

## ***It's time to give your leadership!***

*Leadership is needed, more than ever before. Our eyes need to be wide open to what is going on in the world. It's difficult, working as a change agent **within** an organisation, putting one's living and career on the line. Yet you are important: change happens from within organisations as well as from outside. It requires both courage and astuteness. I know from personal experience of working in your role in the City for eighteen years, later consulting to many organisations. Most organisations respect courage. To help you meet the challenge, here is my thinking, much of it rooted in my experience as an OD consultant.*

### ***We face the biggest crisis in recent human history.***

Recent floods in UK have brought it home to us. Every day there is more news about the potentially devastating effects of climate change. People everywhere will be affected, both business and people, especially the poor.

The Stern Review sets out the devastating consequences and warns that the global economic cost of climate change to business and governments could eventually reach 20% of world GDP if nothing is done

The scientific consensus is that environmental crisis is a man made, largely caused by CO<sub>2</sub> and methane. Even if, as some argue, it's mainly down to solar activity, we still face a crisis.

### ***It's more complex than climate change.***

The two big issues are:

- a) We are destroying the planet
- b) Poverty.

Degradation of the planet and poverty are inseparably linked. Climate change is a symptom of a broader and deeper malaise. The universe is trying to teach us a big lesson.

Here is the size of the problem:

- 1) ***We are consuming and destroying the planet's resources at a rapidly growing rate that is unsustainable.*** We're taking more than our fair share. London's "footprint" is huge: it requires 125 times its surface area to provide its needs. If everyone consumed like "Westerners", we would need three planets! Most countries aspire to this unsustainable way of life.

We face soil degradation, increasing pollution, and growing shortages of fossil fuels, food, land and water, already leading to conflicts. We have exported much our manufacturing with all the pollution problems, to poorer, developing countries, less able to operate sustainably.

- 2) **Sustainability also includes global economic and social justice.** We know the facts: millions living in poverty and starvation, afflicted with disease much of which could easily be prevented or cured. Millions of children die or their lives are stunted by lack of education and opportunity. Millions live in fear and insecurity generated by violence.

There can be no security without global economic justice and respect for difference. The "West" is largely unaware of its violent militarism and the effects of its huge military economy. It created the threat of nuclear annihilation. Unfair foreign policies create hostility and contribute to international "terrorism". These problems affect business and countries like ours in many ways.

**Growth isn't working** as a means of reducing poverty. Certainly some countries, like Singapore, have been lifted out of poverty. But in many cases, **not through free trade.** The idea that one size fits all flies in the face of economic history. In reducing poverty, rapid economic growth is unsustainable, inefficient and too slow. Between 1990 and 2001, for every \$100 of growth in the world's per person income, only \$0.60 contributed to reducing poverty below the \$1- a - day level. It is making a growing elite of super rich vastly richer, raising the incomes of middle classes and wealthier nations. (New Economics Foundation report, June, 2007).

It is also rapidly fuelling climate change, global warming and the degradation of the planet. It is creating problems everywhere, most of all in poor countries and poor areas like northern England.

**Britain is the 4<sup>th</sup> wealthiest economy.** The success of the UK economy comes at a cost. It is partly based on London's attractiveness as a place for billionaires to live and make money. The City's financial expertise includes tax avoidance and evasion, off shore tax havens and money laundering. The rich pay least proportionately. Disproportionate wealth contributes to the problem of unaffordable housing in London and similar problems in the countryside.

The happiest countries tend to have more equal income distribution. In the seventies, incomes were getting more equal; now the reverse is happening. Sourcing for "lowest cost" externalises and does not count social, health and environmental costs. UK ranks low on most measures of wellbeing. Social mobility in Britain is worse than other advanced countries and declining.

### **The challenge.**

**Reversing climate change** We need to cut CO2 emissions, largely resulting from using fossil fuels, to a sustainable world average of 3 tonnes per person. Yet, emissions are rapidly rising. Wealthy countries pollute most; poor countries least. People in UK and EU account for 12.5 tonnes (average) greenhouse gases per year and rising; US and Canada some 20; China 4;

India 2 and sub Saharan Africa less than one. Individuals are **directly** responsible for 44% of CO2 emissions – indirectly far more (Goodall, C, 2007).

EU and UK, need an 80% reduction, some argue 90%. Rich countries have the capability and technological skills. Seen by other nations to have created the problem, we need to set an example and help poorer nations. It's our turn to help the world.

**We all need to act decisively and urgently.** The momentum is gathering. Business really is responding and a huge amount of change is going on. But it is not happening fast enough. Government strategy is not joined up. People, companies and government are taking steps, but too little, too slowly to avoid catastrophe. UK government schemes are having too little impact. Government needs to set an example, provide enabling legislation and remove obstacles, reward the sustainable and make it affordable for everyone penalise the unsustainable, nurture nascent technology and help make "going green" profitable. We can't wait for or blame others. Everyone has to take personal responsibility and use their purchasing and "people" power.

Businesses that respond to the challenge and growing customer awareness can enhance profitability and competitive position.

**A model for sustainable businesses is Interface**, a worldwide company producing floor coverings, fabrics for airliner seats, speciality chemicals and interior architectural products. Interface's principle is "*do well by doing good*," says, septuagenarian, Ray Anderson, Chairman and founder of Interface. Companies like this are a minority but their number is growing, often from small beginnings. Sustainability is at the heart of Interface. Interface aims for a "zero footprint" and is more than half way there (Interface). It has helped create a host of sustainable companies in its supply chain.

### **Why are we so slow to respond to this crisis?**

Why do years of successive summits, Kyoto, G8 meetings, concerts, Live Aid and Live Earth, produce so little action? Part of the answer is inertia, fear of change and vested interests. Complex changes take time to emerge.

**It's the system! An unsustainable economic system and its underlying values** is at the root of the crisis. It is little use addressing *symptoms*, as the history of New Labour demonstrates. Instead we need to see the "whole system" and identify the underlying issues. We are part of a **living system**, an interacting relationship between the planet and all living things on it, which cannot be controlled like a machine. Living systems hit back hard if not respected, as climate change and "*the war on terror*" show.

We are caught in an unsustainable system driven by powerful elites; large corporations; unrepresentative global institutions (World Bank, World Trade Organisation and IMF) too much influenced by big business; militarism and a military economy; uncritical belief in globalisation as the way to end poverty and GDP as the measure of progress.

***We need a new economic system and reformed global institutions,*** focussed on the key worldwide priorities: protecting the planet; eliminating poverty and violence; meeting human needs; offering meaningful work and balanced lives for everyone. It requires ***fair***, not ***free, trade*** and the freedom of each country, with support from richer ones, to develop its own unique way - not having free trade and privatisation imposed on it before developing its own agriculture and industries.

***It may seem a daunting but*** we created the system and we can change it.

***What we need to do***

***We need to transform the way we live.*** We need a total change of awareness and consciousness. It means consuming less - that does not mean fewer jobs – just different ones; minimising use of non-renewable and non-biodegradable resources; avoiding toxic substances and products that cannot be recycled (UPVC and nuclear power use toxic processes and produce non-biodegradable waste). Obviously, we need to make flexible, balanced decisions.

***Principles for sustainability:***

- ***Reduce***
- ***Reuse***
- ***Recycle***
- ***Repair***

***A prudent "Green" strategy makes money,*** regardless of ethics. Interface, the international carpet company, is quoted above. Another commercial example is Sherwood Energy Village, created on a former colliery site, providing a site for industry, housing, recreation and education. It exemplifies energy efficiency, promotion of renewable energy and biodiversity in all developments. There are plenty more, large and small.

There are five spheres in which we need to work: in ***ourselves***, the source from which change begins; our ***family and home***; our ***community***; our ***workplace***; the ***world***.

***How can trainers as catalysts, make change happen?***

***What we need to do - specifically.***

- 1) First, be the change.** Change begins within and in your own home. Decide who you are; what really matters to you, your values and purpose. Why are you on this earth? Follow your energy and do what you feel passionate about. Prioritise what is most important to you. Own up to your deficiencies and take responsibility for them.

- 2) **Lead transformation in your workplace.** This means being a change agent.
- 3) **Finally, be a global citizen!** Lobby. Press for local, national and global change Use your purchasing power. Play a part in your community. It is your responsibility to have your eyes wide open and be fully informed.

**Here is an approach that works.** It applies to your workplace but equally in your community, including the world.

**Getting sustainability it into the heart of your workplace and society**

- **Prepare the ground for change**
- **Spread a philosophy of seeing opportunities in the big issues**
- **Be a trustworthy mentor.** Make friendships amongst leaders; get alongside the CEO; listen to people; ask them how they would like things to be; how they think the business is helping and where it is doing harm.
- **Work with the energy for change, “crusading forces” - *also* listen to and respect “restraining forces.”**
- **Facilitate co-creation.** Bring key stakeholders together, the full diversity of the system. Challenge them to think it through. Help them: identify the big issues; grasp the opportunities; study what’s working inside the organisation and elsewhere; articulate inspiring vision and outcomes; examine and make the case; and implement successful strategies for change.
- **Develop leaders of leaders.**
- **Help people review,** evaluate and learn from what works, not working and what needs to be done differently. Celebration, giving and receiving appreciation, fuels energy and recovery from setbacks and learning.
- **Sustain yourself.** Take inspiration from good models. Allow time to reflect and renew. Get yourself friends *who will tell you the truth* – even if you may not like it!

**Go radical.** Here are some suggested campaigns to support if you want to help change the system and save the planet - Google for websites:

1. **Agriculture, not agribusiness** (Soil Association, Garden Organic).
2. **Company law reform** to embrace the interests the environment and society as a whole (Centre for Tomorrow’s Company, World Development Movement).
3. **Ending poverty - Global trade - a radically new framework.** (Christian Aid, Oxfam)
4. **Localisation,** power to local communities, local healthy food, restoring high streets and communities. (New Economics Foundation, Local Works, Ecologist, Transition Towns)
5. **Reforming democracy** giving more power to local communities, giving greater power to parliament to prevent the executive withholding information and over-riding the wishes of citizens – going to war, nuclear. (Pressure Works, New Politics Network’s “*Power to the People*”, WriteToThem.com)

6. **Sustainable buildings, cities, communities and transportation.** (Friends of the Earth, Herbert Girardet's *CitiesPeoplePlanet - Liveable Cities for a Sustainable World* and Transport 2000).
7. **New Economics:** (New Economics Foundation, James Robertson – *working for a sane alternative*).
8. **Violence** - resolving conflict non-violently (Oxfam, CND, Greenpeace).

**To conclude:**

1. "Be the change" – get your own "house" in order.
2. See the crisis as an opportunity and grasp it.
3. Make your own life sustainable – that includes YOU – not exhausting yourself or the planet!
4. Reduce, reuse, recycle, repair.
5. Reduce your "footprint"
6. Buy sustainable goods; choose sustainable, ethical suppliers or educate them.
7. Aim to make your business and home carbon neutral.
8. Work in your community.
9. Be well informed and fully aware - read the Ecologist, George Montbiot and look at the NEF – use the www.
10. Lobby for system change and influence others.

**References and further reading.**

Stern Review, [www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/independent\\_reviews/stern\\_review\\_economics\\_climate\\_change/sternreview\\_summary.cfm](http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/independent_reviews/stern_review_economics_climate_change/sternreview_summary.cfm)  
 Sherwood Energy Village [www.sev.org.uk/about-us/energy-village-concept](http://www.sev.org.uk/about-us/energy-village-concept)  
 Goodall, C 2007, *How to live a low-carbon life*, Earthscan.  
 Montbiot, 2006, *Heat, how to stop the planet burning*, Allen Lane.  
 NEF report, *Growth isn't working*, June, 2007

**Useful sources of help**

- **ACORN** - <http://www.iema.net/acorn> (first steps to an environmental management system)
- **Carbon Trust** - energy and carbon - [www.carbontrust.co.uk](http://www.carbontrust.co.uk)
- **Envirowise** - waste and water - <http://www.envirowise.gov.uk/>
- **Friends of the Earth** <http://www.foe.co.uk>
- **Getting your house in order**  
[http://www.imc.co.uk/news/professional\\_consultancy\\_article.php?item\\_id=654&issue=18](http://www.imc.co.uk/news/professional_consultancy_article.php?item_id=654&issue=18) (scroll down to the bit on 'getting your house in order').
- **Good Corporation** - wider than just environment, an audit-type assessment - <http://www.goodcorporation.com/>

**More sources** on sustainability and change, in **Writings** at [www.bruce-nixon.com](http://www.bruce-nixon.com)

Bruce Nixon is a veteran change agent and author. His latest book ***"Living System – Making sense of sustainability", forewords by Anita Roddick and Meg Wheatley***, is published by Management Books 2000. Readers

discount from: tel 01285-771441/2; e-mail: [mb2000@btconnect.com](mailto:mb2000@btconnect.com); web: [www.mb2000.com](http://www.mb2000.com) or bookshops and [www.amazon.co.uk](http://www.amazon.co.uk)

---

**BCN 30-7-07**