



## Creating a Culture of Environmental Stewardship

BY KEVIN FLETCHER, DIRECTOR OF PROGRAMS AND ADMINISTRATION



Turn your commitment to the environment into a culture of environmental stewardship within your organization. Begin by gathering a team of coworkers with knowledge and motivational skills to help coordinate environmental initiatives.

Once you make a commitment to improved environmental performance in your organization, you must become a *green change agent* or *environmental champion* to foster employee buy-in and involvement. Your goal is to create an *environmental culture* within your organization, making environmental stewardship “the way people do things around here.”

Where do you begin? Start by reviewing eight common failures for environmental organizational change (adapted from John Kotter, *Leading Change*, Harvard Business School Press, 1996) and make a plan to ensure your success:

### 1. Failing to Create a Sense of Urgency

Moving people, and entire organizations, in a new direction can be a little like moving an ice berg. Effective environmental champions find ways to create a sense of urgency: This is important! What you do matters! Environmental stewardship has to be viewed as a critical part of your long-term success, and a critical part of each person’s job.

### 2. Not Creating a Guiding Coalition (Team)

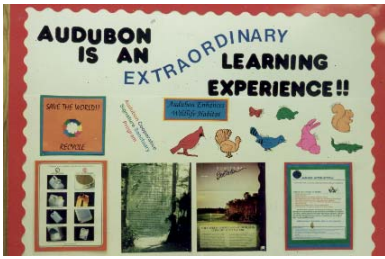
You can’t go it alone. Build a “resource advisory group” or “green team,” selecting people from all levels and departments. Be aware of who has an ability to help you motivate staff and coordinate operations. Who has knowledge and technical skills to help solve environmental problems? Who has the authority and respect to help you mobilize people to take action?

### 3. Underestimating the Power of a Vision

People want to feel as if they are a part of something bigger than themselves. Create a vision to inspire people. Your vision may be based on being the best, protecting the environment for future generations, operating efficiently, or developing a healthy and enjoyable workplace. Find the connections between the day-to-day actions that staff take and the effect that those actions can have on our natural environment.

### 4. Under-Communicating the Vision

Once you’ve developed a “vision message” make sure that vision is communicated to staff. You may think that your staff have heard or read what you’re saying, but most environmental messages are under-communicated. Use posters, regular meetings, and perhaps even bonuses or other incentives to reinforce that vision and the role that each individual plays in achieving it.



Workplace displays, like this one at Bonita Bay Club East in Florida, can be used to communicate your environmental goals, expectations, and successes.

### 5. Not Addressing Obstacles

Most environmental efforts fail in businesses because they are viewed as side issues—not core to financial health. Avoid this by tying all of your actions explicitly to business value. Environmental performance and business goals (e.g., revenue generation, cost avoidance, image and public relations) can, and often do, go hand-in-hand.

### 6. Failing to Create Short-Term Wins

Keep yourself and your staff motivated. Have a long-term vision, but set short-term goals. Meet them. Publicize and celebrate those shorter term successes. Then, set new goals to inspire continuous improvement and longer term excellence.

### 7. Declaring Victory Too Soon

Don't settle for limited results. Remember that the long-term goal is to create an environmental culture in your organization. One or two recycling success stories do not lead to changed culture. Culture change takes five, eight, even ten years to accomplish. And the bigger the organization, the longer it takes. Be patient and include a periodic process to review program goals, set new ones, and keep environmental performance in front of staff constantly.

### 8. Not Anchoring Changes in the Culture

Use projects and performance goals to change behavior, but use management systems, reward programs, and training programs to reinforce and embed that behavior in staff. As an environmental champion, part of your job to ensure success is managing the environmental culture that you've created.

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Audubon International  
46 Rarick Road  
Selkirk, NY 12158  
(518) 767-9051