



**2010 NHBSR Spring Conference World Café
May 24, 2010**

At NHBSR's 2010 Spring Conference, New Directions Collaborative facilitated a World Café conversation where dozens of small groups engaged in conversations around some key questions. After each conversation, participants wrote down key themes they heard. A large-group conversation at the end "harvested" the most inspiring ideas. This document is a compilation of the key themes that came up often in the notes and harvest conversation.

Key Themes from the "Harvest" Conversation

- Need to engage small businesses around sustainability.
- Mentoring: people need it to find where to begin. Companies can give it to each other.
- We're focused on what's germane to our own businesses. Need to look beyond it, to household and govt., too.
- Bring our messages to community that we care about environment, etc. so we know we have that in common.
- Each person in organization should be involved and heard. Each person should do something, and know it makes a difference. Being an example has a big effect. One person can make a difference.
- NHBSR should organize a one-day service learning event in community.
- Be the kind of business you want to see. Don't be morally judgmental.
- It's not me, it's all of us. "Coopetition". Be willing to share good ideas with others. Learn from clients about good behaviors and replicate them.
- HR is underrepresented here today. They play a big role with change efforts.
- Be the rudder not the boat. Guide, but don't take on too much yourself.
- People are what's important in an organization.
- Be a fifth grader. The ones that are appalled when recycled plastic bottles are thrown in the trash, and get their parents to change.
- Transparency is powerful. So is making your sustainability goals clear. NHBSR should make sustainability reports open. It will be a model.
- Business people should be engaged in public policy.
- Deal with reality that we're in a consumer society with a profit motivation. Use it. Every dollar should vote for sustainability, local, organic. We can change the world by doing so.

Reactions to the World Café Process

- Fun.
- Met more people and had deeper conversations than would have normally.
- Heard different viewpoints than she would have otherwise.
- Liked the talking sticks!



Key Themes from Each Round of Conversation (drawn from the notes)

What Brought You Here?

While people came from distinct backgrounds and professional work they shared a common interest in social responsibility and social justice. The common themes about what brought people to NHBSR and this event included:

- Passion for doing the right thing, aligning actions with values, making a difference and finding ways to give back. The importance of meaning, joy and connection at work. A realization that business has a responsibility beyond financial results. A desire to incorporate social responsibility practices into their work
- Question of “what kind of company do I want to work in?” Employees are truly inspired by employers who care about them and the environment.
- Interest in learning, including accessing the overall awareness of sustainable practices from the group, hearing what is already in place and working, and getting new CSR ideas.
- Interest in networking and meeting diverse people.
- Concern for my children’s future.
- Interest in livable wages - economic development and improvement.
- Outreach by Molly or another connection to NHBSR.

What is the most inspiring example of socially responsible business practices you have participated in or learned about?

“Soil is to a farm as people are to an organization.”

Specific Examples:

- Timberland has recommends/encourages community service, providing each employee with 40 hours of annual paid time off to work on service projects in their communities. Sabbaticals are part of the program.
- The Life is good Kids Foundation raises funds from the public via 18 fundraising festivals conducted by Life is good, Inc. in 13 states. 100% of the money raised goes to non-profit organizations supporting children in need, including Project Joy.
- Individual ideas can have a big impact, e.g., UNH eliminated cafeteria trays – reducing water use in washing, food waste, and cost.
- Vermont and Maryland have a legal option for companies to become a B-Corp. (Corporation exists for broader purposes than financial and cannot be sued for decisions not based on short-term profits.) (<http://www.bcorporation.net/about>)
- Using your good works as a marketing tool as well as an education tool, e.g., Ben & Jerry’s.
- Resident owned communities – ROC USA helps residents buy their manufactured home communities or “mobile home parks” from private community owners.
- Green Mountain Coffee Roasters – every employee gets 40 hours of education or training. Work diversity with farmers growing coffee with community support
- A company donates 5% of billings to the non-profit of the customer’s choice.
- Hannaford –LEED platinum store, Augusta, ME - 1st LEED certified supermarket store (only one in the country). Everything is designed to be LEED certifiable gold going forward.



- Share our Strength Hannaford: Donate food, nutrition training, cooking training
- Heartland Health Center created public service announcements around health issues in Missouri.
- Stonyfield employees picking up trash on the road near the plant – they did not do it by mandate from management, but because it was the right thing to do (and the road was messy).
- C&S makes major donations to civic causes, e.g., United Way.
- Grappone – collision center has adopted green practices, such as recycling metal and plastic bumpers and using less toxic paints.
- Nike Green Exchange (<http://greenxchange.force.com/vGXhome>) – “Helps bring the network efficiencies of open innovation to solving global problems of sustainability.” Example of the “power of partnerships” – driving innovation through sharing.
- 7th Generation – Partnered with WAGES –provides funding to help their work in building worker-owned green businesses that provide employment for low-income women. <http://wagescooperatives.org/>
- NH Community Loan Fund – empower low-income people to become financially responsible
- Program with kids BY kids to solve kids’ problem – youth group
- Kiva.org – global microfinance; benefits individuals and community best. Small investments turn into big thing
- “Climate Counts” rates corporate climate actions to give consumers better information.
- Tom’s of Maine – value centric

Other Innovative Practices:

- Offer incentives for employees that provide energy saving ideas (50% of savings annually up to set amount)
- Time-sharing for employees (increase family time) - Time-share, flex time, 40 to work week. 9/80 workweek – Work more hours to take every other Friday off. Reduces commuting and gives employees a week day off.
- Green idea – Who do you do business with? Is it important for you to work with green vendors?
- Organization-wide community service project
- Volunteer fair
- 70% cost to company/environment from telecommuting
- Planet Bike – sells bike supplies and 25% of profits donated to cycling causes



General Themes/Lessons in Doing CSR Well

Engaging Employees

- More and more employees LIKE to work for socially responsible companies AND customers are wanting it. Employees seeking companies that are more environmentally involved. A strong moral compass is inspiring and motivating.
- It's important for the energy for CSR initiatives to come from both the bottom and top. Energy from top and bottom fusing to make a difference
- Raise awareness and inspire employees by connecting CSR to what employees care about in their job. Connection to something that informs who they are.
- Personal stories and emotion move us. Stories that revive the human spirit and where people achieve or do what they never thought they could.
- Get the internal culture right – encourage employee volunteering and treat employees well. Bring out the best – equal work atmosphere.
- The need to organize and carry out this work as “we” – and not several hundred “me’s.”
- Authenticity is key – principles of social responsibility can't be forced.
- Engaging employers to be the advocates in your community
- Treat employees well:
 - Flexibility built on trust
 - Create something more human.
 - Commitment to purpose
 - Internal culture has to be same as external wants
 - Treat employees like to want them to act
 - Importance of those at top to uphold it
 - Happier employees, more socially involved

Storytelling

- Storytelling to share info about exemplary CSR and environmental corporations
- Inspiring examples of best practices
- Power of authenticity, storytelling, full disclosure, leaving the world a better place
- How it empowers the people who embrace new challenges to keep fighting
- How to make a powerful difference
- Conferences/conversations with others interested in this cause (variety of organizations)
- Finding a common language to get things done
- Power of stories → finding a common language – what does it take to change things?
- Power of collaboration → convene people more often to share ideas and inspire and motivate people

Implementation Approaches/Strategies

- Rate of change in sustainability related to action – solutions must be action-oriented. Inspires others to take on these missions and brings awareness to everyone in the business.
- Usage of standards such as ISO 14001 can be as much for internal focus and organization as getting the certification.
- Co-opetition – An approach where a network of stakeholders co-operate and compete to create maximum value, versus solely “winner take all.”
- Support those going against the norm, not doing business as usual



- Share ideas, e.g., Green Drinks, and get educated
- Ask your employees
- Life cycle analysis
- Citizen versus government driven
- Do it, do it big, start with the youth
- Be the rudder, not the boat – inspire, provide direction, don't take on too much yourself.
- Inspire corporate culture

CSR Challenges

- Need to make money in order to promote community support to be green. Need to be practical and prudent on one hand in order to be in business tomorrow, but also striving for improvement, better, closer to sustainability
- CSR is traditional practice in small companies though as companies grow, they lose focus on these ideas. We've lost CSR/traditional practices with growth to large corporations. How a big company can hang onto traditional values – they tend to focus on short term bottom line?
- Challenges to balance long versus short term – 50 year perspective versus quarterly returns – and broad versus narrow – multiple stakeholders versus stockholders.
- It takes a crisis to get a real change. Latent values turn into life-changing events
- “Volun-told” – you are volunteered for something and ‘told’ you have to do it.
- A diversity of employees is necessary to move towards sustainability.
- Investing in HR – how to energize/re-energize and give the workforce opportunities to grow
- How to focus giving for smaller businesses
- Buying/sourcing local (educate consumers)
- Cultivate demand by educating consumers
- How do you get the word out?
- Generational shift. Cannot change some minds.
- Mergers/acquisitions and how difficult to retain values and culture
- Leader/CEO needs to be onboard and driving it

Personal values/focus

- Being true to yourself
- Values driven (personal)
- Having integrity and intrinsic drive to make personal commitment a reality in professional life
- Passion to step out... put it on the line... do the right thing based on your values
- Passion to make things better
- Run it the way you want it to be
- Hearing about more personal contributions and how small suggestions in large groups can still make a big difference



Looking forward, what is the most powerful way that you and we, as the NHBSR community, can act to make a difference?

Looking Forward for Self

- Share triumphs and failure.
- Be a resource and an expert, mentor.
- Inspire companies to do more with awareness, inspire clients to make the move and talk/be proud/advocate the message
- Personal action – small can have a big impact. Leverage your opinion with your purchase – vote with your \$. Vote for sustainability with your voices in the marketplace. Vote with your dollar. Be the 5th grader that enlists change – recycle the plastic bottle
- Get more people involved:
 - Next step needs to be looking beyond yourself/get more people involved (create action)
 - Publicize on your business cards
 - Give everyone in a group the chance to make suggestions
 - Support each other – help each other to succeed
 - Recruit more likeminded people (new organizations in the movement)
- Connecting with like minded people/companies
- Social justice/advance real change
- Increase transparency
- 1 volunteer day per quarter

Looking Forward for Company

- Call staff meeting on sustainability
- Take ideas learned today back to a superior who is already interested
- Get someone in sustainability appointed to sustainability officer
- Media – marketing message.. get it out there! Share stories. 1000 points of light! Be one!
- Be an example of the type of business you want to be, be bold enough to exemplify the SR practices you want to see
- Collaborations between organizations that might not otherwise have done so in party (corporations and NGOs, military and NGOs, etc)
- Emphasize fact that CSR/sustainability pervades all functions of organizations (HR, etc)
- Communication a moral and business-case for CSR, but not in a way that comes across as morally judgmental – communicate it as the practical move that just makes sense from a business, environmental and social perspective
- Focus on internal issues (pay for wages/benefits, etc)



Looking forward, what is the most powerful way that you and we, as the NHBSR community, can act to make a difference?

Be the rudder, not the boat - -- don't change the world by yourself -- enlist others to help

Broad spectrum of people and industries that the topic covers - still all have similar challenges

Enable Members to Help & Connect with Other Members – Be the “Convener” Connecting People

- Small business initiative:
 - Help small businesses adopt CSR practices
 - Educate small businesses in why they should be moving in this direction eg: mandates from customers re: compliance – payback – work force stability
 - NHBSR could identify impractical changes for small companies
- Mentor program (e.g., Big Brother Big Sister program for larger company to help smaller companies with CSR initiatives).
- NHBSR can be “convener” to get people together more consistently:
 - People connection – a yearning for connection others – “contagious” positive energy, common feeling. People feel good about environmental/social efforts. Social capital.
 - Affinity groups - small scale and regional; Personal – locale, group – larger group
 - Use more 1:1 face time – beyond social media to engage people and drive change → this is what businesses large and small are doing
 - Common forum to exchange ideas and post questions – example: website or Facebook
 - Service learning project
 - Share best practices- take what has worked. Build and trade ideas and act upon them.
- Provide ways to bring the ideas generated at conferences back to our employees to help them help themselves and our companies innovate
- “Centralized rating/guidelines” especially for small businesses (use NHBSR self-assessment tool)
- Do we need so many oversight groups? So much info – overwhelmed

Communicate and Spread the Message

- Spread the word – evangelize the message. Support with idea sharing, providing many opportunities for story telling internally with NHBSR and externally in PR (like NPR features):
 - Get more stories out. Small snippets – propagate – respect time. Video clips.
 - Get NHBSR into press – letters to the editor, features of businesses in NH doing unique things and working to tell “our” stories
 - Show to everyone that we care, as they care
- More actively and forceful promote the bottom line impact examples to non-NHBSR members, i.e., get them to the table
- Common marketing display to send message about CSR



- Give voice to the issues = share experiences and successes, and business case for doing it. Powerful – power in numbers, work through groups, use social networking technology and many voices, many media.
- Inspiring: stories of community coming together and benefiting others
- How do we convey the “whys?”

Galvanize Action around Bold Goals – Lead by Example

- Really big bold goal – “Revolutionizing the whole state” – e.g., Keene 20-20, goal to be healthiest town in NH by 2020
- Create a concrete goal for each company or BSR overall to create a rallying point (Power in publicizing goals)
- Less talk, more action!
- Power in numbers, be a voice (to demand accountability), share ideas, use social networking
- Power of transparency i.e., goals
- Leadership (Board/Staff) provide goal and vision for an initiative
- Platform for creating value and doing the right thing

Expand the Membership

- Need to achieve critical mass for NHBSR new members - more members in geographic diverse areas
- Have a sustainability intern for each member (driven by each member)
- Educate others, ask others to join - find ways to share this with peers and colleagues
- Expand participation by HR
- Would be great for more non-profits to attend BSR. Notion that non-profit organizations may not have an understanding of how social and environmental responsibility impacts bottom line.

Engage in Public Policy

- Get business people engaged in public policy
- New legal structure in VT & MD - BCorp

Workshops/Educational Programming:

- Environmental issues
- CSR/Sustainability reporting
- Create internships for BSR companies
- Education with integrated environmental focus
- Offer the tools
- Being a resource – share stories
- Education for employees who don’t have a personal interest in CSR initiatives to understand the value to the company

Small is good... Small can do it - can have big impact