and are a unique sustainably minded small business.

BEST ADVICE ABOUT SUSTAINABILITY

Carli Lyon: Ask for help! Look out from beyond your community to see what other people are doing, other businesses that are similar but might not be in own backyard. Do what's right for you; take the time and take as many steps as necessary to make sure you follow through.

BOTTOM LINE RESULTS

- 90% of waste diverted from landfills from the Jackson office in 2011. Approximately 75% from the 13 home offices.
- 2011 electric savings of \$560 in Jackson office.
- \$1200 electric savings in all home offices in 2011.
- 125 lbs of electronics recycled correctly in 2011.
- Saved \$550 in 2011 by buying locally and cutting unnecessary supplies.
- Employees produce over 30% fewer emissions than the average person in a year.
- AllTrips helps over 6 million visitors plan their vacations without a single paper brochure. 🌱

We strive to leave our virtual footprint everywhere, but our physical footprint shouldn't have a lasting effect that we cannot avoid first.

—Carli Lyon

Program Outline (cont. from pg 2)

5: Resource Management – Energy Efficiencies

Businesses learn how to complete baseline energy audits, create a system for tracking their usage, and identify potential areas for maximum energy efficiency improvements. They plan for and implement facility improvements, and track the results over the course of the program.

6: Resource Management – Water Efficiencies

Businesses learn how to complete a baseline for water usage. They learn how to track utility data and how to identify areas with the greatest potential for improvements.

7: Transportation Efficiencies

The Transportation Efficiencies module looks at how people and goods are moved across the region, and how customers access each business. Businesses perform a baseline audit to identify transportation needs, and they learn about Corporate Average Fuel Efficiency (CAFE) standards and local alternative fuels and transportation options.

8: The Business Response to Climate Change

The Business Response to Climate Change is the "Closing the Loop" module. Businesses learn about Greenhouse Gas Inventories, Carbon Offset programs, species extinction, and other issues not yet addressed. From that point they outline a plan for continued implementation post-graduation.

Program Review and Graduation

Learning Teams report on their individual and collective progress; participants receive certificate of program completion.

UnCommon Sense Graduation Requirements

In order to graduate from *UnCommon Sense*, each business is required to:

- Complete action items or assignments from each module by stated deadline, earning points toward the total needed to graduate.
- Document and quantify all operational improvements and actions taken as a result of participation in *UnCommon Sense*. This documentation is acceptable in whatever form that the participant has found useful: spreadsheets and tracking matrices, graphs, work plans, surveys, communications strategies, mission/vision statements, resource lists, job descriptions, photographs, policies, marketing materials etc. The intent of this reporting is to actually quantify what a business was able to achieve over the two-year period.
- Submit a sustainability report upon graduation which includes bottom-line results, greatest challenges and accomplishments, unexpected results and a plan for next steps. This report can double as a communications tool for raising awareness of the business' green credentials.

SANDERSON STEWART

Sanderson Stewart is a civil engineering consulting firm that provides professional engineering, planning, landscape design and land surveying services throughout the Rocky Mountain region. Sanderson Stewart's wide range of clients include private land developers, municipalities, commercial and governmental clients.

WHY UNCOMMON SENSE?

Sanderson Stewart's core purpose is *To Plan and Design Enduring Communities*. "We see sustainable design as the future of our industry. We can't promote sustainable design if we aren't sustainable in our own business practices," said Kjersten Olson, Sustainability Coordinator/Project Engineer. "The *UnCommon Sense* program struck a note with me because these are things I try to apply to my daily life and it was exciting that my employer also wanted to go the same route."

HOW THEY WENT ABOUT IT

Sanderson Stewart put together a sustainability working group: Team IMBY (In My Back Yard). The core group included 15 volunteer employees. According to their employee sustainability survey, 76% of respondents believe it is very important for Sanderson Stewart to adopt sustainable business practices. Suggestions from employees included such things as allowing employees to bring recycling from home, offering a responsible way to recycle batteries, and providing more fuel efficient vehicles for field crews.

Sanderson Stewart had two *UnCommon Sense* representatives: Kjersten Olson, based in Billings, MT, and Danielle Scharf, associate/senior engineer and member of the company leadership team. "I had just taken the LEED exam to become accredited and was already in that mind-set," said Scharf, who found out about *UnCommon Sense* while researching recycling options in Bozeman as there wasn't a system set up in the office.

TACKLING WASTE

Shared dumpsters made measuring total waste generation a challenge, but Sanderson Stewart was able to assess the types of waste they were producing and determine what could be diverted from the waste stream in the future. Results of these assessments showed that they could eliminate approximately 10% of the waste stream in the Bozeman office and over 20% of the waste stream in Billings and Sheridan, simply by implementing better recycling practices.

They replaced individual garbage cans with recycling containers and a centralized trash location, reducing the number of trash can liners needed and encouraging each employee to take personal responsibility for the trash they generate. Future plans include installing a composting facility in each office.

Sanderson Stewart recycled unused electronics through Computers 4 Kids and Yellowstone E-Waste Solutions. They also sponsored recycling for a year at a local elementary school in Billings.

THE IMPORTANCE OF HAPPY EMPLOYEES

Internally to Sanderson Stewart, social sustainability is defined as a focus on people and providing the type of atmosphere in which they are able to thrive as individuals and as a team. Externally to Sanderson Stewart, they take responsibility to invest their time and resources into the communities in which they live and work.



Sanderson Stewart had one-on-one discussions with all 60 current employees, which resulted in candid feedback. Although Sanderson Stewart prides itself on being a family-oriented, employee-friendly business, the economic downturn hurt business; layoffs and other cost-cutting measures took their toll on employee morale. Therefore Sanderson Stewart made the Social and Community Investment module a focus.

The program also provided a way to get consensus around some of the savings that require extra effort on the part of employees. "*UnCommon Sense* has brought us together in a way to make us stronger, become more efficient. We're working more as a team than ever before to get through tough times," said Scharf. "People are much more aware of leaving lights on, recycling, stuff like that."

Sanderson Stewart implemented a Take 10% Program that allows employees to take 10% of their work week to focus on business development, professional development or volunteer for a nonprofit organization in the community. They also created Sanderson Stewart University (SSU), a series of online courses and in-house workshops that provide professional development opportunities for employees.

REDUCING WATER USAGE

Water usage was greatly reduced between the 2009 and 2010 irrigation seasons; Sanderson Stewart installed a smart irrigation controller that uses sensors and weather information to manage watering times and frequency.

GREATEST ACCOMPLISHMENT

Scharf: Our greatest accomplishment was to get people thinking about what we use on a daily basis: electricity, water, paper, whatever. The audits done through the *UnCommon Sense* program were instrumental for us to quantify and show financial savings.

CHALLENGES

"A big challenge was being in three different offices, and leasing two spaces. It's hard to have much control over power and water usage, and even garbage pickup, when sharing space with other busi-



Sanderson Stewart employees roll up their sleeves to help with a United Way Day of Caring project.



Sanderson Stewart conducted a dumpster dive (waste audit) to learn what they throw away in a day.

nesses – it's not completely under our control. So we ended up focusing mainly on our Billings office, where we could better quantify and measure changes," said Scharf.

There were also behavior-related areas that were more challenging – such as getting employees to shut off computers and monitors.

UNCOMMON SENSE IS GOOD FOR BUSINESS

Sanderson Stewart's Sustainable Design Practices are presented to clients during preliminary project-planning meetings. They plan to update and add to these practices every few months to keep employees and clients aware of new and innovative ideas.

"We have definitely gained business because of our sustainability efforts, both from the design aspect as well as our business practices. There is at least one architect in town who uses our services primarily because of the sustainability aspect of our business," said Scharf.

Olson added, "Some of the people and businesses that we've interacted with during UCS have become potential clients, or were already and will be more likely to remain clients. The connections we have made or strengthened through the program are really beneficial for business."

NEXT STEPS

Future company goals include reducing paper consumption by 15%, reducing

fleet gasoline consumption by 10%, and reducing electricity consumption by 5%. There are also big projects that will be implemented down the road, such as replacing their HVAC (heating, ventilation, air conditioning) system. "I wrote a report/plan and presented it to the board; hopefully we'll eventually get it replaced with a more efficient system," said Olson. In the meantime, since power use related to the air conditioning system is much higher in the summer, Sanderson Stewart has a goal to make better use of natural ventilation and cool morning temperatures in the summer.

BEST ADVICE ABOUT SUSTAINABILITY

Scharf: Keep it simple. Things we had the most success with were the easiest things to implement and for people to actually follow. Recycling was easy and had a huge effect. The water sensor was a no brainer – solutions don't always have to be complex and technical. Often the best actions aren't complex and are very effective; people aren't intimidated by them and are able to follow through.

BOTTOM LINE RESULTS

- Savings of \$446 per year from eliminating electric space heaters.
- 120,000 gallon water-use reduction.
- Take 10% program allows employees to use 10% of work hours per week for volunteering, professional development or business development.
- 10 LEED APs on staff. 🌱

We see sustainable design as the future of our industry. We can't promote sustainable design if we aren't sustainable in our own business practices.

—Kjersten Olson

City of Bozeman (cont. from pg 2)

ENGAGING THE COMMUNITY

Meyer feels the best way to communicate sustainability is through physical projects, rather than just through words. Even better is to actually engage the community in the projects!

In partnership with 1000 New Gardens, Bozeman constructed the city's third community garden at Bozeman City Hall (at right). This garden



A community garden at Bozeman City Hall provides a place for residents to produce their own food.

provides an opportunity for residents to produce local food and help promote greater food security in Montana. All gardeners renting a plot are asked to garden without herbicides, pesticides, fungicides, or fertilizers. Several aerobic composting cells are in use at the community gardens. Bush and Meyer reported how pleasantly surprised some gardeners were that the city was engaging with them. One person commented about the composting available at the site, "I've never had an option to compost; I live in an apartment."

GREATEST CHALLENGE

Transportation was the most difficult area to address in terms of tracking the city fleet and establishing a miles per gallon baseline. Both Meyer and Bush believe this baseline is key to start making decisions about more efficient vehicles and viable fuel and equipment alternatives.

MOST CRITICAL SUSTAINABILITY ASPECTS WITHIN THE GREATER YELLOWSTONE REGION?

Natalie Meyer: Transportation is one of most challenging components. On the flip side, having a regional consortium of people talking about that issue spurs solutions. Linx is an incredible example of that. Having that conversation [at *UnCommon Sense*] you begin to see solutions and how this group can help contribute toward building Linx up to become a more comprehensive program that will truly allow people to move about this region.

Sid Bush: The cost of shipping and transporting things in this region is high compared to other parts of country. This drives up the cost of everything from food to building supplies to technology.

BEST ADVICE ABOUT SUSTAINABILITY

Sid Bush: If I met someone on street who just moved here and they asked about sustainability, the first thing I would say is, "Don't try and make everything here like it was where you came from."

Natalie Meyer: It is easy to come to this region and make a lot of assumptions about what is sustainable, and it's important when you come into the context of a rural setting to ask how and why things operate as they do. I think sustainability is going to look different for businesses in this region than in other areas.

BOTTOM LINE RESULTS

- Historic TB Story Mansion re-insulated, resulting in approx 17% decrease in natural gas consumption, a \$324 dollar savings per year on average.
- 27% reduction in average electricity consumption for Fire Station No 1, following energy retrofits. At this rate, the city will save approximately \$4,822 each year.
- Overall, energy savings from building retrofits are expected to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 389 MTCO_{2e} per year.
- Water fixture retrofits at Bozeman City Hall reduced water consumption by approximately 9%.
- 25-30% increase in recycling rates.
- Approximately 18,000 plastic bag liners saved at a cost of \$865 per year.
- Anti-idling policy for the municipal fleet was adopted in 2009 with an anticipated savings of \$3300 dollars each year and annual greenhouse gas emissions reductions of 9 MTCO_{2e}. 🌱



NOLS TETON VALLEY

The mission of the National Outdoor Leadership School is to be the leading source and teacher of wilderness skills and leadership that serve people and the environment. NOLS culture is built around sustainability; it's embedded in their mission, and by default they attract employees who are passionate about the environment.

WHY UNCOMMON SENSE?

Dan Verbeten, operations manager for NOLS Teton Valley learned about *UnCommon Sense* through non-profit community resources and recognized that the program meshed with goals that NOLS had in place school-wide. Branch locations have the freedom to determine how to pursue each goal, and Verbeten wanted to be the point person to help implement sustainability at the Driggs/Teton Valley branch.

THE TEAM

For NOLS Teton Valley the internal working group consisted of *UnCommon Sense* representative Dan Verbeten, branch director Abby Warner, and the in-town operational staff. The personnel in the roles change from season to season, but the titles of the positions involved are: rations manager, kitchen manager, transportation/facilities manager, outfitting manager and operations assistants. The group integrated *UnCommon Sense* action items and topics into the weekly operations meetings.

FOOD WASTE

NOLS biggest waste challenge is the food waste associated with their courses. Food is rationed for each student for each course, and if returned uneaten, NOLS cannot reuse it due to health concerns. Composting doesn't make sense because of the amount of water required to reconstitute the dehydrated foods to a compostable form.

NOLS decided to measure all food that returned from field courses from the summer of 2010 and winter of 2010/11. They created a competition with NOLS providing incentives for each group to only take the amount of food into the field that they would eat. They re-evaluated their rationing system to minimize returning food.

At base, they were able to make better use of composting. Their existing compost pile was a "rotten mass of food," according to Verbeten, which they were able to transform into a functional compost pile that provides soil for their new gardens.

FOOD PURCHASING

NOLS tracked purchases through the 2009/10 winter season and found ways to make more responsible choices, including a local pig from 4H for meat, organic salad greens from a local farm, local eggs, organic milk and regionally baked bread. They replaced packaged cereal with granola homemade with organic ingredients, and they grew 50 lbs of produce in their own garden.

Local organic free-range beef proved cost prohibitive at about \$5 per pound. Though that didn't fit

the 2010/11 budget, NOLS intends to commit to a percentage of local organic free-range beef in the future.

GEAR PURCHASING/RECYCLING

An analysis of gear purchasing found that NOLS was doing what was possible within their budget. As an example of what they are already doing well, NOLS identified Pro Guide Gear as a preferred vendor due to their sustainability practices and gear quality. Pro Guide Gear has worked with NOLS to ship gear to students' homes ahead of their trips. NOLS was also able to identify a regional ski binding manufacturer that recycles old bindings in conjunction with a discount on new bindings.

During their participation in *UnCommon Sense*, Verbeten collaborated with another staff member on writing the Environmentally Preferred purchasing guidelines for the school which provide criteria for evaluating all purchasing decisions including the supplier's environmental record, the presence of toxins and recycled content, to name a few.

SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY INVESTMENT

NOLS found a plethora of opportunities for social sustainability with internal-growth-oriented initiatives and community involvement. Social and Community investment now figures a lot more into decision making, hiring, coaching and training staff, and setting up opportunities for professional development. Verbeten and his supervisor were able to shift the paradigm, and Verbeten considers this their greatest accomplishment. "It didn't add more work," said Verbeten, "it just shifted the way we did it." For example, they introduced a staff retreat on a ranch for relationship-building and tone-setting at the beginning of the season.

NOLS COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

The NOLS community investment included 530 hours of service to Teton Valley non-profits, free Leave No Trace trainings and a scholarship for a local student to take a NOLS course.

CLIMATE CHANGE RESPONSE

As an organization, NOLS is very cognizant of the effects of climate change – the outdoors is NOLS' classroom. They want to be a leader in the outdoor education industry in reducing their environmental impact. NOLS has set carbon-reduction goals from 2006 levels of 10% reduction by 2010 (goal met) and 30% reduction by 2020. They set up a Carbon Tracker Environmental Management System in 2008 to establish baseline emissions. They immediately identified some low-hanging fruits, such as installing low-flow showerheads, consolidating all frozen foods into one freezer for the off-season, and re-



The solar array on the roof of the NOLS branch will offset 30-35% of annual electricity use.

examining their everyday operations and usage. From 2009 to 2010, they reduced their electricity use by 7%.

NOLS replaced a number of windows with energy efficient models, insulated the on-site yurt, and completed a lighting retrofit and bulb/ballast replacement.

GREATEST ACCOMPLISHMENT

In 2010, NOLS installed a 7.59 Kw solar array with funding assistance from Bonneville Environmental Foundation, Protect Our Winters and Fall River Electric. The system should offset 30-35% of annual electricity use. An educational display on solar electricity takes advantage of the learning opportunity that the installation represents.

GREATEST CHALLENGE

"The challenge will be trying to keep up the momentum now that we have completed *UnCommon Sense*. We have recognized that once you move past the low-hanging fruit, it takes bigger projects with significant capital investment to really reduce impacts – like a whole new heating system, for example," said Verbeten.

NEXT STEPS

NOLS has a long-term plan for facility improvements and continued carbon-reduction goals. These are projects that they will do once they have been able to do a cost-benefit and return on investment analysis. NOLS believes that the key to success is continued education, which is one reason that Verbeten has joined the *UnCommon Sense* leadership team as a class advisor – to continue to help others learn and implement changes in their organizations.

BEST ADVICE ABOUT SUSTAINABILITY

Verbeten: Get involved in the *UnCommon Sense* program. The accountability of the program and commitment to the program makes it very worthwhile.

BOTTOM LINE RESULTS

- 35% electricity reduction.
- 19% heating oil reduction (\$791).
- 35% propane consumption reduction (\$2,193).
- Increased staff retention.
- Saved \$200 per year by reducing dumpster tips to every other week.

In January 2011, NOLS was named one of the 15 best nonprofits to work for in America by Opportunity Knocks.



Regional Experts Teach Sustainable Business Operations

The *UnCommon Sense* Leadership Team
 Front (l-r): Gina MacIlwraith, Deb Friedel, Allison Collins, Dan Verbeten, Lara Salazar.
 Back (l-r): Stacy Kersens, Basil Barna, Heather Higinbotham, Wendy Weaver.
 Not pictured: Dan Olson, Dylan Hoffman

Companies dependent on unsustainable business models are dropping as fast as ice shelves in the Arctic, and companies face increasing strains on their bottom line if they don't plan for a carbon-constrained future now. Regional experts in sustainable business operations share their extensive knowledge through the Yellowstone Business Partnership's (YBP) *UnCommon Sense* leadership program.

VOLUNTEER LEADERSHIP TEAM

Basil Barna is a physicist who has conducted research in energy and transportation systems for 25 years at the Department of Energy's National Laboratory complex in Idaho Falls. At the lab, he worked on transportation efficiencies and systems infrastructure, planting the seeds for biofuels in the region and supporting the greening efforts in Yellowstone National Park. Barna is the lead instructor for the Energy Efficiencies and Transportation modules.

Allison Collins graduated from the University of Vermont with an environmental business degree with an environmental studies minor. She is the general manager of the 19th Street MacKenzie River Pizza Co downtown in Bozeman. Collins graduated with the pilot *UnCommon Sense* class, the Sustainers, and served as a learning team advisor for the Seekers. Collins brings the experience of having been through the course and can help advise participants on how to organize their efforts and where they should spend their energy.

Deb Friedel is the director of sustainability for Delaware North Companies Parks & Resorts. Friedel administers GreenPath, the company's environmental management system, and also develops interpre-

UnCommon Sense is really challenging, which is why the peer support is so important. Your class members keep you motivated and inspired. And the collaboration between businesses, even competing businesses, is truly a unique experience.

—Allison Collins

tive messages and experiential retail programs for Yellowstone General Stores. Friedel is the lead instructor for the Responsible Purchasing module and was a learning team advisor for the Seeker class.

Cari Hanson is a consistent advocate for environmental, economic and social sustainability as a means to change and empowerment. Hanson's professional experience includes organizational development, experiential education, design and event management in both the for-profit and nonprofit sectors. She is the founder of The Ripple Project, an international nonprofit working with African women's organizations. She lives in San Francisco with her husband, Andy Leider. Hanson is a Seekers graduate and served as a learning team advisor for the Not So Big Class.

Dylan Hoffman recently transplanted himself from the mountains of Colorado to begin his new role as the Director of Environmental Affairs for Xanterra Parks & Resorts at Yellowstone. In this position, Hoffman has the privilege of leading the charge to develop, implement, and maintain comprehensive environmental strategies and climate change mitigation efforts in the park's lodging, retail, restaurant, transportation, and hospitality operations. Built on the back of Ecogix, its ISO 14001-certified Environmental Management System, Xanterra prides itself on being a leader in the industry by providing legendary hospitality with a softer footprint.

Heather Higinbotham graduated from the University of Montana with a Bachelor of Science in Forestry and minors in Environmental Studies, Wilderness Studies, and German. She received her Master of Science degree from the University of Montana in 2003, in Environmental Studies, Alternative Energy and Sustainable Building. She serves as secretary on the board of directors for the Montana Chapter of the US Green Building Council and Middle Creek Montessori. She and her daughter live in Bozeman, MT. Higinbotham is also a licensed private pilot and licensed Real Estate Agent. She teaches the Leading the Way and Waste Stream Management modules and is the Yellowstone Business Partnership's Sustainability Programs Director.

Stacy Kersens is the Grounds and Garden Services Division manager for Blanchford Landscape Contractors in Bozeman, MT. Kersens represented Blanchford in the pilot group for *UnCommon Sense*. "*UnCommon Sense* helped so much with getting our company on the right track," she says. "Participants can come to *UnCommon*

PROGRAM ALUMNI

Class of 2007: Janny B & The Sustainers

- All West Realty – Lander, WY
- Blanchford Landscape Contractors – Bozeman, MT
- Bridge Creek Backcountry Kitchen and Wine Bar – Red Lodge, MT
- Creative Energies – Lander, WY
- MacKenzie River Pizza Company – Bozeman, MT
- Mountain Home: Montana Vacation Rentals, Inc – Bozeman, MT
- On Site Management – Bozeman, MT
- Refuge Sustainable Building Center – Bozeman, MT

Class of 2009: Sustainability Seekers

- Bridger Bowl Ski Area – Bozeman, MT
- Chico Hot Springs Resort – Pray, MT
- Four Seasons Resort – Jackson, WY
- Grand Targhee Resort – Alta, WY
- Madison Arm Resort – West Yellowstone, MT
- Montana Yellowstone Expeditions – Tom Miner Basin, MT
- Moonlight Basin – Big Sky, MT
- Sun Ranch – Cameron, MT

Class of 2010: The Growlers

- Billings Public Schools – Billings, MT
- Buffalo Bill Historical Center – Cody, WY
- CTA Architects & Engineering – Billings & Bozeman, MT
- Greenspace Landscaping, Inc – Bozeman, MT
- Harmony Design & Engineering – Driggs, ID
- Intrinsic Architecture – Bozeman, MT
- Plan One/Architects – Driggs, ID
- Silver Star Communications – Driggs, ID
- Yellowstone Association – Yellowstone National Park, WY

Class of 2011: The Not So Big Class

- City of Bozeman – Bozeman, MT
- National Outdoor Leadership School – Driggs, ID
- Sanderson Stewart Engineering – Bozeman, MT
- AllTrips (formerly Vertical Media) – Jackson, WY

CURRENT CLASSES

Class of 2012: The Low Hanging Fruits

- Archer Construction – Bozeman, MT
- DA Davidson – Bozeman, MT
- The Garage Soup Shack and Mesquite Grill – Bozeman, MT
- Grizzly Wolf & Discovery Center – West Yellowstone, MT
- Kampgrounds of America (KOA) – Billings, MT
- Red Lodge Mountain – Red Lodge, MT
- Riverbend Builders, Inc – Bozeman, MT
- TF Ranch – Firth, ID

Class of 2013: The Common Scents

- American Title and Escrow – Billings, MT
- Beartooth Ranger District – Red Lodge, MT
- Delaware North Companies Parks and Resorts – West Yellowstone, MT
- First Interstate Bank – Billings, MT
- Montana State University – Bozeman, MT
- Refuge Sustainable Building Center – Bozeman, MT
- Park County, WY School District #6
- Stillwater Mine – Columbus, MT
- Teton County, ID School District #401
- Teton Science Schools – Jackson, WY

(Continued next page)

Leadership Team (cont. from pg 7)

Sense knowing that the leadership team understands the challenges facing small companies trying to make these changes." She remains actively involved with the program and was a learning team advisor for the third class, the Growlers, and is currently an advisor for the fifth class, the Low Hanging Fruits.

Andy Leider is a nonprofit executive director, facilitator and leadership coach specializing in experiential education and organizational management. Leider began his career as an instructor for Outward Bound, before managing and founding several small businesses in the human development field, including his own company, Open Range Consulting. He and his wife, Cari Hanson, live in San Francisco. Leider is a Seekers graduate and now serves as a learning team advisor for the Not So Big Class.

Gina MacIlwraith currently directs the Environmental, Health and Safety Program for Grand Teton Lodge Company in Grand Teton National Park. Her responsibilities include management of the concessioner's environmental management system and health and safety program, along with maximizing operational sustainability, developing interpretive programs and maintaining overall regulatory compliance. MacIlwraith joined the *UnCommon Sense* leadership team in January 2008 and is the lead instructor for the Water Efficiencies modules. She is also an advisor for the Low Hanging Fruits. Her significant past experience with air, water and solid waste in the manufacturing industry helps participants better understand the responsible way to take care of their waste and water.

Dan Olson is a senior manager in the Climate & Sustainability Solutions divisions of Ecova. Olson has worked on environmental sustainability and climate change initiatives for seven years, creating greenhouse gas inventories and mitigation action plans for, among others, Ted Turner Enterprises, Harvard University and Yellowstone National Park. Olson was one of the original volunteers who helped brainstorm *UnCommon Sense* and was later hired by YBP to develop the curriculum and teach the modules.


Lara Salazar comes to *Uncommon Sense* by way of Community Health Partners, a nonprofit community health center providing the Montana communities of

I haven't seen any program like *UnCommon Sense*. The program continues to evolve and advance.

—Deb Friedel

Livingston, Bozeman, Belgrade and West Yellowstone with affordable, high quality primary healthcare for all. Recently, she transitioned to the Montana Primary Care Association, in Helena, Montana, where she is the Director of Workforce Learning and Development. Salazar attended the University of Colorado Boulder, and Montana State University. In 2011, Salazar became an examiner for the Malcolm Baldrige Performance Excellence program, a nationally acclaimed business improvement and quality framework and award. Salazar teaches the Social and Community Investment module.

Dan Verbeten began his career with NOLS in 2001 as a field instructor after having worked with at-risk youth wilderness programs for two other organizations. Currently Verbeten is the Operations Manager for NOLS Teton Valley and a recent graduate of the *UnCommon Sense* program. He is one of the advisors for the current class the "Common Scents." Verbeten also serves as a board member for Teton Valley Trails and Pathways, a Driggs-based nonprofit that promotes bicycle and pedestrian pathways in Teton Valley.


Wendy Weaver is a sustainability consultant with Green Stone Consulting and an advisor to the "Common Scents" class. Weaver's commitment and involvement in her community is a critical component of her passion. She is a Board member and Green School Chair of the Montana Chapter of the US Green Building Council, co-founder of the Gallatin Zero Waste Coalition, founder of Gallatin Growth Solutions, Business Leader for a Clean Energy Future, and professional mentor of the MSU Engineers Without Borders group. Weaver is also a licensed professional civil engineer with over 15 years of civil engineering experience in the built environment and believes passionately in sustainable and green building and design principles. 

Align Sustainability Efforts with Core Business and Expertise



Julie Klein, director of environmental affairs for RockResorts/Vail Resorts, presented an engaging address to the fourth *UnCommon Sense* graduating class: "Beyond the traditional business case...driving sustainability in small and large businesses."

In her address, Klein stressed the importance of sustainability efforts aligning with core business and expertise. She also emphasized the relational aspect of sustainability efforts: empowering and engaging company leadership, celebrating employee champions, sharing lessons learned, and maximizing partnerships. Klein encouraged graduates to make bold decisions and to "test your boundaries to define your position in the sustainability space."

Klein's experience includes leading and implementing a comprehensive sustainability program for the RockResorts/Vail Resorts hospitality division. She is also integrally involved in the entire company's corporate social responsibility program. RockResorts/Vail Resorts manages five of the top nine most visited mountain resorts in North America including the #1, #2 and #3 most visited in the US. The organization manages an additional 23 hotels and several real estate developments, and operates the Colorado Mountain Express, a resort ground transportation business. 



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Join UnCommon Sense!

Want to take your business to the next level and be identified as a leader in sustainability in your community? Starting in January 2012 you can apply to be a part of the next *UnCommon Sense* class, which will begin its journey **April 26-28, 2012**, in Red Lodge, Montana.

Go to www.yellowstonebusiness.org/our_programs/sustainability to learn more, including how to apply online. Start planning now to take advantage of this opportunity to energize your employees and position your business for a marketplace in which sustainability is becoming increasingly important.

UnCommon Sense Sponsors 2010 - 2011

- ★ Eastern Idaho Regional Medical Center
- ★ Idaho Community Foundation
- ★ Montana Department of Environmental Quality
- ★ New Belgium Brewing
- ★ Idaho Small Business Development Center
- ★ Northwestern Energy
- ★ Idaho National Laboratory
- ★ Vail Resorts

Workshop Hosts:

- ★ Harriman State Park, Idaho
- ★ 320 Guest Ranch, Montana
- ★ Snow King Resort, Wyoming



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