

Evaluate, tell your story, and do it again

So now you have done everything you set out to do, you have taken a giant step towards climate neutrality, and you can just sit back and wait for the rest of the world to follow your lead? Well no, not really. You have taken the first essential step, and you have every right to be pleased that you have. But there's still a long and winding road ahead on the way to a truly climate-neutral life. You have made a start. You now have to assess what you have managed to do so far, to tell people about it, and then to carry on, only this time more effectively.

Evaluate your progress

The obvious reason for evaluating what you have managed to achieve is to make sure you do better next time round. The chances of improving on your performance will be much higher if you know what that performance amounted to. So you owe it to yourself to make an honest appraisal of what you have done. You also owe it to everyone else to let them know of your success (and your mistakes too: they should be given the chance to avoid wasting effort in the ways that you have probably done). It bears repeating: working towards climate neutrality is important not just for what you do yourself, but for the way it shows other people what they can do.

Whether you are an individual, business, city administration or country, evaluation starts with the obvious step of counting by how much you have actually reduced your GHG emissions. But you will want to count the cost of the reductions as well, so you can see how to make the biggest and most effective cuts. At the same time, count how much your GHG cuts have saved you. Luckily, you have already prepared the ground for counting your emissions earlier in the process, and this re-assessment of progress made since the first analysis will take much less time and effort.

And make sure to factor in both direct and indirect benefits. You will have saved energy and reduced your GHG emissions, and you will probably have saved money as well – or, at least, made an investment which will

certainly save you money in years to come. But that is only the obvious part. You will have improved your reputation with people you want to impress, and will probably have gained some free advertising as well, a reputation as an individual or company prepared to practice what you preach, which will help to improve your brand image. You may also have avoided legal penalties, and if you are in either local or central government the chances are that you will have earned some electoral popularity. And there is a good prospect that you will have brought about an improvement in health, perhaps your own (from walking instead of driving, for instance), perhaps your community's. Energy not used means pollution not emitted, and lungs and hearts spared damage.

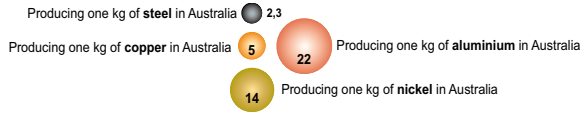
Think as well about what you have learned from this first round of reducing your climate footprint. Probably you will feel you have identified both weak and strong points. If the process has made you more realistic, that will have been worthwhile in itself. You can then start the second round under no illusions. You might want to examine also whether your set-up was ideal, or whether you have to reassign responsibilities among the people involved.

Businesses, cities:

An additional validation of your evaluation is to carry out an audit and get certification for your process in the framework of an environmental management system (GHG protocol certification with ISO 14000 environmental management standards: in ISO 14040:2006 and 14044:2006 for example). This step will improve your credibility and give you extra credits with those you are reporting to: board of trustees, city council, etc.

Tell your story

Perhaps you know someone who has successfully completed a diet, and who cannot stop telling everyone they meet about how much weight they have lost and the privations they had to undergo to do it. That is not really the sort of role model you need, because people like that can be intensely annoying, and are unlikely to persuade many others to emulate them. But at least they do pass the message on, even if they make sure that not many people will absorb it.



So learn from them. Let your friends, colleagues, rivals, opponents, casual acquaintances and everyone you can think of know what you have done, how you have managed it, and *why* – there are still people who are not convinced that climate change is real or important. But do it in a way your listeners can hear and understand. Tell them that if you can make the effort, then anybody can. Let them see that what you are doing is rapidly becoming the norm, not the exception.

You probably looked at some of the case studies in earlier chapters, and quite likely you thought they provided useful pointers for you as you embarked on the first phase of reducing your impact on the climate. They inspired you, and now it is your turn to provide inspiration to others.

The effort to become climate-neutral can sometimes arouse incomprehension or even hostility, and if you are accountable to shareholders or employees or voters you may find they expect an explanation from you. It is much better to offer them an explanation before they get round to demanding one. That way you will not sound defensive or apologetic, or as if you are trying to hide something. So telling your story to the people you answer to makes good sense, and may also enlist them to support you and to follow your lead.



INDIVIDUALS

As an individual you are the one category least obliged to market your efforts. That does not mean there is no worthwhile effect from doing so, in particular when your experience might be the first step for others towards climate neutrality. Make sure you tell your family, friends and neighbours for a start. It is also well worthwhile to go back to people whose advice you sought when you started out on the climate-neutral path: tell them what worked for you and what did not, because there is no one-size-fits-all approach. Different strategies work for different people and groups. Reporting back may help your counsellors to refine the advice they give to others who follow you.



SMALL AND LARGE ORGANIZATIONS

What you have begun to do may well have given you a competitive advantage already, and if it has not yet it probably will soon. So you will probably have several alert and eager audiences for the feedback you can provide.

The bigger you are, the more important an organized communication campaign will be to justify the investments that you certainly had to make. Different groups will be interested in different things. Differentiate the information you give out according to the audience it is aimed at. Tell your staff what you are doing, and how it will make the company – their company – more profitable and their families' futures better. Tell your customers how you are (or soon will be) saving money and keeping prices down. Tell your shareholders how you are securing the company's future. Tell your rivals what they are

JOIN THE CLUB – SUCCESSFUL REPORTING INITIATIVES

Tell everyone who may be interested about the groups that exist specifically to help businesses reduce their emissions. There is the Global Reporting Initiative, which has pioneered the development of the world's most widely-used sustainability reporting framework. This sets out the principles and indicators that organizations can use to measure and report their economic, environmental, and social performance. The cornerstone of the framework is the Sustainability Reporting Guidelines. The third version – known as the G3 Guidelines – was published in 2006, and is available free. Other components of the framework include sector supplements (unique indicators for different industry sectors) and protocols (detailed reporting guidance), and national annexes (unique country-level information). GRI promotes and develops this standardized approach to reporting to stimulate demand for sustainability information, which will benefit both reporting organizations and those who use information from their reports. GRI develops learning materials and accredits training partners, and also provides special guidance for SMEs. More than 1 500 companies worldwide, many of them household names, have announced that they have voluntarily adopted the Guidelines. The GRI is a collaborating centre of the UN Environment Programme.

missing and how everyone gains from reducing their GHG emissions. Tell the community in which you work how your efforts are improving conditions for everyone and offering them – and their children – a healthier future.

Strategic communication

Do not rely simply on spreading the word informally, by word of mouth and chance contacts. By all means write reports and put details on your website, if you think people will read them. Hold a meeting to explain what you have done if you think you can attract a decent audience. Mount a media campaign, because if you can get journalists interested you can inform far more people than by direct contact. Try to get someone from the company invited into schools and to visit groups like local senior citizens' or civic associations. Many of them are always on the lookout for interesting speakers anyway, and nobody is too young – or too old – to start down the climate-neutral road. Hold

Then there is the Carbon Disclosure Project (CDP), which works with shareholders and companies to disclose the companies' greenhouse gas emissions. In 2007 it published the world's largest repository of GHG emissions and energy use data, covering 2 400 of the world's largest corporations, which account together for 26 per cent of global anthropogenic emissions. The CDP represents institutional investors, with a combined US\$57 million million under management. Individual governments have been reluctant to develop stringent national emissions limits for fear that big companies will move their factories to nations with laxer regulations. The CDP tries to get round these national interests by focusing on individual companies, not on countries. It unites institutional investors to focus attention on carbon emissions, energy usage and reduction wherever companies and assets are located. Some companies have higher GHG emissions than individual nations. A number have moved to become carbon-neutral, but others can still reduce energy use and emissions by adopting energy efficiency policies and business planning. The CDP has also begun establishing a globally-used standard for emissions and energy reporting. Much of the data it has obtained has never been collected before. An estimated US\$27 thousand million will be spent over the next 30 years on energy-related capital developments (new power stations, fuel distillation plants, etc.), so it is vital that the right technologies are adopted.

training sessions for your own staff, and think perhaps of offering incentives (prizes, even) for the best suggestions on ways to change policies and practice to save GHG emissions. What about advertising? You probably do that anyway, so ask your agency to come up with new copy and graphics which will highlight what you are doing. If you feel you have made a real change in seeking to become climate-neutral, and that you have some significant insights to share, then it may be worth commissioning external advisers to take charge of communicating your message as widely and as effectively as possible.

A full-page ad in the largest Swiss Sunday paper drew the attention of readers to the fact that the supermarket chain Migros reduced its CO₂ emissions by 800 000 tonnes. A comprehensive footnote explains that this is counting efforts made since 1990 to improve energy efficiency in stores, optimize logistics, and introduce biogas-fuel lorries among a range of measures taken to reduce energy consumption. The advertisement mentions that the amount saved equals the emissions of 300 000 modern detached houses in one year, offering a comparison comprehensible to most readers.

Not everything Migros does is consistent with its declared responsibility as a sensible energy user. In the same communication campaign, Migros announced more transparency over CO₂ emissions by launching a label for particularly low-emitting products. However, at the same time, their in-house magazine featured a large ad which offered a special discount on seedless grapes from South Africa... This is just one example of a lack of consistency in overall policy and marketing efforts that ought not to hinder the efforts made by this particular company. Nobody's perfect, and everybody starts somewhere and has room for improvement.

Producing one kilogram
of beef (average)

36

17

Producing one kilogram
of beef in France

Driving 250 kilometre with
an average European car

36



CITIES

If you are involved in running a city, you have a marvellous opportunity to tell its people what you are doing, why you are doing it, and to inspire them to follow your lead. Use your publicity machine, the reporting tools in your environmental management system, the city's mass media, its NGOs, and international associations of city governments, like the ICLEI network. Use your political contacts to enthuse your colleagues in other cities and towns in your own country. Use the considerable influence you have on your own government.



COUNTRIES

National governments are in a strong position to pass the word on about the opportunities for going climate-neutral, first of all, of course, by the examples they set and the policies they adopt – policies, for instance, on transport, building regulations, the phasing out of perverse subsidies, fiscal encouragement for less GHG-intensive activities and production, and support for international agreements on tackling climate change. They can also shine a spotlight on the need for action by exploiting their ability to convene both national and international conferences and workshops, by using political and historic networks like the OECD, ASEAN, the African Union and the Commonwealth. They can spur national players (cities, NGOs, employers' federations and others) to act, and they can use their public information networks to inform and inspire citizens to emulate national policies in their individual lives.

Producing one
tonne of **sugar**

730

Do it all over again

Repeating a fairly difficult process you have just completed does not sound like fun. If you are not in it for the long haul, do not bother: most climate scientists will tell you anyway that even the best efforts at achieving climate neutrality are not guaranteed to work. The rapidity of the onset of change – which, in the words of the IPCC's Fourth Assessment Report, may prove “abrupt and irreversible” – means all bets are off, and we have to try everything we can to avert the worst. But continuing the process for however long is necessary is the best any of us can do if we seriously want to be the change we want to see.

It will be different the second time round. You will have the benefit of greater realism, a clearer understanding of both the difficulties and the potential of what you are doing. You will have a clearer idea, thanks to the lessons you absorbed from your first attempt, of what is likely to work and what is probably not worth bothering about. And by the time you are half-way through this second effort, there is a chance it will be turning into second nature, something it feels quite normal to spend time and effort on doing. In other words, a key element of success is to increasingly automatize and integrate into regular processes many of the functions related to the inventory and assessment. That is the way to equip yourself to make the climate-neutral process a routine, and the routine a way of life that you would not dream of abandoning. This will make future work much easier. That way lies possible success – success that's not guaranteed. But the attempt is better than doing nothing. Nobody begins a diet convinced that it is going to work. They start in hope. That is all we can do in trying to kick the habit of living in a greenhouse gas-dependent society. The job will be hard, but not impossibly so, and the rewards for success make it worth the effort.

Becoming climate-neutral, for many of us as individuals and as consumers, workers, voters, shareholders, or in any other corporate guise, does not need to be the stuff of dreams. It can become a reality in our lives. We shall have to bust a gut to do it, but it is do-able.