AOHT Sustainable Tourism

Lesson 10

Sustainable Business Management

Student Resources

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Student Resource 10.1

Reading: Sustainable Choices for Your Business

Directions: As you read, think about which of these sustainable practices are appropriate for your project business. Not all of them will be; you need to think about your specific business and make some decisions. In the margin, note somewhere between 5 and 10 ideas that you think would be realistic and useful for you to incorporate.

Solid Waste Management

Did you know that one hotel room can generate up to 28 pounds of waste per day? Think about how many hundreds or thousands of hotel rooms there are in your city or state. Where does all that trash come from?

* Room items packaged for individual use (wrapped bar of soap, bottle of water in the mini-bar)
* Newspapers delivered to hotel rooms
* Trash generated by guests and employees
* Food waste

Food waste is at the top of the list. The California lodging industry alone creates 112,000 pounds a year! How does hotel food waste accumulate in such huge amounts? From the hospitality side, waste comes from:

* Preparing too much food
* Table scraps
* Cooking losses (dishes that didn’t turn out to taste good enough to serve)
* Packaging failures

On the consumer side, waste usually results from the common practice of ordering too much. When leftovers or doggy bags are involved, the paper, plastic, or Styrofoam packaging contributes to even more waste.

What Hospitality and Tourism (HT) Businesses Can Do

Establish recycling and composting programs

Most large HT businesses already have recycling programs; the next step is composting. Composting is the act of allowing biodegradable waste (vegetables, fruits, and grass clippings, for example) to decompose, or rot. In a very short time it looks like earth and can be used to help farmers and home gardeners create richer soil for growing. Food and landscape waste, along with other biodegradable items like paper plates, can be composted. In fact, some HT businesses today use cutlery and packaging made of a cornstarch-based plastic, which can also be composted. Businesses have found that, in addition to the environmental benefit composting brings, they also save a lot of money in trash hauling fees.

Educate employees and encourage guests to recycle

According to the US Environmental Protection Agency, recycling recovers over 30% of solid waste in the United States. That’s significant. However, the environmental movement’s goal is that every product, every component, and every material should be reused, repurposed, or recycled after it reaches the end of its useful life. In other words, nothing should end up in the landfill. This is called **zero to landfill**. Most people do not realize that there are other options, though. Institute a recycling program, educate your employees about why it matters, and encourage guests to recycle.

Eliminate or reduce disposable items

Hotels can replace disposable dishes or cups with reusable kitchenware and install refillable dispensers of soap and shampoo rather than offering individual-use bottles. Hotels can offer free copies of the newspaper in the lobby for guests to pick up if they want them, rather than delivering a newspaper to each room (which might not ever be read).

Water Usage

Water waste is another challenge for the HT industry. It’s necessary for bath, laundry, kitchen, landscaping, cooling and heating, pools and spas, and other uses.

* The Environmental Protection Agency estimates that lodging facilities use up to 218 gallons of water per day per occupied room. Luxury facilities can use up to 475 gallons a day!
* According to Hilton Hotels Corporation, it takes 2 gallons to wash every pound of hotel linens. (A typical hotel room uses 11.5 pounds of linens per day.)

What HT Businesses Can Do

Start a linen and towel reuse program

Hotels can post signs in their rooms suggesting that customers hang their towels up and use them more than once before asking the housekeeping staff to wash them. After all, at home, most people don’t wash their towels after every single use! One 77-room Kansas hotel discovered it uses 90 gallons of water each time its washer fills. The hotel used to do about 23 loads of laundry a week, consuming over 8,200 gallons of water. Then it began a towel reuse program. If even just a third of its guests participate in the reuse program, it will save about 143,520 gallons a year!

Use water-efficient devices and practices

Installing low-flow toilets, low-flow showerheads, and faucet aerators (devices screwed into the faucet spout that mix air with water flow) can save a company a lot of money in the long term. Low-flow toilets could save 180,000 gallons of water a year. And the customer notices no difference!

In food and beverage businesses, don’t automatically serve water to customers. Put a sign on the table or in the menu explaining that water will be served on request. Avoid running water to thaw frozen foods in the kitchen.

Practice good maintenance. Repair leaks quickly, shut off the water supply in areas where it is not needed, and make sure ice machines are well-maintained and functioning efficiently. If you have water-based elements, such as fountains or ponds, make sure they are well-maintained. If possible, use systems that recycle their water to reduce your overall water usage.

Reuse gray water

Gray water is wastewater from the kitchen or the bath that does not contain any harmful contaminants (as the water in toilets does). Gray water can be used to water landscapes; many cities are doing this to save both money and water.

Make changes to landscaping

Consider adjusting the landscaping around your buildings to use more drought-resistant and native plants, which will reduce your overall water usage. Look into more efficient irrigation systems and make sure not to run the sprinklers at the hottest part of the day. You can also save a lot of money and water by ensuring that the watering system only waters plants—not sidewalks and driveways.

Avoid contaminating water

Other HT operations can also affect water. Businesses are becoming aware of the ways chemical cleaners, herbicides, and pesticides can contaminate wastewater. They are looking for more sustainable alternatives, such as natural cleaning products and green pest control methods. For example, organic gardening practices encourage the arrival of dragonflies, which eat mosquitoes, and ladybugs, which eat a variety of other insect pests such as aphids.

Energy Usage

HT businesses use a lot of energy. Restaurants, on average, use three times more energy per square foot than any other type of commercial building. Lodging facilities are also among the top users of energy.

In a restaurant, the highest amount of energy use goes into preparing food, followed by heating/air conditioning systems, refrigerating food, and sanitation (dishwashers, trash compactors, etc.). In a hotel, almost 50% of energy usage is from heating/air conditioning systems, followed by food prep/catering, heating water, and lighting.

What HT Businesses Can Do

Use renewable sources of energy

Explore how you might take advantage of renewable sources of energy like wind, solar, or geothermal. Many hotels are built in locations where solar energy would be easy to obtain. Even if you can’t install solar panels or a wind farm on your property, talk to your local utility provider. Many utility companies are beginning to offer more renewable energy choices. And many businesses are starting to receive tax breaks for using alternative sources of energy.

If your business uses vehicles, make sure to evaluate their use of energy, too. Consider switching to hybrid, electric, or biofuel vehicles. Did you know it’s possible to make biofuel out of used cooking oil? That could be a great renewable energy source for a restaurant with delivery trucks! Work with your employees to identify ways to save fuel when driving company vehicles, too.

Target HVAC and lighting systems

HVAC (heating, ventilation, and air conditioning) systems use a lot of energy, particularly in hotels in warmer climates. Install occupancy sensors in meeting rooms, public bathrooms, and other spaces to control heat/air conditioning and/or lighting. These sensors can identify when people are in the room and turn on lights or HVAC systems automatically.

Wherever possible, replace traditional incandescent light bulbs with compact fluorescent bulbs (CFLs). CFLs may not work for mood lighting in a romantic restaurant, but they offer bright, efficient lighting for work areas, hallways, and more. Also think about replacing lit signs (such as a sign at the front of your restaurant or the exit signs inside your business) with LED lighted signs, which are more energy efficient and last longer.

Use energy-efficient equipment

If you are purchasing or upgrading equipment, make energy-efficient choices. Look for Energy Star rated products, which are evaluated by the US Environmental Protection Agency for their energy efficiency. Restaurant and hotel kitchens can save energy by choosing conventional ovens rather than traditional ovens, opting for energy-efficient components for their walk-in coolers and freezers, by replacing their ice machines, and even by changing the type of pots they cook with!

As always, maintaining equipment will also help it to be more efficient. Just cleaning the coils on the refrigeration unit can make a big difference, especially since refrigeration costs represent 13–18% of the typical restaurant’s energy bill!

Make changes to landscaping

Planting trees in specific locations can actually reduce your energy usage in your buildings. Deciduous trees in particular provide shade in the warmer months and then drop their leaves in the cooler months, allowing more sun to reach your building to heat it.

You can also reduce energy consumption from lawn mowers and other gardening equipment by making careful choices about the types of plants you use. Consider a low groundcover instead of grass because it doesn’t need to be mowed. Or consider energy-efficient ways to mow. In the Sonoma Valley wine country in California, some of the wineries actually hire local herds of sheep to come in and graze on their lawns and vineyards—a very sustainable solution!

Building and Construction Impact

Most HT businesses occupy at least one building. Large businesses, like hotels, resorts, or amusement parks, might have several buildings. In addition to making smart choices about energy and water usage, HT businesses can make sustainable choices about the way buildings are constructed and maintained.

What HT Businesses Can Do

If you are leasing space for your business, try to choose more energy-efficient and green buildings. Look for green construction materials such as locally available and low- or non-toxic wood, low-VOC paint (which emits fewer unhealthy fumes), or recycled denim insulation (made from old blue jeans!).

Replacing or renovating windows can have a big impact on a building’s use of energy. Adding a special glaze to windows can reduce the amount of solar heat that comes through them. Repairing the seal around the windows or changing the window treatments (blinds, curtains, etc.) can also improve efficiency.

If a sustainable building is really important to you, consider applying for the “gold standard” of sustainable construction in the United States: LEED. LEED is short for “Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design Green Building Rating System.” It is a rating system developed by the U.S. Green Building Council(USGBC) to provide standards for environmentally sustainable construction. There are 100 possible LEED points, which cover categories such as site sustainability, water efficiency, energy and atmosphere, materials and resources, indoor environmental quality, and innovation in design.

There are four levels of LEED certification. The first level is “Certified” (40–49 points) and requires the fewest points to achieve. “Platinum” (80 points and above) means that a building is at the cutting-edge of green technology and sustainable construction.

LEED has its limitations, too. It focuses on how the building is constructed. It does not ask if the business buys its materials locally or if it pays its workers an economically sustainable wage. There are other certification programs, such as EarthCheck and Green Globe, that consider all of these things. LEED certification is also very expensive, and might be out of reach of some smaller businesses.

In spite of these drawbacks, LEED certification is becoming increasingly popular in sustainable tourism, particularly in the United States. In some areas of the country, you can get tax breaks for having LEED certified buildings. In every area of the country, pursuing LEED certification can generate great public relations for an HT business.

Technology Implementation

Apps on a smartphone or tablet can be used to address many of the issues you’ve read about here. Some environmentally-friendly apps can:

* Find you a bike path to commute to work.
* Direct you to a local farmers’ market or other source of local foods.
* Determine the energy usage in your house.
* Identify sustainable meal choices (e.g. which fish are farmed/caught sustainably).
* Improve your driving habits to increase gas mileage.
* Find local businesses with sustainable business practices.
* Evaluate how much energy you could save by switching to CFL light bulbs.
* Track and reduce your carbon footprint.
* Identify local recycling centers.
* Track and reduce your water footprint (how much water you use/waste).
* Coordinate a carpool.

What HT Businesses Can Do

There are many ways HT businesses can use environmentally-friendly apps, including:

* Use them to improve the sustainability of your business.
* Recommend them to your customers.
* Design your own app that includes similar functions.

For example, a restaurant might recommend that guests use the Seafood Watch app (created by the Monterey Bay Aquarium) to determine what type of seafood they wish to eat. This way guests avoid choosing fish that are in danger from overfishing, or fish that are highly contaminated with pollutants like mercury. The restaurant could also provide waitstaff with a tablet or smartphone with the app on it, so they could answer questions about the sustainability of a diner’s selection.

Student Resource 10.2

Assignment: Sustainable Choices for our Project Business

Student Names: Date:

Directions: Now that you have read about the various ways a business can make sustainable choices, work together with your project group to decide which choices you will implement in your project business. Before you begin, read through all of the instructions on this sheet, and read the assessment criteria at the end of the sheet to make sure you understand how your work will be assessed.

Step 1: Set priorities

Here are the five categories you read about earlier. Number them from 1 to 5, based on how big of an impact you think they will have on your business. For example, if you are going to build a hotel on a vacant lot, Building and Construction might be listed as 1. On the other hand, if you are inventing an app and you’re going to have a small number of people working for you out of your home office, Building and Construction might be listed as 5 (not that big of an impact).

Solid Waste Management

Water Usage

Energy Usage

Building and Construction

Technology Implementation

Step 2: Make choices

Now, use the table to list how you ranked these five categories, as well as what choices your group would make about how to manage your business sustainably. An example is provided, using an integrated pest management company as the example business.

Keep in mind that you should put more of your effort into the areas that will really impact your business. In other words, if technology and apps won’t affect your business and water usage will, you should have more ideas for how to impact your water usage. You should have sustainable choices for at least 3 out of the 5 categories.

| Category | Ranking | Choices We Would Make |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Example: Water Usage | 3 | Make sure our office has low-flow bathroom equipment; dispose of all pesticides carefully so as not to contaminate water; advise clients on landscaping that can reduce pest problems as well as reducing water usage; collect rainwater at office and use to water landscape and clean equipment |
| Solid Waste Management |  |  |
| Water Usage |  |  |
| Energy Usage |  |  |
| Building and Construction |  |  |
| Technology Implementation |  |  |

Make sure your assignment meets or exceeds the following assessment criteria:

* The assignment lists a wide range of sustainable choices in at least three different categories.
* The choices are plausible and realistic steps for a business to take.
* The choices are well explained.
* The choices focus on the categories that will have the greatest impact on the business.
* The completed assignment is neat and easy to read.

Student Resource 10.3

Reading: Sustainability Manager Job Description

Primary Function:

Lead the development and execution of a company-wide strategic sustainability initiative, integrating sustainability throughout the company. Ensure that the sustainability effort supports the long-term interests of the company.

Responsibilities include:

1. Lead the effort to create a sustainability vision for the company that includes people, profit, and planet. Develop the business case to address sustainability issues.

2. Secure senior level support for integrating sustainable development into core processes and decision making.

3. Lead the development of a long-term sustainability vision for the company, including mission and operating principles, and lead the creation of a high-level strategy to support them.

4. Collaborate with internal groups throughout the company, including facilities management, engineering, and marketing, to create and implement a broad-based sustainability plan. Incorporate sustainability principles into all facets of company planning.

5. Form and lead an internal Sustainability Steering Committee that will help shape and initially oversee the launch of the company’s sustainability efforts. Oversee and define the scope of the committee, short term and long term. Appoint committee members, define duties, and assign committee responsibilities.

6. Serve as the internal leader and “go to” expert for sustainability. Monitor emerging trends, programs, and issues; communicate with and educate the company and the customers on sustainability topics.

7. Serve as the central point of contact for any and all customer interactions on the topic of sustainability. This includes taking the lead regarding customer inquiries as well as any and all written and verbal communications to customers on the subject of sustainability. Collaborate with other employees and internal experts to ensure appropriate responses and communications.

8. Lead the interface with any and all government agencies and departments, domestic and international, relating to the company's position on sustainability-related matters. This includes subjects relating to the broader topic of sustainability, such as US cap and trade legislation. Collaborate closely with other employees and management (e.g., the Director of Environmental Health and Safety and the Vice President of Engineering and R & D), to ensure appropriate responses and communications.

9. Identify and prioritize areas for institutional sustainability efforts and recommend strategies for proactively addressing relevant sustainability issues.

10. Foster a culture of sustainability through ongoing organizational communications and education.

11. Offer expertise and provide leadership-level support for initiatives to reduce company-wide resource consumption and waste generation.

12. Serve as the company spokesperson on sustainability issues. Create and implement communication strategies to publicize the company’s sustainability effort and promote broad awareness of sustainability initiatives, both internally and externally.

13. Build effective partnerships with external organizations to support sustainability efforts.

14. Assess the organization’s current sustainability performance and identify and prioritize the organization’s key sustainability issues.

15. Ensure that appropriate internal controls and measurement systems are in place to support sustainability efforts.

16. Measure and monitor progress against sustainability strategies, objectives, and performance targets.

Student Resource 10.4

Research: Sustainability Careers

Student Name: Date:

Directions: Find a description for a sustainability job. Use this resource for guidance.

What to Look For

You need to find a job description for a full-time sustainability management position. Possible job titles include:

* Sustainability Manager
* Sustainability Specialist
* Sustainability Director
* Sustainability Officer

You do not need to look for jobs that are hospitality-specific. Sustainability jobs exist in a lot of different fields.

Where to Look

You can do a general web search for [job title] + job description. For example:

* Sustainability manager job description

You can also visit job search websites such as:

* Monster ([www.monster.com/](http://www.monster.com/))
* Career Builder ([www.careerbuilder.com/](http://www.careerbuilder.com/))
* Indeed ([www.indeed.com/](http://www.indeed.com/))
* Simply Hired ([www.simplyhired.com/](http://www.simplyhired.com/))

What to Do When You Find One

When you find a job description, read through it. Look for a job that sounds like something you might want to do or something that sounds interesting. Make sure the description includes enough details about what that person would do.

Once you have found a description you like, you can print out a copy or copy and paste it into a word processing document on your computer.

Student Resource 10.5

Frame: Job Description

Student Name: Date:

Directions: Use this resource to help you plan your job description. Then type your description or write it neatly on a separate sheet of paper. Before you begin, read through all of the instructions on this sheet, and read the assessment criteria at the end to make sure you understand how your work will be assessed.

Choose a hospitality business

Is it a hotel? A restaurant? A tour company? A rental car agency? An attraction or entertainment venue? Something else?

Describe the business

Is it a big multinational company? A small, locally-owned business? Is it a long-established business that is starting to become more sustainable? A brand new business that emphasizes sustainability from Day One?

Describe the position

What is the title? Where does this person work? Is this a full-time job? A Chief Sustainability Officer for a big hotel chain might have an office in a major city, work full time, and rarely visit the hotels where the sustainability initiatives actually happen. A sustainability manager for a local bed and breakfast might only work part time at the B&B and probably is very involved in the actual initiatives—maybe the manager helps with the composting or replaces the light bulbs with CFLs alone!

Describe the duties

What does this person do? Make a list of the key responsibilities of the position. Remember that this is a position at a hospitality business, which means the responsibilities might look slightly different than the example job you found online.

Make sure your assignment meets or exceeds the following assessment criteria:

* The description outlines a plausible set of duties and responsibilities for a sustainability management professional.
* The description is appropriate for a specific type of hospitality business.
* The description utilizes professional language and jargon as necessary. All professional language and jargon is used correctly.
* The completed assignment is neat and easy to read.