Finding Motivation

In our work, we continually witness the immense potential of one motivated person. We are inspired by the collective efforts of so many, working alone or in small groups, who are literally transforming our culture from the grassroots up.

But motivation is a complex topic. We know that it does not necessarily flow from information. Many well-informed people are not motivated. On the other hand, a motivated person gains access to the information needed to take action.

Even those well along the sustainability path struggle with motivation: “It is a cold and rainy today. I think I will leave the bike at home and take the car to work.” Because humans did not evolve to respond with passion to threats that seem remote in time and space, how do we develop a sense of urgency in response to global threats like climate change or the loss of coral reefs?

We have come to view motivation as a discipline for those who seek to create a sustainable culture. We know that sources of motivation vary for each of us and may change over time. When our motivation wanes, we must intentionally rekindle it or find a fresh source. Fortunately, the sources are many, and our efforts to protect the earth are particularly rewarding.

Because our sensory reality is very local, motivation seems to flow most naturally from what we feel close to. A few examples: We come to understand deeply that we are creating the future our children and grandchildren will experience. We intentionally find a sense of wonder in the natural world. We develop the ability to honor native species that require habitat for their existence. We associate with a group of supportive friends who give us affirmation for our efforts. Or we decide, in a personal sense, the next step is simply the right thing to do.

Because we enlist, train, and support citizens who proactively take steps to create a sustainable future, the foundation of our work is motivation. Without it, we would have no stories to share with you.

Jeanne and Dick Roy, Co-Founders

Agent of Change Program

At the Center for Earth Leadership, our mission is forging citizen leadership to a sustainable future.

Training. Our cornerstone program is a six-session course, “How to Be an Agent of Change in Your Circle of Influence.” To date, over 425 citizens have been trained in this program. Here is the way it works.

Each participant selects a circle (such as a school, neighborhood, or workplace), develops a plan to introduce sustainable practices and raise eco-awareness, and takes steps to implement the plan during the two-month course. Groups of no more than 16 participants act as co-consultants, keeping one another focused. When the course is over, the Center provides ongoing support.

When Seth enrolled in our Agent of Change course,
Agent of Change Program cont.

he had an expansive vision for his block in South-east Portland, just north of 40th and Hawthorne. The 14 households would place a small-scale thermal system—possibly a biomass unit—in the middle of the block. It would generate hot water to heat all 14 homes. Needless to say, this would require easements, knocking down fences, installing underground pipes, and project financing.

As a first step, Seth knocked on doors to talk with neighbors. Grateful for his leadership, the neighbors completed a two-page energy survey and shared their utility bills to provide baseline data. Also, some offered their services to construct a wood model and to run preliminary calculations. From his Agent class, Seth recruited a land use lawyer.

The Agent of Change course prompted Seth to call a meeting of all his neighbors for a formal presentation of the project. With a preliminary plan in place, he and his neighbors are now exploring financing through a mechanism like the City’s Green Investment Fund. The capital cost would be repaid out of savings from heating bills after the thermal system is in place.

Creating networks to support agents of change.

As participants complete the Agent course, they are invited to join our Agent of Change Network, which was formed to maintain the momentum of agents working on a project. The Network plans periodic gatherings, workshops to sharpen skills, and reading groups to stay connected.

For a 2009 Agent gathering, guest speaker Tod Sloan, Chair of the Department of Counseling Psychology at Lewis & Clark College, was given a difficult assignment. As a professional, address this question: Why do people resist change and what can change agents do about it?

Within our Agent of Change Network, it soon became apparent that some of the most motivated agents are parents working in their school. Jill Inahara and Amy Culp have assumed leadership of our Eco-School Network of parents who have taken the Agent course. Guided by a steering committee of five parents, the Network now includes parents from 25 schools who plan educational events and field trips and share information through an electronic network created by the Center. A September 2009 post reads:

Hi Eco-Parents,

My school is interested in using rain barrels to collect water for watering the gardens. Does your school have experiences in implementing something like this? If so, how did the facilities approval process work? What equipment worked best for you? Thanks for the help.

Sharing programs and spawning autonomous initiatives. The Agent of Change course has moved from Portland to Eugene where a Center chapter now offers it, and to Columbus, Ohio, where Simply Living (a nonprofit) is currently testing the course. In the spring of 2009, the Center trained parents and teachers from nine public schools in the Lake Oswego School District who then created an autonomous affiliate of our Portland Eco-School Network. Meanwhile, two Center volunteers from Vancouver (WA) initiated an independent outreach in their city.

In Ohio, the Simply Living Web site announces something new from Oregon:

Help pioneer the new green frontier. Take part in a dynamic grassroots program.

WHO? Anyone seeking to initiate or accelerate sustainable practices and/or raise eco-awareness within a circle of influence

WHAT? How to Be an Agent of Change in Your Circle of Influence

An Agent's Motivation

Because motivation is the key to earth leadership, we surveyed experienced Center agents to determine their primary source of motivation. Meg, a mother of children ages five and nine, had this to say:

I am motivated to help the earth due to a deep, ever present voice that reminds me that we need to live in harmony with the earth by living in a sustainable manner. As a child, I learned to listen to the earth from my conservation-minded father and grandparents. As an adult living in a consumer society, the call to care for the earth formed as a voice in my head and a feeling in my chest, almost like anxiety. By using sustainable practices as much as possible and by teaching children about reducing, reusing, and recycling, I am able to hear the voice as a whisper instead of a scream.
**Sustainable Lifestyle Program**

**Home Eco-Parties.** Drawing on Jeanne Roy’s expertise in a low-impact lifestyle, this year the Center employed several formats to train and motivate citizens on lifestyle practices. And we celebrated a benchmark! Jeanne arranged the 450th Home Eco-Party in the greater Portland area, in an outreach format that she created years ago. It is quite simple. A host invites ten friends over for an eco-party. In advance, each guest completes a three-page checklist about practices at home. At the party, a trained Center volunteer leads the discussion on low-impact practices. In a group setting, as participants share their stories, they are motivated to take what they have learned at the party and adopt it in their daily lives.

Because of the media attention on global warming, we expected that questions from participants would address energy use. Interestingly, that has not been the case. Reducing waste is the paramount concern, perhaps because waste is so visible in our lives.

Accumulated plastic bags and plastic clam shells take up space, and guests ask where to take them. Throwing away Styrofoam packaging, fluorescent light bulbs, or electronic equipment evokes a sense of guilt. “What can I do with them?” Yard debris and food scraps constitute a large portion of waste and are perceived as valuable. “The best part about recycling organics is using my own compost in the garden.”

Finally, many express satisfaction in seeing the results of their efforts. “I used to fill a 32-gallon garbage can every week. Now it’s down to a single grocery bag.”

**Assessing Your Ecological Footprint.** In the Center’s Ecological Footprint course, participants cited both positive and negative experiences when asked why they were motivated to reduce their footprint.

Dallas experienced first hand the impacts of chemicals in the environment as a child when he watched a spray truck kill all the fish in a stream. Raised in Alaska, Tammi remembers the first winter with no snow as global warming was amplified in northern latitudes. On the other hand, Rachel, Aiden, and Lane grew up in families that were immersed in nature—either for sustenance or spiritual renewal. As adults, they don’t want to see nature destroyed.

In the last session of the course, participants pledged to make changes. For about half of the class, lifestyle changes involved food: eating less meat, going organic, or growing their own. Others vowed to sell a car or commute by bike. And a few committed to upgrade their homes by adding insulation or installing solar panels.

**The Path to Zero Waste.** The Center’s popular presentation for downtown workplaces at noon, moves from easy steps to more difficult ones. For example, precycling requires new habits like remembering to take durable bags to the store. Recycling some materials, such as worn textiles, bubble wrap, and wood scraps, requires space, patience, and a special trip to a drop-off site. Avoiding disposables may mean giving up convenience.

At a Zero Waste presentation, one participant shared an idea, “When I am tempted to use plastic baggies or saran wrap, I just visualize that mass of plastic debris in the ocean that is killing wildlife.”

Generally, as the presentation moves to hard choices, only the hard core will accept the challenge of living without two “indispensables”—kitty litter and disposable diapers.
Thank You to Members and Supporters

At the Center, we believe that one cornerstone of a sustainable culture is a commercial-free school where sustainable practices and eco-awareness are woven into its very fabric. Our Eco-School Network provides tools and support for parents who share this vision and take steps to make it a reality.

In recent years an unfortunate trend developed in public education toward the commercialized, “throw-away” school filled with Coke machines, advertisements, and Styrofoam trays, like the tray held by nine-year-old Amelia (pictured on left). Fortunately, a grassroots counter-initiative is now underway. In Portland Public Schools, Coke is no longer available. Parents and students are also taking steps to replace the single-use Styrofoam trays and disposable utensils that send daily messages to our children.

Over the coming year, the Center will increase its support of parent-led initiatives to introduce earth-friendly practices at school that engage the kids in growing food, reducing waste, and saving energy.
Carolyn Gassaway
Donald Green III
Ward Greene
Tom and Karen Gritzka
William Halbert
Meredith Hendricks
Diane Henkels
Preston Hefield
Ron Holloway
Bill Hutchison
Jill Inahara
Bob James
Amie Jamieson
Peter and Anne Jarvis
Amy Jarvis
Martin Jones and Gayle Landt
Cornelius and Helen Kolff
Frank Lagesen
Sally Marie
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Tamara Olcott and Ann Muller
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Robert Vestal, M.D.
Sue Warninghoff
Roger Warren
Katie Wilson-Hamaker
Claudia Wilton
Pam Wood
Susan Wulfekuher
Jennifer Wyld

Small Changes Add Up to Big Gains

An Agent of Change initiative at Laurelhurst School encourages parent-drivers to turn off their engines if they wait longer than 10 seconds.
Transformative Center Projects

At the Center, we develop projects to engage targeted groups with unrealized earth leadership potential. This year we worked with three groups of professionals: lawyers, engineers, and mental health professionals. Each has potential for a much greater contribution to the societal goal of a sustainable future.

Our most advanced project, Oregon Lawyers for a Sustainable Future (OLSF), has experienced a watershed year. With encouragement from OLSF, the Oregon State Bar is now moving to a position of leadership within the American legal profession, and the American Bar Association is taking a much deeper look at its emergent role.

Individual lawyers. We have conducted 28 education programs on sustainability for lawyers. Twice per year, we also offer a two-month Lawyers’ Earth Leadership Seminar. Lawyers from 40 Portland law firms and offices have been involved.

In the fall of 2009, Earth Leadership Seminar group #7 filled to capacity with 13 lawyers. During the seminar, the lawyers considered how the profession, their law offices, and they themselves might play a leadership role in creating a sustainable future. In contrast to civil rights and other great issues of the past, the goal of sustainability lacks a sharp legal hook for lawyers to apply their craft. On the other hand, the group discussed many avenues where legal skills and influence can be applied to forge a sustainable future.

Law offices. OLSF has developed six sustainability tools for use in the law office, including a model law office policy (see the sidebar on next page). Posted on our Web site, these tools are widely used by law offices in Oregon and increasingly in other states.

As firms adopt policies and form sustainability teams, the novel ideas begin to flow. After Stoel Rives adopted a sustainability policy, its newly formed Green Squad began generating innovative ideas. “What if we attached reminder stickers on any computer left on after working hours?” “What if we remove trash cans from all individual offices and work stations?” They did, and the firm soon adjusted to the change. Meanwhile, down the street at Schwabe Williamson and Wyatt, employees were beginning to notice composting cans in all spaces where food waste is generated.

Oregon State Bar (OSB).

In November 2008, two OLSF representatives attended the annual planning retreat of the OSB Board of Governors (BOG) and urged the BOG to appoint a statewide sustainability task force. The task-force charge drafted by OLSF was accepted with minor modifications, and the 14-lawyer task force was appointed in February 2009.

On October 30, three members of the Task Force (including Dick Roy) delivered a far-reaching report. The Bar adopted its two key recommendations: add a sustainability article to the Bar bylaws and create a permanent Sustainable Future Section, a section supported by a petition signed by 475 lawyers that had been circulated by OLSF colleagues in law offices around the state.

Oregon State Bar Looks to the Future

The new OSB sustainability bylaw reads in part: The Bar supports the goal of sustainability, generally defined as meeting present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs...The Bar will encourage education and dialogue on how law impacts the needs and interests of future generations relative to the advancement of the science of jurisprudence and improvement of the administration of justice.
The 2009 OLSF amendment would provide explicit authorization for directors of Oregon corporations to take “social, environmental, or ethical factors” into account in their decision-making process. This would dispel any misconception that the sole purpose of a corporation is to maximize profit.

Within Oregon, the State Bar, law offices, law schools, and individual lawyers are struggling with their ultimate role in the sustainability movement. Is the profession merely the legal arm of the economy, or is there an independent, noble role to play? Although OLSF is pushing the cutting edge of current developments, we believe our work to date will someday be seen as the nascent stage of a much greater leadership role.

**Psychology for a Sustainable Future (PSF).** In 2007, the Center launched PSF by organizing a major conference at Lewis & Clark, “Psychology-Ecology-Sustainability.” Out of the conference, a group of mental health professionals formed to educate the public on the adverse effects of child-targeted advertising. Led by Pat Chandler, the Center’s Committee for a Commercial-Free Childhood now offers a Power-Point presentation or film to high school and college students, parent groups, and conferences such as the Oregon Association for Education of Young Children. The factor that seems to draw the most passionate response from an audience is how sophisticated and underhanded marketing has become. This is particularly evident in the Girls Intelligence Agency, a stealth marketing organization that recruits girls to be GIA secret agents who will then conduct product testing and market research on their unsuspecting friends. The agents are unpaid, and their friends are not informed of their participation in this research.

**Taking Note of OLSF**

*The formation of OLSF thrust Oregon to the forefront of the emergent interest in sustainability within the American legal profession.*

– 2009 Sustainability Task Force, Oregon State Bar

Perhaps it is because they are closer to the polar ice cap than we are, but some Oregon lawyers [OLSF] have gotten well out in front of Californians in developing user-friendly guides for greening your law office.

– California State Bar Association

*The Oregon group [OLSF] has progressed the furthest. It’s technically a project of the nonprofit Center for Earth Leadership in Portland, Ore., but former Stoel Rives corporate lawyer Dick Roy is at the helm.*

– National Law Journal
The Center Staff

Our Portland office staff includes Kelly Boreing, Administrative Assistant, Emily Klavins, Program Coordinator, and Jeanne and Dick Roy, Co-Directors. To expand capacity, the staff supports organized teams of volunteers who take the lead on specific programs and projects, including the following:

- Agent of Change Program team including presenters, mentors, and trainers
- Eco-School Network steering committee
- Eco-Party presenters
- Center chapter in Eugene
- Numerous teams of lawyers working on focused topics such as corporate governance, law office practices, education, and laws generally
- Committee of a Commercial-Free Childhood, consisting of mental health professionals

ESSENTIAL KNOWLEDGE

Living during what might be described as an energy revolution, citizens need credible information about energy and carbon. To meet that need, this year the Center published a 40-page primer, *Energy and Carbon*. The charge to our research team was to organize a complex topic into understandable bites of information.

With input from 25 recognized energy experts, the result is a concise overview of U.S. energy use, the ten primary energy sources, and carbon credits, trading, and offsets—an arena fraught with misinformation. A central goal of the publication is to provide a realistic understanding about the “technological fixes” being proposed—both the promise and the often unstated downside associated with each fix.