

A Sustainable Environment: Our Obligation to Protect God's Gift

by
George P. Nassos

More Students Propose Sustainability Strategies at their Companies

As I teach a graduate business school class on sustainability management, I require my students to take a strategy they learned in class and apply it to their place of work. They are required to write a report, and in addition make a presentation so the rest of the class can learn from their efforts. More important than learning these sustainability strategies is to apply them in the real world. So here are some examples.

Of the \$244 trillion of global debt, less than \$500 billion is traceable to sustainable sources. SDebt is a new method for making loans to companies seeking growth. Under this method, companies would receive a lower interest rate in exchange for taking action defined by the sustainability covenant framework. This system will add to the growth of ESG investing.

Although the strategy used for this company is not unique, recommending it is really interesting. Ally Financial has its Chicago area office in the suburb of Itasca occupying half of an 82,000 square foot building. It is located next to a new expressway and centrally located near three other highways. It is an easy commute for its employees but very limited public transportation is available. It is being recommended to relocate the office to Schaumburg, a much larger hub served by 10 Pace bus routes and two Metra lines. The employees could do some work while commuting, and a significant portion could even work from home. This recommendation would eliminate over 100 metric tons of carbon dioxide, reduce congestion, and save money for the employees and the company.

RSM, the fifth largest public accounting firm in the U.S., holds a yearly contest called "pursue your passion". Well, this student wants to implement the company's own 10x20x30 initiative. It should have RSM's 10 largest offices commit to lowering their carbon footprint by 50% by 2030. Then, have the RSM partners reach out to their 20 largest clients to do the same. This strategy would have environmental, social and economic benefit to all involved and by spreading the word, it could have even a greater impact.

Another great opportunity for sustainability is at a hospital, a business sector that accounts for 4.4% of the world's greenhouse gas emissions. Waste can be reduced by eliminating single-use isolation gowns, surgical packs, surgical gowns and drapes. Energy consumption can be reduced by increasing the use of natural light which will also improve the patient's health, replace all lights with LEDs, and reduce heating and cooling in unoccupied areas.

Well Hope Industries Co. Ltd, an international trade company headquartered in China, exports fine chemicals, pharmaceutical intermediates and agrochemicals manufactured locally. Quite often the quantity of chemicals produced exceeds the real demand due to slightly greater production or a reduction in demand after ordering. Rather than having these chemicals

becoming waste, Chem Clearance Assistant (CCA) was created as an online trading platform for chemical products. This program aims to help industrial partners deal with idle materials, promote supply chain management coordination, reactivate and circulate slack resources more efficiently and redistribute more effectively.

An unemployed student that lives in an apartment building suggested some ideas by introducing them to Planned Property Management Co. Energy can be reduced in a number of ways but a unique one is to convert carpeted floors to wood flooring which would make cleaning much more efficient. Also, installing motion sensor lights in the stairwell will reduce energy consumption if the lights are on only when needed. Trash chutes are available for the tenants but no recycling chutes which forces the disposal of recyclables along with the trash. He also recommends placing bins for recyclable clothing to be more efficient to encourage their use.

Chicago has a great opportunity to improve its recycling program. Three companies are responsible for the recycling system in the city but less than 9% of the waste is recycled. About 25% of the recycling bins are marked contaminated and must be disposed in a landfill. Of the three companies, only one has its own landfills and it accounts for 95% of these contaminated bins. Another great opportunity is recycling of gypsum waste which is a large portion of the construction and demolition (C&D) waste accounting for about 59% of all waste. There are many opportunities to recycle the gypsum which has a 1% recycling rate in Chicago but around 60% in Denmark. Recycling of paper is another great opportunity as it represents about 30% of the city's waste.

The Freedom Boat Club offers membership allowing the use of boats without owning them. Switching to electric powered boats will reduce carbon emissions and save on the cost of fuel.

The U.S. Military spends too much money for the shipment of private automobiles for its service members. An alternative being suggested is to adopt the sharing economy strategy and offer cars for lease while the service members are abroad rather than having their own cars being shipped abroad.

Although Starbucks is striving to be very sustainable, there are opportunities to improve its position. The company should install recycling kiosks to encourage recycling by rewarding its members. It should also encourage customers bringing their own reusable cup by charging a single-use fee to those that don't have a reusable cup.

A large generation of waste occurs at music festivals which are attended by 32 million people each year in the U.S. and generate an average of 100 tons of solid waste every day. This waste consists of single use plastics, tents, mats and sleeping bags. Hippie Homes provides music festival attendees a sustainable camping alternative. The Hippie Home staff set up all that is needed for the attendees and disassemble the equipment at the end resulting in very minimal waste, improved social benefits and at a lower cost.

Every year, I am encouraged by the addition of new ideas to make this world more environmentally, socially and economically sustainable.