



Passion to Action: The First Step toward Sustainability

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One drop. One pound of CO2. One kilowatt. One tree saved. Every journey on the path of sustainability starts with that first step. Since Earth Day is today, corporate social responsibility is top of mind of many businesses. So how does an organization take a first step to positively shape the environment and community? The key is to understand the opportunities and passion of your people, and then turn that passion into action. To do that, you need to understand what your organization cares about, what goals you're trying to achieve and how a focus on environmental sustainability can help guide your steps.

Over the past decade, LoyaltyOne has taken a number of steps toward more sustainable operations, an environmentally-conscious workplace and an engaged workforce. From the first SMART car for our sustainable fleet, to the adoption of LEED®-certified buildings, environmental sustainability has been integrated into the way we do business. How did this all start? From a small passionate group of associates who were looking for a way to make LoyaltyOne a 'greener' company. They started with small steps such as getting rid of Styrofoam cups and encouraging their colleagues to turn off the lights when leaving a room. Catching the attention of our CEO, their passion was rewarded with a formalized commitment to integrate environmental sustainability into the company's core business practices.

So how do you connect the passion of your employees to positive environmental actions?

First, **create a culture of openness and collaboration**. Fostering discussion will allow you to get at the heart of what really matters to your people. By creating a forum for two-way discussion, your employees will be able to tell you where the opportunities to improve exist. Listen carefully to their input.

Second, **clearly communicate the goals and business objectives for your company**. What direction are you trying to head toward? What are the expectations? What are the challenges? These goals in many ways are not mutually exclusive from sustainability. If these are properly communicated and understood, it will be much easier for employees to see how environmental performance can be achieved in unison with the overarching business objectives.

Finally, **show support for environmental initiatives**. Support isn't always in the form of dollars or budget, although that is an important component for success. Simply taking a leadership stance to set the tone for the company is even more critical. People will follow a passionate leader they believe in and who lives and breathes the values they're trying to instill in the organization. Your employees will follow you and adopt the values you champion. Set an example that will inspire them.

This is certainly a simplified portrayal of what can be a complex process but the fundamentals remain the same. With Earth Day, many people, organizations and nations will be celebrating a day dedicated to being a bit more 'green' for a 24-hour period. No matter where you are on the path to sustainability, this is a great time for self-reflection and to ask yourself 'what first steps have we taken and where are we going?' Even if the steps are few and far between, think about ways to better understand the passions of your people, stakeholders and community and turn that passion into a united will that results in positive actions.

While first steps can sometimes be challenging, trust the passion and commitment of your employees. Martin Luther King Jr. once said, "Faith is taking the first step even when you don't see the whole staircase."

As a result of some associates at LoyaltyOne taking those first small steps towards environmental sustainability, the company has been repeatedly recognized as one of the 50 Best Employers in Canada, as well as a Top Green Employer in Canada.

To learn more about LoyaltyOne's commitment to the environment and community, please visit: <https://www.loyalty.com/about-us/corporate-responsibility.html>.

Have a great Earth Day.
