



MERCi

## The 10% Event; Save Energy, Save Money

### MERCi workshop: Motivating change: How to support others when making energy saving decisions

In order to support colleagues, trustees and landlords in implementing energy saving decisions we need to understand a little more about their current behaviour and what makes them tick. We can look at this in terms of what barriers they face when making energy saving decisions and then how to break down those barriers. We can then look at how to communicate the message so that it appeals to everyone.....

Everything will be written down on the flip chart paper and we will write up the notes and email them to you, so there is no need to make your own notes.

#### Barriers

What would colleagues, trustees, landlord say are the reasons why they don't currently carry out energy saving measures at work? Picture these people in your mind and think about what they would say...

(Ask the group to make suggestions, note down on flip chart paper)

*eg; apathy, habit, resistant to change, denial, too busy, don't want to be seen as a 'greenie', none of the other tenants in the building are bothered (landlord), none of the staff are bothered (trustees).....*

*Other ideas: their physical environment (do they know where the light switches are?), do they think someone else switches everything off, do they know how to switch the printers / heating off/ down...*

(Cluster the answers)

Now we know what barriers are in place how can we break these barriers down....

#### Breaking down barriers

(Refer to clusters)

eg; how can we break down the barrier to 'resistance to change'? Many people are scared of change because it involves the unknown, the unfamiliar and they may not have any control over change. Ensure that colleagues are active in the decision making process, give them control of a certain aspect, involve them in a 'green' group.

(Ask the group to make suggestions, note on flip chart paper)

*Examples of ways to break down barriers:*

- *Resistance to change (scared, unfamiliar, no control= give them control, input into process)*
- *Apathy (climate change has been on the agenda for over 30 years, no wonder people are apathetic, introduce new thinking around climate change)*
- *Habit (make breaking a habit as easy as possible and promote the benefits)*
- *Denial (Refer to J Porritt excerpt\*)*
- *Too busy (make it part of the everyday routine, develop action plan and training)*
- *Don't want to be seen as a 'greenie' (why not? The alternative is far worse!)*
- *None of the tenants/ staff are bothered (have you informed landlord/ trustees that you want to make changes? Pull together with other tenants / staff in collective action)*

## **What motivates people to implement change?**

Has anyone heard of the term 'pull', it is often used in marketing?

A 'pull' is something that will bring your customer, in our case, a colleague, to buy goods, in our case, to buy into energy saving measures because it taps into something that they feel is important, something they value or something they can put worth onto.

eg; you have noticed that a colleague recycles everything, takes public transport to meetings instead of their car and is vegan. You could consider that in order to 'pull' that colleague into implementing energy saving actions that any communication used would need to emphasise the impact on the planet.

(Ask the group to make suggestions, note on flip chart paper)

*eg; they have children/ grandchildren so want to preserve the planet for future generations, they are the board/ manager/ landlord so they **want to save money**, it's the right thing to do- moral obligation, they go walking in the countryside so they want to preserve the local environment,*

## **What tools are required to communicate the message?**

So now we know what the potential barriers are and how we can break down those barriers, we also know what the 'pulls' are for our colleagues so all we need to do now is to communicate the message with these things in mind.

eg; If a colleague said they didn't believe that climate change was happening (denial) and they had grandchildren, you could arrange for a film to be shown, possibly Al Gore's 'An Inconvenient Truth' which explains climate change and the impact on future generations...  
(Ask the group to make suggestions, note on flip chart paper)

*eg; poster campaign, email alerts, 'bog standards', chocs / rewards for switching monitors off, incentives- money saved used for staff event, films 'An inconvenient truth' (for 'denial'), energy saving group (for colleagues/ trustees 'resistant to change'), tenants collective action group (to persuade landlord), training and workshops (for 'denial'), full induction to building, peer pressure, business plan outlining savings and potential publicity opportunities (for trustees and landlord)*

## Additional information

Excerpt from: **Capitalism as if the world matters, Jonathan Porritt, 2007**

### **Chapter 12 Confronting Denial Page 214**

Humans have real difficulty coping with uncertainty and complexity; when overwhelmed, we tend to fall back on familiar 'rules of thumb', reassuring habits and defensive routines. It's only human to want to maintain a worldview or a way of life that suits us, and to block out that which puts it at risk. Emotionally, it's even harder to cope with grave threats to our wellbeing or to those we love, especially if we feel there's little we can do about it- and often default to 'sanity-maintaining', mechanisms of repression, denial, detachment, hopelessness or anger. 'Denial' does not need a conspiracy to make it work; it just needs normal people who like the way their world is organised.

In the face of today's portfolio of environmental 'horror stories', Thomas Homer-Dixon points to the three layers of defensive barriers that people erect:

First we try **existential denial**; in this case, we'll say the environmental problem in question- for instance, climate change- simply doesn't exist. But if the weight of evidence becomes impossible to ignore, we can turn to **consequential denial**. Here, we'll admit the problem exists, but say it really doesn't matter. Finally, if we can't credibly deny both the problems existence and its consequences, we might say we can't do anything about it. This is **fatalistic denial**. For the die-hard environmental sceptics, fatalistic denial is a last and all-but-impenetrable line of psychological defence (Homer- Dixon, 2006)

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### **Tips for developing collective action :**

Arrange a staff meeting with 'Energy Saving' on the agenda so that all parts of the organisation are involved. If possible and appropriate ask your landlord to join the group. Also, make sure that you have senior level engagement / support so that decisions made can be implemented asap. Ask staff to volunteer to become energy savings champions – ideally one in each department if it is a big organisation. Champions should be given support from senior management and recognised for their efforts.

Once you have your energy saving champions they can launch short term projects:

#### **'Switch off project'**

1. Switch off your monitor when away from your desk for more than 30 minutes
2. Switch off your PC when away from your desk for more than 1 hour
3. Unplug your phone charger when not in use

Energy Champions assess workstations at the end of every day for eight weeks. A league table would be put in place, showing individual scores every week. At the end of the eight week period, the highest performing individual(s) would be rewarded . Add a twist to the score board by introducing 'Beat the Boss'!

Once a project is completed, introduce a new scheme to keep the initiative fresh.

## Incentives and rewards

Make sure you understand what people want when designing incentives—what do people value? Is it a cash reward, a team day out, chocolate?

A staff meeting could discuss how to spend the money saved on the energy bills – if price rises have not swallowed the surplus.

Use positive messages rather than making people feel guilty

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**Additional handout:** Top Tips for Persuading Your Landlord (and other Tenants) to Make Changes, Every Action Counts, 2008