

ENGINEERING A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

BY ELI KANE OF CH2M GORE & STORRIE LIMITED



Our Sustainability Journey Begins...

On July 5th, 2000, an eager band of 25 CH2M Gore & Storrie Limited (CG&S) staff headed north of Toronto to partake in a groundbreaking event in CG&S history. Making their way through the beautiful green countryside of Orangeville, Ontario, participants traveled to attend the CG&S 1st National Sustainable Development Training Workshop. CG&S is the Canadian arm of the Denver-based CH2M HILL family of companies, the world's largest environmental engineering firm, generating approximately \$2.2 billion USD a year in revenues.

This national workshop was conceived and created through the leadership of CG&S President Nick Sonntag, a recognized global leader in sustainable development. The workshop was organized and facilitated by a core faculty of individuals, which included Dr. Brian Natrass and Mary Altomare Natrass, Directors of Strategic Organizational Learning of TNS/US; George Greene, Stratos Inc. President; Stephanie Foster, CG&S Director of Strategic Initiatives and International Business Development; John VanDeusen, CH2M HILL Senior Management Consultant; and Eli Kane, CG&S Sustainable Development Practice Coordinator. Special thanks is extended to the workshop guest speakers, Dr. Michael D. Bertolucci, CEO and President of Interface Research Corporation, and Dr. Bryan Smith, President of Innovation Associates of Canada.

The energy, intelligence, and knowledge that each guest speaker brought to the workshop helped generate an enthusiastic, inspiring and fun learning environment. The workshop presented the concept of sustainable development through several practical business case examples of corporations using The Natural Step sustainability framework, including the inspiring story of Interface, Inc. told by Dr. Michael Bertolucci.

Dr. Brian Natrass and Mary Altomare Natrass presented The Natural Step framework and shared corporate examples of its use from their research. As members of a global engineering firm, all participants from CG&S appreciated the scientific foundation of the TNS framework. It was very useful to establish a common understanding among the participants about the essential principles of sustainable development.

Participants were then challenged to apply The Natural Step's four system conditions to their everyday work at CG&S. This illustrated the applicability of sustainable development as an innovative context in which engineers can appreciate their roles as individuals in society, and more importantly, as individuals within the earth's natural ecosystem.

With a firm grasp of sustainable development, the participants were then mobilized into four cross-functional work groups comprising representatives of all business groups, each assigned with a specific task to complete.

The Regional Management Team

The first group, being the Canadian Regional Management Team (RMT), led by CG&S President Nick Sonntag, developed a vision and deliberated on a set of guiding sustainable development principles for CG&S, which are intended to be incorporated as the basis for everything CG&S does as a company.

Greening Our Internal Operations

The second group worked on revising the first draft of the "CG&S Guide to a Sustainable Work Environment" as a first step towards a Canadian Region (CNR)-wide program to create a healthy, comfortable, enjoyable, and productive work environment at every office building. The purpose of this document is to outline the objectives and suggest different ways to engage all employees throughout CNR in various "green initiatives" that will help integrate the firm's new sustainable development principles into all internal operations.

Marketing and Planning

The third group focused on how integrating the principles of sustainable development into the business would affect the way it approaches business development, marketing and planning, and explored how it can work with our present and future clients to illustrate potential new business opportunities for CG&S.



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Operations & Project Delivery

The fourth group took on a similar exercise, but focussed on the project delivery and implementation aspects of the business. They were specifically asked to look at the upcoming Toronto Waterfront Revitalization project as a potential sustainable development project for the firm. The group developed a presentation highlighting the potential areas of the project where the sustainable development principles could be integrated as a value-adding element.

Sustainable Development Workshop

Outcomes

From the success of the sustainable development training workshop, certain products emerged for CG&S to build on. The first, and most important, are the guiding sustainable development principles and objectives composed by the Regional Management Team. The second outcome was the identification of three key functional working groups focused in the areas of 1) greening the company's internal operations, 2) marketing and planning, and 3) operations and project delivery. Within the above functional areas, learning networks are to be developed across Canada to facilitate a higher rate of sustainable development information sharing, continuous learning, and cooperative sustainable development activity among all employees of CG&S.

Next Steps for CG&S

The planning for future CG&S SD training workshops at various office locations across Canada has already begun! The challenge of running future workshops will be to combine sustainable development learning with opportunities to validate and comment on progress made at the first workshop. Progress includes the Regional Management Team Guiding Principles for Sustainable Development at CG&S, and providing inputs to the three Learning Networks on project delivery, marketing and planning, and internal operations. The goal is to reach as many staff as possible by year's end.

At a minimum, the company will engage in sustainable development workshops to be held in Toronto, Kitchener-Waterloo, and Calgary this fall with Dr. Brian Natrass and Mary Altomare Natrass of TNS/US working closely with Stephanie Foster, CG&S Director of Strategic Initiatives, to design and present the workshops.

With these workshops just around the corner, the CG&S commitment and enthusiasm towards sustainable development, using the sustainability framework developed by The Natural Step, is growing and gaining exciting momentum.

For further information, please contact Stephanie Foster, Director of Strategic Initiatives, CH2M Gore & Storrie Limited at 416-499-0090, extension 266. 📧