

The State of Sustainable Museums



9 Keys to Greener Museums

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Introduction	3
Secrets to sustainability?	3
About Greener Museums	3
A note of thanks	3
Museums are Struggling	4
The 9 Keys	5
1. Strategy Matters	5
2. Is Your Board On Board?	6
3. Spending Sensibly	8
4. Generating Influence	9
5. Engaging Staff Members	10
6. Finding the Time	11
7. Targets, Policies and Measurement	12
8. Technical Constraints, Technical Expertise	13
9. The Message Matters	14
Take the first step	15
Some final thoughts	16

Introduction

Secrets to sustainability?

What you are about to read is an insight into a year's worth of research and experience working to implement cost-saving, reputation-building sustainability initiatives with one of the world's top art galleries. Until now, this information has only been available by speaking with me first hand, or by spending hours combing the internet, attending conferences, speaking to numerous museums, and networking. I feel a deep desire to get this information out to a larger group of people, and that's why this report's time has come. It shouldn't be a secret any longer.

About Greener Museums

I founded Greener Museums in 2008, but my experience represents over twelve years working in sustainability, with corporate clients from a range of sectors, including the UK's leading retailer, Marks and Spencer plc, and the world's largest law firm, Clifford Chance LLP. I take that knowledge and expertise along with government and NGO experience into my work with museums.

A note of thanks

The museums-specific information in this report is based on an ongoing assignment with the Tate Galleries, a survey which was completed by over fifty museums worldwide, and several individual interviews with museums professionals. I would especially like to thank the Tate for their support and cooperation, and the interviewees and respondents to the survey for their thoughts.

Throughout the report, you'll see some of the responses from the survey contained in speech bubbles for each section.

Happy reading!

Rachel Madan, Director

Greener Museums

Museums are Struggling

It's nearly impossible to talk about museums without discussing the economic climate. Funding cuts, staff freezes and redundancies, postponing exhibitions, and trying to raise new sources of income. Many museums have already laid off staff, had their budgets cut by governments, and had corporate donors cut back. Some have gone so far as to sell pieces from their collections. At the same time, costs are rising. More visitors are coming to museums, with fewer staff to help them out. Visitors cost many times more than what typically spend in museums, leaving donations, government funding and other income generation routes to pick up the slack. In addition, energy prices will continue to rise, and climate change will make weather conditions less predictable in the future.

And yet, many museums are missing a trick that could both save costs and generate income. How many museums don't know their fundamental energy costs and how to reduce them? How many don't have a clearly articulated sustainability strategy to knit together and leverage all their different areas of work? How many aren't working with their supply chain to address these issues? How many could open up whole new income streams but aren't? Too many, in my opinion.

I'm going to address the issues I see, because I know from twelve years of work in this area that my perspective can make a huge difference to an organization, as it has for my previous clients. I don't want to sit out and keep working with organizations one at a time. These issues are far too urgent for that. This report exposes the issues I see as the keys to unlocking the sustainability potential lurking in the cultural sector, and in particular in museums. Step by step, you will gain clarity about what's holding your museum back, and how to take the first steps to achieving a greener museum. Of course, all of the answers won't be in this short report. It's just a taster. But I'll show you how to get started and take your first steps to sustainability.

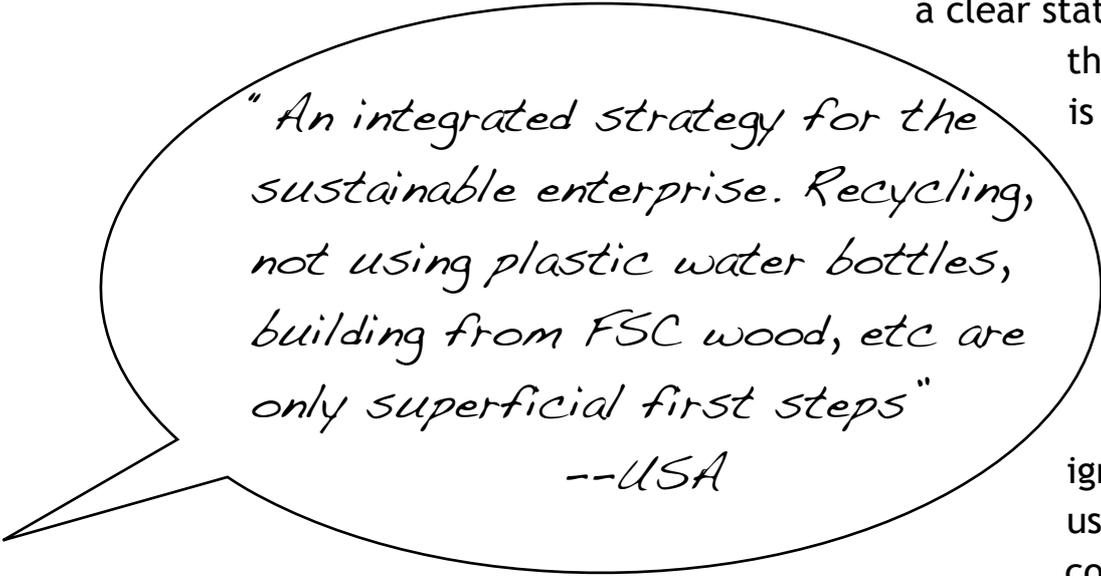
The 9 Keys

1. Strategy Matters

What is strategy, exactly? As Dr. Stephen Covey, author of *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, says, “Begin with the End in Mind.” A strategy is that beginning. It is not the result of planning, it is not a policy, and it is not

an implementation plan. Rather, it is a clear statement of what

the organization is trying to achieve and how. This crucial piece of work is often completely ignored, or more usually, it is compiled to bring



“An integrated strategy for the sustainable enterprise. Recycling, not using plastic water bottles, building from FSC wood, etc are only superficial first steps”

--USA

together different strands of activity

which are already occurring. But when this happens, we are not seeing a strategy, we are seeing a plan, or information and analysis.

So what makes for a great strategy? Well, there are some essential steps to follow. First of all, your organization needs to agree upon a way of doing things. What process will you follow? Second, identify the reason for your strategy. What is its purpose, what is it for? Third, take a step back and just figure out where you are. What is the museum doing RIGHT NOW? What’s the current reality? Fourth, envision your future reality. How would you like things to be? And finally, identify your organization’s drivers of change. These are the areas which will have the biggest impact on delivering your future reality.

I have put strategy first because I truly feel it is the most important. Interestingly, very few respondents in the Greener Museums survey directly identified a poorly crafted sustainability strategy or lack of strategy as one

of their major challenges; but, this sentiment always comes through. Some common statements which reflect a lack of strategy include:

- “We are taking a silo approach. No one knows what anyone else is doing.”
- “We can’t measure how we are performing.”
- “We don’t know what we are trying to achieve.”
- “We feel like our approach is bitty-- we’ve captured all of the easy stuff, now what?”

The other keys to sustainable museums are just as important as strategy-- but having a good sustainability strategy is the bit that is most often ignored, and is often the greatest unseen or unspoken barrier.

2. Is Your Board On Board?

If you don’t have support from the top of your organization, your attempts at sustainability are unlikely to go very far. This is not to say that grass-roots, bottom-up, employee-led activities do not have a place. In fact, these activities are very important. But the focus of these activities, at least at the beginning of a sustainability venture, should be to engage your top people and get their support. Without the support of top management, sustainability efforts are unlikely to get beyond recycling and switch-off

campaigns. Where will sign-off from

capital funding come from? The

approval for carbon-reduction

targets? How about

sustainability targets as a part of role descriptions?

None of this will happen

without senior

management

commitment, leaving

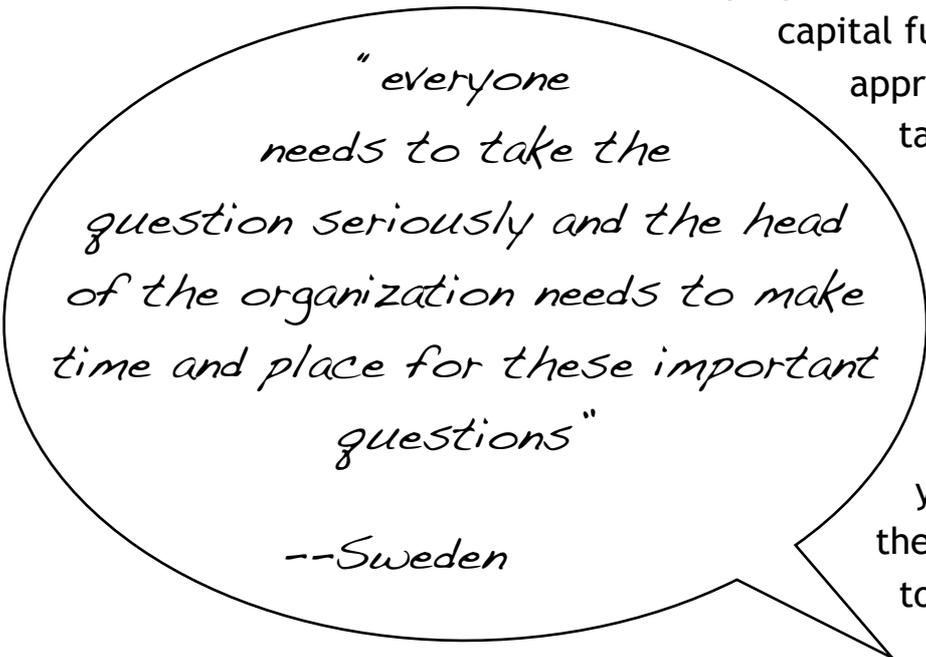
your organization stuck in

the slow lane when it comes

to sustainability. There are

strong lessons to be

learned from the



*“everyone
needs to take the
question seriously and the head
of the organization needs to make
time and place for these important
questions”*

--Sweden

corporate world when it comes to sustainability success. For all of the importance of grassroots campaigns (and I'm not denying their importance by any means) some of the companies which have taken their sustainability strategy the furthest have all started with what I like to call the "CEO Epiphany." Consider some examples:

Interface: In 1994, while preparing remarks on Interface's environmental plans for a company meeting, Interface founder and Chairman, Ray Anderson, read Paul Hawken's *The Ecology of Commerce* – an experience Ray has described as an epiphany, a "spear to the chest" awakening him to the urgent need to set a new course toward sustainability for Interface.

Marks and Spencer: Stuart Rose, who in his three years as CEO has overseen the revival of the UK clothing and food chain, had an epiphany after reading a book by Al Gore last summer. He decided to take his 100 most senior staff in the £7 billion company to see Gore's documentary on global warming, *An Inconvenient Truth*. The response to the film was enthusiastic, leading to calls for action.

Timberland: CEO Jeffrey Swartz says that "in a thunderbolt" he felt he had a new purpose, a true calling: helping those less fortunate than himself. "I expect deep engagement on the issue of not just what you make but how you make it; not just where you make it but under what circumstances; not just the environmental ethos but the environmental practices. I believe that there's a storm coming against the complacent who say good enough is good enough."

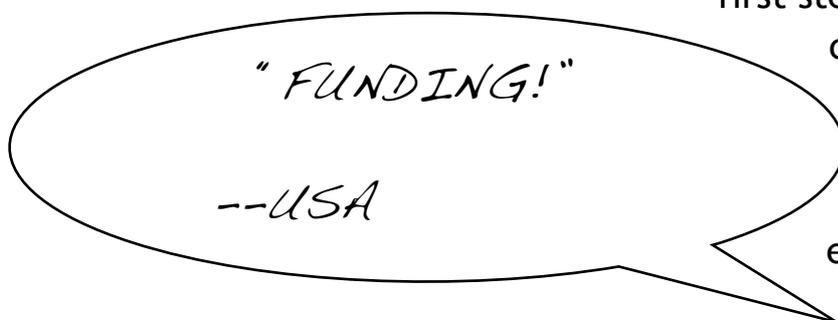
So does your Museum Director need to have a quasi-religious experience in order to "get it?" No. But they do have to get it. They have to realize that the cost-saving benefits, the opportunities to access funding streams, and the increasing reputational risks of not addressing sustainability are too important to ignore.

3. Spending Sensibly

Museums are worried about money. And sustainability often seems like an expensive proposition, doesn't it? Designing new environmentally-friendly buildings, finding capital funding, replacing lighting. Who will pay for it? This is one of the major challenges all organizations face. And yet, sustainability projects pay for themselves. The problem for most organizations is in making the case. I have found that the sustainability funding case can often be much easier than most people realize, given broad enough thinking about what sustainability is and the impact it has. In addition, there are many creative ways to fund large capital expenditure. And finally, there's evidence that organizations relying on government or grant funding might be forced to supply evidence of their sustainability practices in order to obtain grant funds. So that could mean that you DON'T get funded unless you can show that you're going green.

Let's begin with the question that usually comes up first: "how do we secure large amounts of capital funding for sustainability projects?" A good

first step is to ensure that your capital improvements budget and equipment maintenance plans require the most energy efficient equipment to be bought when it is replacement time.



But what if there is no money in the budget for improvements? You still have options. For these kinds of projects you can look for an ESCO partner. ESCO stands for Energy Services COmpany. More and more ESCOs are working with the public sector, and large museums also stand to gain from the kind of arrangements they can provide. The ESCO usually conducts a feasibility study, proposes a project designed to deliver energy savings over the status quo, installs the equipment, and runs the system during the payback period. The client usually does not lay out any initial capital, and

the savings in energy costs are used to pay back the investment, plus contribute to profit.

The second key element of funding is to realize that there is more to sustainability than the building and the boiler. You might look to strengthen your internal communication, develop leaders, work with your suppliers, or have an international impact. I've worked with clients whose sustainability funds have come from

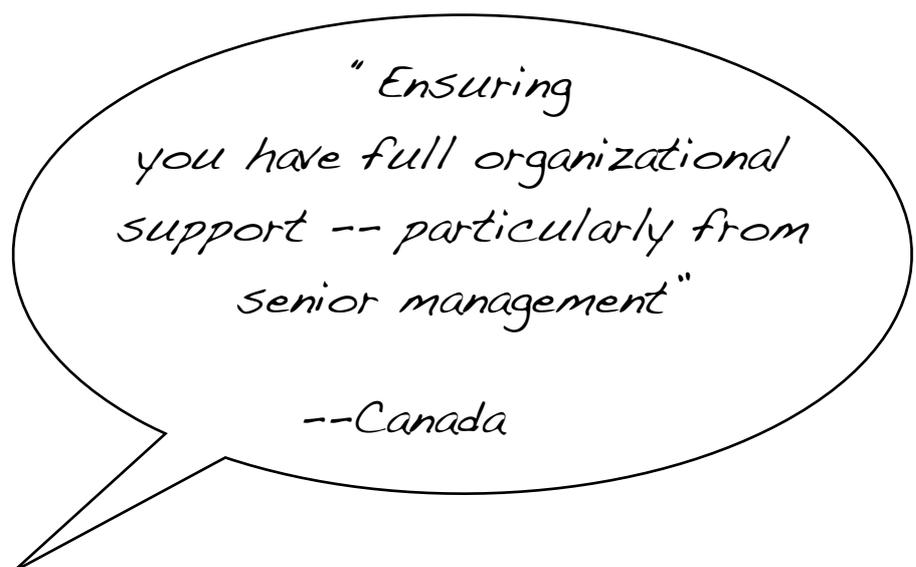
- HR and training
- a reserved sustainability fund
- communications and marketing
- external government funding

So it's time to start thinking creatively and move beyond your funding fears.

Ultimately, it won't be long before the tables are turned and you are asked to provide evidence of the organization's commitment to sustainability on funding applications. So it's important to start thinking about sustainability NOW, before it becomes a requirement.

4. Generating Influence

What does it mean to lead from within an organization? This is about becoming an advocate. It's more than just engaging staff (which I will discuss next). This is really about taking the bull by the horns and leading. Here, we are looking at



how to lead and influence when you, as an individual, have limited authority. The danger that many organizations face when starting their sustainability journey is that they may wind up in a situation where the

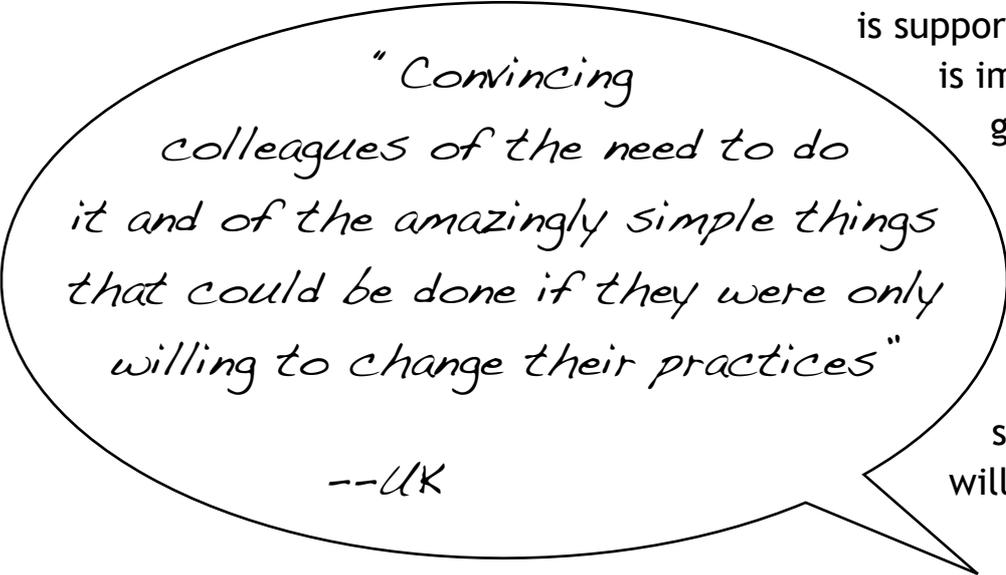
green team is run by a number of passionate, interested people who haven't managed to get the attention of the senior management. I had one client describe this situation to me as the "after-school club syndrome," meaning that everyone involved is having a great time, but the influence and the impact is just not there.

Effective green advocates must develop leadership capacity and skills. This is a huge topic upon which many books have already been written, so here I will offer up ten suggestions for developing leadership qualities:

- take risks, do something differently
- put yourself in the place of the people you are trying to lead
- ask for feedback
- give feedback, be open and honest
- identify a mentor, and ask if you can work with them
- borrow other people's ideas and test them out
- acknowledge and learn from your mistakes
- never assume
- be yourself
- remember what you do well, but don't get stuck in a rut

5. Engaging Staff Members

At this point you can recognize how key it is to have an organization-specific sustainability strategy which is supported by your board. It is important to have green advocates within the organization. But as important as this is, your museum sustainability strategy will go nowhere without the understanding,



"Convincing colleagues of the need to do it and of the amazingly simple things that could be done if they were only willing to change their practices"

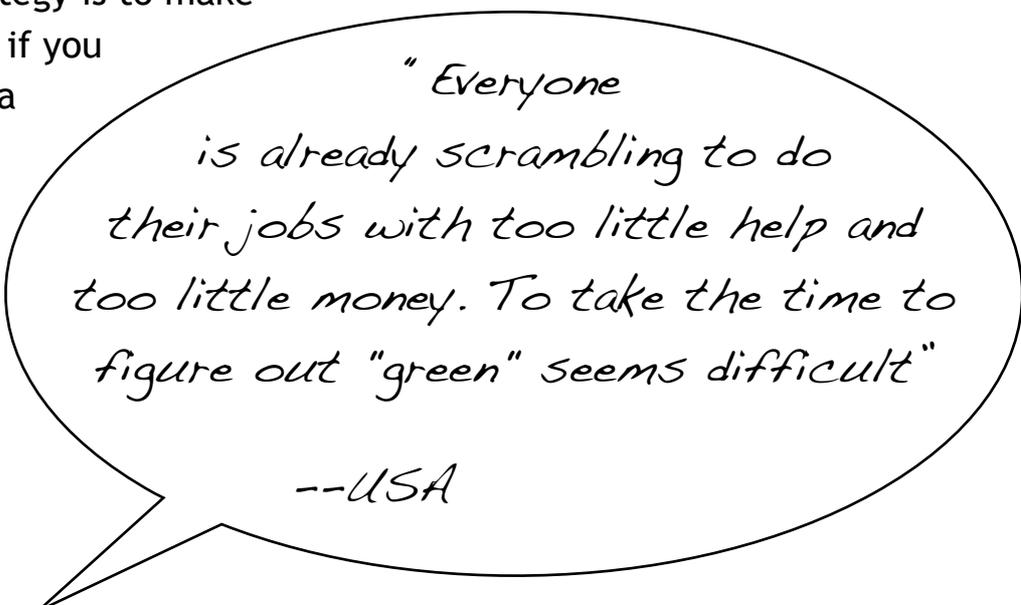
--UK

support, and actions of ALL staff members, not just the dedicated few. Staff need to understand not only why your museum is going green, but also their own individual contribution. By making it clear to an individual what their direct impact will be (or could be) you can create a team of advocates. And the more engrained sustainability becomes within everyone's job, the more engrained sustainability becomes within the organization, and the more likely it is that your strategy will be successful.

6. Finding the Time

Limited resources are a key problem for museums in every aspect of their work. Finding the time to go green can just seem like another "thing I have to do." Relying on passionate volunteers can mean that when things get busy, going green goes out the window. And when it's not anyone's clear responsibility, or even when it's "everyone's responsibility," it can wind up being no-one's responsibility. This is a real problem, and not just for museums. Without dedicated support, green efforts can wither on the vine. So what can you do if you don't have enough budget to support full-time staff? How do you create a sustainable museum with limited resources and time? One strategy is to make

sure that even if you are relying on a team of volunteers, you divvy up tasks so that that they are related to the job the individuals are already doing. For example, your



*" Everyone
is already scrambling to do
their jobs with too little help and
too little money. To take the time to
figure out "green" seems difficult"*

--USA

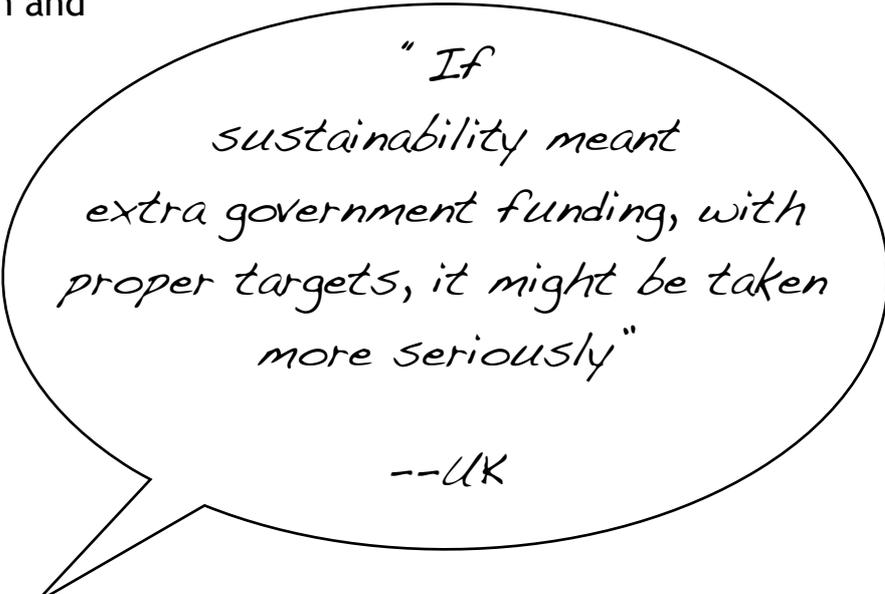
marketing/communications team might take ownership of a monthly green newsletter, your facilities management team could conduct an energy audit, and your education team could review your program for ways to

communicate sustainability to visitors. This way, the green aspect becomes part of the job, rather than an add-on. At the end of the day, all staff need to see how sustainability is linked to their role, what impact it has, and to have their green responsibilities linked to job descriptions and appraisals.

7. Targets, Policies and Measurement

How do you know if you are actually greening your museum? Well, without proper measurement, you won't. Without implementable policies, you won't achieve your strategy, and without targets, you won't have a pathway to achieve your vision. Interestingly, not many respondents mentioned any of these issues. The sustainability movement within museums is simply not advanced enough for many institutions to start thinking along these lines. However, instituting good policies,

data collection and measurement systems and reportable targets can be a great way to build internal and external momentum.



*" If
sustainability meant
extra government funding, with
proper targets, it might be taken
more seriously"*

--UK

An easy first step is to

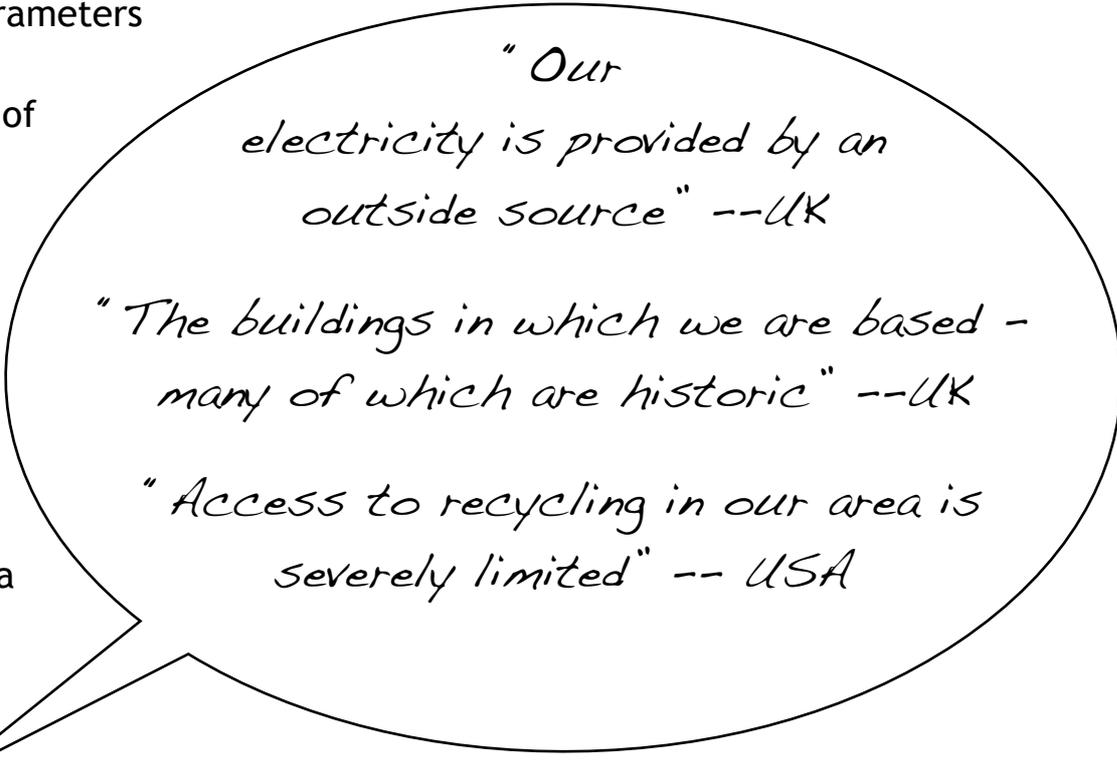
examine what practices are already in place, and how they can be made measurable. For example, a museum with a paper-reduction campaign could measure their achievement through paper purchases. This figure can be converted to cost-savings and tree or carbon savings. A target could be agreed for more paper savings. Simple policies could be implemented, such as double-sided default printing, paper-free Fridays, and adding "do you need to print this" signatures to e-mails. Measurements could be taken at regular intervals to examine the effectiveness of the campaign. A simple, effective campaign such as this can then generate enthusiasm and the desire to go green in other ways.

While this is a simple example of internal targets, museums cannot ignore government and even societal imposed targets. For instance, in the UK many large museums are now subject to the Carbon Reduction Commitment (a carbon cap and trade regulation) and all publicly funded bodies in the UK need to comply with the government's sustainable timber policy. In the US, numerous cities have passed carbon reduction goals for their cities. A big opportunity exists for museums to turn these legislative pressures into income generating opportunities, but only if they are taking the issue seriously first.

8. Technical Constraints, Technical Expertise

Many museums reported at least some element of technical constraint. This could include being located in a listed building, being run by a government agency, or not understanding the technical parameters

faced by the museum. All of these challenges require a museum to engage with an outside source. That might mean a landlord, a supplier, or even the historic preservation society. Regardless, these challenges are not insurmountable. Again, they do require a bit of creative thinking, and most likely, access to a network of sustainability practitioners (or at the very least individuals who are familiar with the technical constraints you are dealing with).



" Our electricity is provided by an outside source" --UK

" The buildings in which we are based - many of which are historic" --UK

" Access to recycling in our area is severely limited" -- USA

Developing an engagement strategy is a key first step. As an institution, identify what you want to change, what is not under your direct control, and who are the key external partners. Develop a list of questions for your external partner or supplier. Find out why they do things the way they do. Perhaps they have never been asked to change things. Perhaps their perception of the situation is out of date and everything needs to be revisited. The key action is to engage in a dialogue. You could find yourself with an outstanding sustainability advocate!

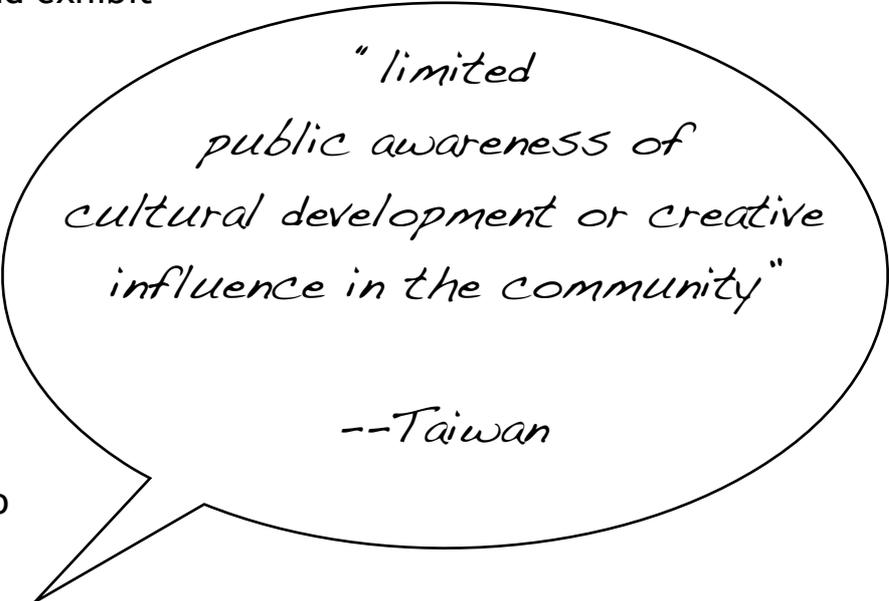
9. The Message Matters

The last key I'll discuss in this report is communication. It is so important and so often overlooked. A number of the previous sections touched on how to communicate internally, with your staff, green teams and board. But equally important is the message you state to the outside world, including to your visitors, community, suppliers, partners, and funders. Your communication strategy could include a webpage for press inquiries, a set of expectations for suppliers, and a business case for funders. It could include programming and exhibit ideas for visitors.

There are many opportunities that are available from greening the museum, but most museums aren't taking advantage yet. The key to getting this right is to make sure that your sustainability

communication does

not feel different from your regular communications. Green guidelines should be woven into supplier contracts, rather than existing separately. Program ideas around sustainability should fit with the mission and vision of the organization as a whole. Your business case for going green should be as sound as your business case for attracting new audiences.



*"limited
public awareness of
cultural development or creative
influence in the community"*

--Taiwan

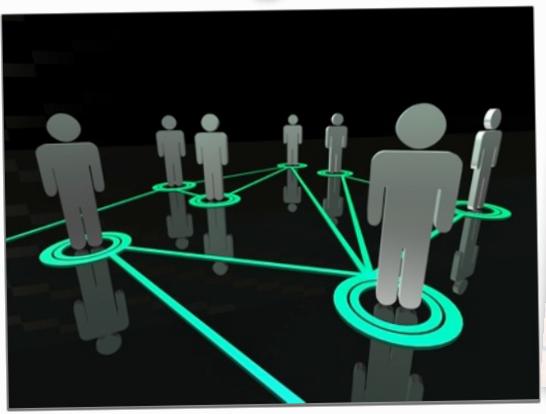
Take the first step



Envision what a greener museum might look like at my institution

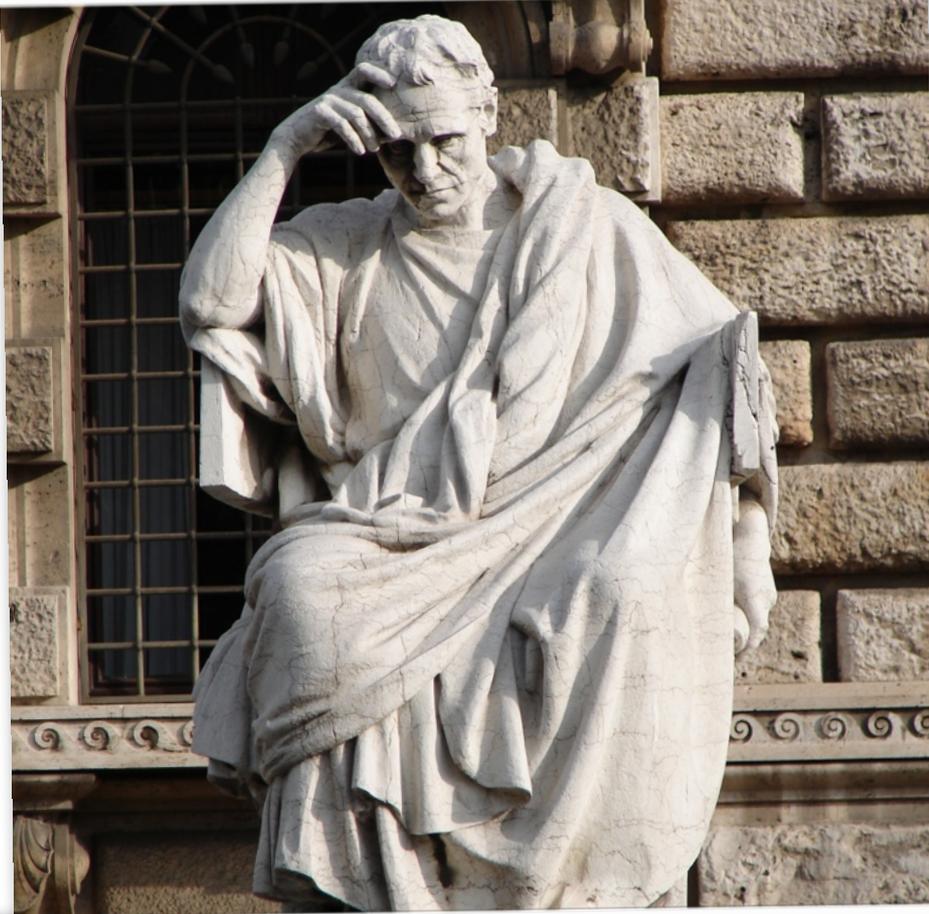


Take an inventory of all of the greening activities which are already happening



Develop an advocate at senior management level

Some final thoughts



Museums have a huge impact on individuals, often from a very early age. A 1999 study by Lake, Snell & Perry reported that American museums, on aggregate, average approximately 865 million visits per year or 2.3 million visits per day. And that's just in America! Culture-led regeneration is widely accepted as a way to stimulate development in decaying urban areas. Add to that the green economic opportunities just over the horizon, and you begin to wonder how museums can sit by and NOT take advantage of the possibilities that going green provides.

Don't be left out! Greener Museums will help you take the next step. Keep a look out for our newsletters, announcements, tools and resources.