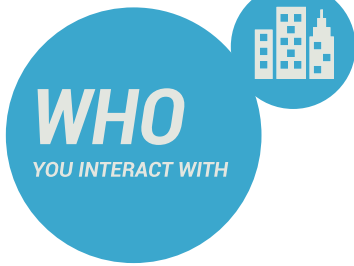


# The Transformational Company Guide

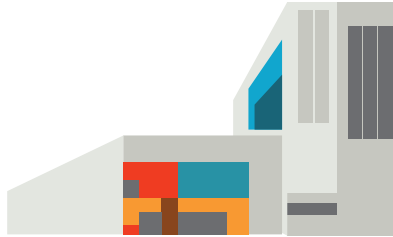
## Quality #18 - Public Engagement



For more information on the new business leadership standard visit  
[www.cbsr.ca/transformationalcompany](http://www.cbsr.ca/transformationalcompany)



## # 18: PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT



*Transformational companies promote sustainability and sustainable lifestyles to the public.*

### WHAT IS IT?

Global mega-forces are changing the context in which business and society can succeed and thrive. Climate change, the growing gap between the rich and the poor, and food, water and resource scarcity are some of the challenges business and society will increasingly face in the coming decades. Forward-thinking businesses choose to not stand idly by, but to use their influence to affect positive social change – for some this includes mobilizing the public to adopt sustainable lifestyles and become sustainability informed champions. The more the public chooses sustainable behaviours, the more resources will be available to fuel future sustainable consumption, the less need there will be for regulation and the greater the likelihood that nine billion people can live well within natural planetary limits by 2050.

Companies have the power to help people get active, eat healthy foods, dispose of consumer products properly, use less energy and generally live more sustainable lives. Knowing this, transformational companies find ways to excite and inspire citizens to adopt sustainable lifestyles.

**A systematic [review](#) of the academic and practitioner literature into how companies can foster social and behaviour change found three conditions are necessary for people to change their behaviour:**

1. Motivation. People must have a reason to change.
2. Ability. They must have the skills, confidence and knowledge required to change.
3. Opportunity. They must have the resources, relationships and environmental conditions needed to change.

These are some of the social change initiatives profiled in the research:

<i>Health</i>	<i>Civic Engagement</i>	<i>Environment</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exercise</li> <li>• Eat healthy food</li> <li>• Quit smoking</li> <li>• Reduce alcohol consumption</li> <li>• Breastfeed</li> <li>• Access health care resources to improve health</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Volunteer in the community</li> <li>• Donate to charity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recycle</li> <li>• Purchase “green” or ethical products</li> <li>• Conserve energy by turning off lights</li> <li>• Carpool or use public transit</li> <li>• Revitalize a local river</li> </ul>



Increasingly, the public expects companies to play a leadership role to address social challenges. The private sector has an important role to play to harness their consumer insights, market research, brand reach, convening power, marketing skills, product platforms and business partnerships to engage the public in social-change goals. In doing so, companies become a force for social good, advance social progress, and build value for the firm.

### Unilever's public engagement project: Project Sunlight

In 2013 Unilever, a major consumer goods company, launched Project Sunlight to motivate "millions of people" to adopt more sustainable lifestyles. According to the company "Project Sunlight aims to make sustainable living desirable and achievable by inspiring people to look at the possibilities of a world where everyone lives well and within the natural limits of the planet." This is part of the company's core purpose to make sustainable living commonplace.

Through Project Sunlight Unilever invites the public to take three simple actions, targeted to specific campaign initiatives, such as fighting child hunger:

1. Help people SEE a brighter future. To do this, Unilever invites people to watch online films which aim to inspire and motivate people (e.g. speeches from young leaders and an inspirational documentary that spotlights child hunger)
2. ACT by doing small things which, added together, contribute to a better society and environment (e.g. getting involved in local community organizations supporting the fight against child hunger)
3. JOIN the movement and become part of a growing community of likeminded people and organisations who all want to play their part in building a brighter future (e.g. inviting people to share their personal stories about young people fighting hunger using #ShareAMeal)

Project Sunlight is housed in an online hub which brings together the social mission stories of Unilever's brands across the world, and invites the public to get involved in doing small things which help their own families, others around the world and the planet.

#### Source

## WHAT IS IT?

Public trust in companies is low yet expectations for corporate leadership are high. This creates an optimal window for companies to fill the breach, address social concerns, and create business value. Companies that learn how to tap into this latent demand for leadership will build competitive advantage and market differentiation.

They can also build business value through the following benefits:

- Increase market share and consumer loyalty
- Gain customer insights
- Access new market segments
- Strengthen reputation
- Attract and retain employees
- Become a desirable business partner

As companies build their sustainable marketing and engagement competencies, they will become the leaders of the future, in a time where having a social license to operate and grow will be an imperative.



## Unilever develops purpose brands to drive employee engagement and consumer loyalty

Paul Polman, CEO of Unilever. “In any company, you have to go back to what drives people. Making more money or being bigger means less and less. Brands with a purpose and that are values-led over time are going to be more successful.”

He has asked his company to figure out how the progressive intent and actions of Unilever and its Sustainable Living Plan can be manifest through individual brands and ultimately drive consumer loyalty for Unilever. Its recent launch of Project Sunlight (see description above) attempts to answer this question. It invites participation and connects social leadership across a wide portfolio of brands and social issues.

### Source

## HOW TO DO IT?

There is no single route to successful engagement of the public on sustainable awareness, and their behaviours and lifestyles. Here are some ideas that you may wish to try.

First, determine where your biggest opportunities lie. They should relate to your core business (hand washing for a soap company; recycling for a beverage company) and address your business drivers. Are you trying to build your brand, attract a new market, forestall government regulation, or maintain a stable supply base? Your business motivations will influence your priorities. Once you have built the business case, you need to determine the social case. What behaviours and choices will you influence? Where can you have the most impact? On what social or environmental issues can you make the most difference? Who is the target group?

With these answers in hand, you will need to research the barriers, motivations, and opportunities to public take-up. Consider harnessing your existing customer-insight information for clues to behavioural change methods that work. Keep in mind that people need to be inspired. One-off, tactical interventions may trigger temporary symbolic behaviours (give up X for a day or turn off Y for an hour, etc.), but sustainable change requires long-term strategic approaches. Remember, too, that context drives behaviours. Effective behaviour change interventions take a holistic approach that influence at the social and structural levels, not just the individual level.

## Consumer research informs public engagement strategy at Unilever

Project Sunlight has been informed by the wealth of Unilever’s consumer insight, including a new international piece of research commissioned by Unilever. This shows that children are key to motivating adults to want to adopt more sustainable lifestyles and a powerful influence on parents changing their behaviour. 9 out of 10 parents say children’s natural optimism and enthusiasm inspires them to make the world a better place, and 7 out of 10 parents say their main motivation for wanting to live in a greener way is their children’s future. The research also shows that there are key child-related moments, particularly around the birth of a first child, when people are more open to changes in their own behaviours and lifestyles.

### Source

Next, consider what relationships (e.g., employees, suppliers, retailers, business partners, governments, and community groups) you can engage to spread and amplify your efforts. Finally, test your campaign by piloting it in order to learn about and improve on your engagement solution. Here is a [detailed profile](#) of how Sodexo, a multi-national French food services company, mobilized



college students to reduce food waste via its Stop Wasting Food campaign. Note how Sodexo determined its target audience, set objectives, developed strategies, and then implemented and measured the results.

### Sodexo's Stop Wasting Food Campaign for College Students

#### Key Publics:

- College students and college administrators

#### 1. Objectives:

- Engage students in changing their behaviour with regard to food waste.
- Reduce pre-consumer food waste by 20 percent.

#### 2. Strategies:

- Launch a pilot program at eight college campuses across the country to analyse and measure our kitchen waste in an effort to better manage it.
- Engage students through social media, traditional media and advertising campaign in colleges.

#### The main messages focused on attitude and behaviour change around food waste:

- Thinking before you eat
- Benefit to the environment

#### 3. Implementation process:

Prior to the launch of the campaign, Sodexo conducted secondary research to study the level of awareness on sustainability of the 18 to 24-year-old college student demographic. It appeared that sustainability topics such as locally-sourced food and reducing carbon footprint were already well established among that demographic and that food waste would be impactful. Sodexo also led expert interviews with government, non-profit, and industry experts on the topic of food waste to develop messages and audit other food waste communication efforts.

#### The campaign was implemented through the following media:

##### 1. Social Media Platform

- Sodexo established Social media platforms – Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, etc. – to connect with students and reached out to 5,700 media points and more than 5,400 websites. The online campaign has been estimated to reach over 30 million people.

##### 2. Advertising Campaign

- Sodexo developed an advertising campaign in selected campus publications, mainly college newspapers, to highlight the commitment to reduce food waste.

##### 3. Leading Food Waste Expert Blogs

- Jonathan Bloom, author of *American Wasteland: How America Throws Away Nearly Half of Its Food (and What We Can Do About It)*, was a guest blogger on Sodexo's Better Tomorrow corporate blog. His book on food waste has been made available for book signing events at Sodexo-served campuses.

##### 4. News Release

- Sodexo reached out to the mainstream media and blogs with its news release, which was distributed to 6,000 media outlets.

##### 5. Connecting our Customers through Dining Web Sites

- Sodexo manages the dining pages of websites at nearly all of the 650 college campuses it serves and used those sites as a vehicle to engage students on the [www.stopwastingfood.org](http://www.stopwastingfood.org) social media platform.



#### 4. Measure results:

- Reduced food waste by 47%
- 500,000 strategic web placement impressions
- Increased Facebook interactions by 90% among those 18 – 24

#### PepsiCo mobilizes the public to increase recycling

PepsiCo wants to change recycling habits: “We want consumers to consciously recycle – and not just sometimes, but often. In fact, all the time.”

PepsiCo has committed to working to increase the U.S. beverage recycling rate, with a goal of reaching 50 percent by 2018. They are pursuing a multi-faceted approach by addressing recycling from every angle: logistics; infrastructure; industry collaboration; and public involvement. The following two steps highlight how they are removing barriers and increasing opportunities and motivations to mobilize a public recycling movement:

“Accessibility is step one. We’ve committed to working with retailers to put more recycling bins in busy locations, such as gas stations and convenience stores, where there aren’t currently recycling containers. We also support the [Closed Loop Fund](#) in its mission to help provide recycling to communities that cannot afford to put the infrastructure in place.

Step two is to make that action meaningful to consumers. PepsiCo and The Nature Conservancy forged a new initiative to “[Recycle for Nature](#).” By recycling any plastic bottle or aluminium can, consumers are directly helping support The Nature Conservancy’s efforts to save and restore 1 billion gallons of water over the next five years.

The initiative supports waterways that supply clean drinking water to more than 35 million Americans – waterways that in many cases double as rivers and lakes that people use to hike, swim, camp and enjoy time with family and friends. In this sense, recycling becomes a more tangible, personal investment in preserving enjoyable experiences.”

#### Source

## WHO IS DOING IT?

**Unilever**, **PepsiCo** and **Sodexo** initiatives have been described above. Here is another public engagement example from the media sector:

**The Guardian**, a British national newspaper, created an online public forum to help people exchange ideas and change the world around them. The forum is called the [Live Better Challenge](#) and it aims to help people make a difference through positive action. It involves seven monthly challenges, each focused on a sustainability theme or issue including food waste, health, cutting energy use, saving water, etc. The public is invited to participate in the challenges through online forums and social media where they become a part of the Living Better community. The community promotes best practices and serves as a vehicle to help educate and engage people by allowing them to share their experiences and ideas and join online conversations on sustainability issues. The Guardian provides articles, tips, blogs, quizzes, resources, expert panels and inspirational stories profiling behaviours and practices to “live better”. It also posts the results of the public challenges. For example, in April 2014 readers saved 8,000 kWh of energy as a result of the energy saving campaign.



Participants receive a number of benefits by joining the [Live Better Challenge](#), including:

- Free newsletters with the latest news and articles, full of hints and tips to help survive the challenge and enjoy sustainable living
- Automatic entry to a monthly competition to win sustainable living prizes
- Access to the Live Better community –to comment on the site and share personal Live Better experiences
- Opportunity to save money by adopting more affordable sustainable living practices
- Self-satisfaction, by taking positive steps to make a difference in the environment and community

One of the monthly themes was “get involved with your local community”. The public was challenged to:

- Volunteer at their local community garden
- Plant some bee-friendly plants on their doorstep
- Club together to turn some disused land into a vegetable patch
- Invite their neighbours over for a clothes mending session
- Start a car-share scheme or make a pledge with their neighbours to cycle or walk to work or school
- Host a clothes swap in their village hall or community centre

Find out more about The Guardian’s Live Better Challenge [here](#).

Click [here](#) to read about the public engagement efforts of **Marks and Spencer**, a major British retailer.

## WHERE CAN I GO FOR MORE INFORMATION?

- Driving Social Change: Best Practices for Business Leaders and Social Entrepreneurs, Network for Business Sustainability  
<http://nbs.net/wp-content/uploads/NBS-Executive-Report-Social-Change.pdf>
- Lessons from Public Health: Experts in public health have struggled with enabling behaviour change for years. The sustainability sector should learn what it can from their experiences.  
[http://considered-creative.co.uk/communicating-sustainability-lessons-from-public-health/?doing\\_wp\\_cron=1424897648.9956369400024414062500](http://considered-creative.co.uk/communicating-sustainability-lessons-from-public-health/?doing_wp_cron=1424897648.9956369400024414062500)
- The Business Value of Changing Consumer Behaviours, Futerra and Business for Social Responsibility  
[http://www.futerra.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/Sustainable-Lifestyles-Frontier-Group-Value\\_Gap.pdf](http://www.futerra.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/Sustainable-Lifestyles-Frontier-Group-Value_Gap.pdf)
- Business Case Builder – Taking Sustainability to Market, Futerra and Business for Social Responsibility  
<http://business-case-builder.com/>
- Conference Board of Canada webinar on sustainable public and customer engagement, profiling Futerra and HP’s approach ([link](#)). Contact [publications@conferenceboard.ca](mailto:publications@conferenceboard.ca) and quote CBSR to see if you qualify for free or discounted access.

