Different Planets: Belief, Denial and Courage

The Role of Emotion in Turning Learning into Action*

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Clients bring me in to teach sustainability because they want to catalyse action. This case study describes the role of emotional responses to evidence and rational arguments. There are people who accept the evidence of our current unsustainability and the arguments for change, and yet do not act. Emotional responses affect the extent to which participants engage with the subject and the conversations about taking action. Discussing this openly can be a powerful way of moving a group on. The case study describes the ways in which I try to help participants bridge the gap between knowing and doing, acknowledging rather than ignoring how people feel about what they have learned. In trying to understand this, I have drawn on models of adult learning, group facilitation and responses to terminal illness. In workshops I use techniques such as incisive questions, facilitated discussion and action planning.

- Emotion
- Belief
- Denial
- Assumptions
- Change management
- Champion
- Commitment to act
- Transfer of learning

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* *Disclaimer:* The views expressed in this article are those of the author alone, and do not necessarily reflect the views of the organisations mentioned.

Learning for change

Knowing without doing is not knowing (Chinese proverb)

CLIENTS BRING IN SOMEONE LIKE ME TO 'TEACH SUSTAINABILITY' TO PEOPLE IN their organisations because they want to catalyse action. They want to avoid risks (PR disasters, future legal obligations, unnecessary costs), spot opportunities (innovations, market shifts) and understand their stakeholders. Some of them are even explicit that they want to 'save the planet', or at least play a part in doing so.[1]

The learning interventions in which I play a part are not academic exercises. They will have failed if the new knowledge and understanding that participants gain does not lead to a change in their behaviour and in the organisation. In this case study, I describe what I have learned about how to do this more successfully.

The use of evidence, concepts and the intellect

Much of my work is built around making the business case for paying more attention to sustainable development concerns.

The business case is built up in a variety of ways:

- Conceptual
- Theoretical
- Evidential
- Anecdotal

Conceptual

At a **conceptual** level, the metaphor of the Funnel, developed as part of The Natural Step Framework,[2] helps people understand the way in which current trends in environmental capacity and human demand are colliding, and how that reduces a society's room for manoeuvre. It also illustrates the importance of being aware of these trends and planning strategically to avoid decisions that cause you to 'hit the walls' of the funnel (see Fig. 1).

1 Organisations I have worked with include a leading UK grocery retailer, Carillion Building (a UK construction group) and Interface Europe (part of the Interface floor coverings company). I work both alone, and as a member of a consulting or training team: for example, with The Natural Step UK and Cambridge University's Programme for Industry. I find that clients bring in people like me for one of three primary reasons: strong personal commitment in the most senior parts of the organisation (e.g. Interface); a crisis in the organisation which has woken it up to the business benefits of understanding sustainable development better (e.g. a public relations crisis—Carillion Building is part of what was the Tarmac group, which built the road through Twyford Down, a *cause célèbre* for anti-roads protestors in the UK); or as a 'lateral leadership' approach—in the guise of 'ordinary' environmental awareness training, individuals in the organisation are hoping to catalyse deeper understanding and change.

2 The Natural Step (TNS) Framework was developed by Karl-Henrik Robèrt and there are Natural Step organisations in nine countries around the world. The TNS Framework consists of the Funnel, the Four System Conditions, which describe the conditions for sustainability, and the ABCD process (awareness of the conditions for sustainability, understanding where you are now, envisioning a sustainable future and backcasting from this to determine action to be taken now). For more information about the Framework and The Natural Step's work, see www.naturalstep.org. The Natural Step is an international charity, and in the UK it is part of Forum for the Future.

There are various ways in which businesses might hit the walls:

- Natural limits: for example, a business dependent on fish finds fish stocks collapsing
- Legislative limits: for example, a business manufacturing a chemical finds it banned
- Public acceptance limits: for example, a business finds people refuse to buy its GM (genetically modified) food, or boycott it because of its labour practices

By understanding the Natural Cycle and the four System Conditions that are derived from this (two other key parts of the framework), a business can predict what it should be doing to avoid hitting the walls, and thus continue to be successful.

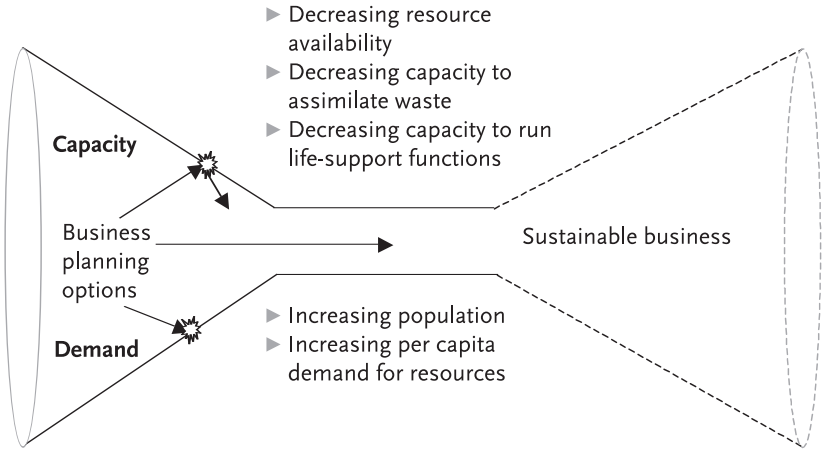

Figure 1 THE FUNNEL
Source: adapted from Walker and Martin 2000

In theory

The '**in theory**' business case is apparent in various lists of headings, each summarising the ways a business can benefit from improving its sustainability understanding: for example, Forum for the Future's Hierarchy of Business Benefits shown in Table 1.[3]

The evidence

Evidence for improved business performance comes in two forms:

- Correlations between good environmental and social performance, and good financial or business performance (such as the Dow Jones Sustainability Index outperforming the 'ordinary' Dow Jones World Index)[4]
- Systematic research, such as SustainAbility's Buried Treasure matrix[5]

3 Forum for the Future is a UK charity which works in partnership with businesses, local authorities, academic institutions and NGOs (non-governmental organisations) to 'accelerate the building of a sustainable way of life, taking a positive, solutions-oriented approach'; www.forumforthefuture.org.uk.
4 For the latest correlations, see www.sustainability-index.com/htmle/news/monthlyupdates.html.
5 Buried Treasure examines the links between business success and sustainable development; www.sustainability.com/business-case.

Eco-efficiency	1. Reduced costs
	2. Costs avoided (design for environment, eco-innovation)
	3. Optimal investment strategies
Quality management	4. Better risk management
	5. Greater responsiveness in volatile markets
	6. Staff motivation/commitment
	7. Enhanced intellectual capital
Licence to operate	8. Reduced costs of compliance/planning permits/licences
	9. Enhanced reputation with all key stakeholders
	10. Influence with regulator/government, etc.
Market advantage	11. Stronger brands
	12. Customer preference/loyalty
	13. Lower costs of capital
	14. New products/processes/services
	15. Attracting the right talent
Sustainable profits	16. Option creation
	17. New business/increased market share
	18. Enhanced shareholder value

Table 1 HIERARCHY OF BUSINESS BENEFITS
Source: Cambridge Programme for Industry/Forum for the Future 2001

Anecdotes

Anecdotes of the benefits of 'good' corporate behaviour and the penalties for 'bad' corporate behaviour abound, and help make the theory real.

Intellectual acceptance

Although some people do dispute the evidence and arguments, this is rare. My experience is that, at this stage, most learners accept the broad thrust of the business case arguments (there may be some discussion about points of detail). The debate is around time-scales and their implications for leadership. How soon will the system collapse? When will the business case become real for my industry/organisation? What will our competitors/customers be doing?

Emotional responses

So, at this stage in a programme, there is a group of people who have learned about, and know, the principles of sustainable development. They understand the planetary and business case for change. They do not seriously dispute the evidence of current unsustainability.

How do they feel about what they know?

Broadly, people either feel something, or nothing.

The ones who **feel something** are either energised (they feel courage, curiosity, excitement, motivation) or engaged but disempowered (they feel grief, sadness, fear, impotent anger).

The ones who **feel nothing** seem to be somehow in denial; they have apparently accepted the evidence and the arguments, but they do not *believe* them.

There is a mismatch between intellectual acceptance, emotional response and behaviour change—it's as if people's brains and guts are on different planets.

This phenomenon of denial has been observed and commented on before in relation to sustainability: George Marshall (2001), looking at climate change, drew on the work of Stanley Cohen (who looked at responses to human rights abuses) and identified two key psychological processes:

- When the problem is too awful to accept; he cites Primo Levi: 'Things whose existence is not morally possible cannot exist'
- The 'passive bystander' effect: when many people could act, individuals wait for someone else to act first, 'and subsume their personal responsibility in the collective responsibility of the group'

I have experienced people in groups spontaneously articulating these phenomena. In addition, I have noticed people asking for permission to not believe, and for permission to take on the role of a powerless victim (see Table 2).

Passive bystander effect	'[Our company] is avoiding having this conversation—we haven't put it on the agenda—we know individually that it's right, but we are avoiding discussing it.' *Business unit managing director*
Moral impossibility	'If I were convinced that what we are doing now really is unsustainable, I'd think differently.' *Group finance director*
Permission not to believe	'Is it too late?' *Numerous participants, seeking reassurance*
Permission not to be responsible	'They [America, business, the markets, corrupt governments in developing countries] will never allow things to change.' *Numerous participants, blaming others and avoiding responsibility*

Table 2 DENIAL IN ACTION

As a facilitator how can I respond?[6]

In the early years of my practice, I usually responded with more argument and information, and with somewhat trite reassurances: 'if we all work together then I'm sure we can do it'.

As I practised more and learned more, I realised that these participants weren't speaking from a rational 'place', but from an emotional one.

6 You may think of yourself as a trainer, teacher or consultant. I use the term 'facilitator', as the closest to my preferred way of working: enabling discussions that help the group decide what to do with what they've learned, while also offering expert input.

I realised that these emotional responses are going to be there whether we intend to induce them or not. We don't have a choice about that. What we do have a choice about is whether we take account of this in our practice. Having noticed the different emotional responses, and begun to speculate about their importance, how has my practice changed?

First, I have begun to research existing theories on emotion and change, and learn about how other 'change facilitators' (consultants, trainers, facilitators) see the role of emotion.

Second, I have introduced techniques into my practice, designed to enable people to recognise their own and others' emotional responses, and make them explicit.

I expect to carry on learning more about facilitating for sustainable development, and I do not pretend to have definitive answers. But I have learned a lot during this time, and hope that by sharing some of my learning I can help others to reflect on their own practice.

The theories and insights that have helped me to understand

Many theories and insights have attracted my attention. These seem to be the most important ones.

Kübler Ross's five stages of grief (Kübler Ross 1975)

Developed from work with the terminally ill, Elisabeth Kübler Ross's five stages of grief have been taken up by others as a model of change (both organisational and personal). The five stages are:

- Denial
- Anger
- Bargaining
- Depression
- Acceptance

In the face of evidence about calamity, there is a predictable set of emotional responses.

Insights from group facilitation

Exploring this further led me to the substantial body of theory and guidance (see, for example, the work of John Heron [1999]) distilled from experience of facilitating groups.[7] A common theme is the importance of working with the whole system—including the feelings of the participants and the facilitator. 'Feelings are important and need to be acknowledged. They are not rational. Group members need to learn to *have feelings, rather than be had by them*' (emphasis added, Hunter *et al.* 1996: 7).

7 Groups with varied purposes: training/learning, therapy, organisational change, consultation/focus groups, or team building.

Observations from other facilitators

As part of my exploration, I have run short sessions on sustainable development for people who are professional trainers and facilitators, but have no professional experience of environmental or social justice issues. After running a half-hour session based around imagining an evacuation of the Earth (designed to bring to conscious awareness people's intuitive understanding of the life-support functions that the Earth provides), I asked the facilitators for their professional feedback. The strength of the emotion generated was a common observation, as was the nature of the emotion—pessimistic (anxiety, fear, guilt) or optimistic (courage, excitement and enthusiasm for pioneering adventure). These personal reflections have an echo in Theodore Roszak's observation: 'But prudence is such a lackluster virtue' (Roszak 1992).

How motivating (and sustainable) are the pessimistic emotions? Can *fear* be the spur? Or are the optimistic emotions the most important in catalysing change?

Transfer of learning

The well-known gap between what people learn on a course and what they do 'back in the office' continues to frustrate managers and facilitators. This is not an issue only when the subject matter is life-changing planetary crisis; it applies equally to the introduction of new internal phone systems or customer service attitudes. There are many strategies that help the successful transfer of learning, and paying attention to emotions is just one of the many helpful things the facilitator can do. Table 3 shows some of the critical factors in the transfer of learning, with my own commentary on how they apply to sustainability.

There are features of sustainability as a subject to be learned, and as a set of implied behaviour changes, which heighten the importance of the critical factors:

- Dominant trends and drivers reinforce the status quo (almost by definition—otherwise we wouldn't need to teach it)
- Society colludes in the general phenomenon of denial and buck-passing
- The enormity of the problem means that an accurate understanding is likely to be accompanied by strong emotions
- The changes in behaviour implied are at the same time *large* and difficult for the individual, and *insignificant* for the problem if only that individual acts

How has this affected my work?

Theories and insights from other people have helped me reflect on my own work.

Knowing about **Kübler Ross's model**, and that the emotions being felt by group members are common (and therefore not 'my fault' as the facilitator), freed me to respond to them as part of the learning process, rather than as if I had personally caused them and needed to apologise and heal them.

Knowing that other people had reflected on and developed approaches to **working with participants' feelings** as part of the group system gave me the confidence to face this under-developed side of my own work, and to research it further—making it a part of my own professional development plan. I continue to ponder the implications of thinking about which **emotions** are the 'most helpful', and what the facilitator's role is and should be in influencing this.

Critical factor	Description	How the factor manifests in sustainability learning
Reinforcement 'on the job'	The presence or absence of positive feedback from peers and supervisors, when the new knowledge is used the workplace	Many of the people I work with may experience 'lip service' rather than commitment from colleagues and managers
Interference in the workplace	Interference may come from time pressure, those in authority, poor or conflicting work processes, inadequate technology	Add to this cost pressures, low levels of understanding from colleagues, suppliers and customers, and inertia
Organisational culture	The skills or knowledge learned may not sit easily with the predominant culture of the workplace, which may indeed not value learning and change *per se*	Society's widespread denial of planetary crisis is likely to be present in the workplace
Learner's perception of the need to change	Without a recognition of the need to change, there is no motivation and little readiness to learn	For sustainability, an intellectual acceptance of the need for change may not be a sufficient motivator. Where there is a strong context that favours change, then personal motivation is less important. When the context doesn't favour change—in the absence of strong leadership, legislative push and customer pull—then personal motivation (i.e. emotional engagement) is pre-eminent in determining whether change occurs
Learning objectives that are relevant to the learner	Learning objectives that are 'so specific that they sound odd', and which do not translate into tasks, make learning transfer hard	For sustainability, it is not always clear *what* specific changes in behaviour are required. A sophisticated understanding of the problems can lead to dissatisfaction with superficial behaviour changes. So much behaviour by so many people must change—this uncertainty in itself can generate strong emotions
Rewards	These may be tangible (prizes, bonuses) or intangible (approval of peers and supervisors)	A very few organisations have built sustainability performance into their performance appraisal or rewards and bonus systems. In the absence of this, informal approval (if you like, an emotional benefit) becomes more important

Table 3 SUSTAINABILITY AND THE TRANSFER OF LEARNING

Source: based on Galbraith 1990 and Taylor 1997

Guidance on how to make the **transfer of learning** more effective led me to plan in many of the steps and techniques outlined below, not only during workshops but also in the pre- and post-workshop phases.

Techniques I use in workshops to bridge the gap between knowing and doing

Emotional responses are bound to be generated by the subject matter of sustainability, and are important in motivating people to change in the face of dominant trends. It seems to me that there are two basic ways of taking account of this in our practice:

- Reflecting on and discussing the irrational, emotional responses explicitly with the group
- Trying to induce particular emotional responses that will be most effective in catalysing change

I am uncomfortable with the latter course; it may be manipulative (unethical) and clumsy (unsuccessful). I have concentrated on building my capacity to facilitate discussion about barriers to change, including those created by people's emotional responses.

It has taken some courage for me to begin conversations about emotions with a group; I have been afraid of not being able to cope with others' emotions, especially if I am assuming that it is my role as the facilitator to rescue the person from their emotion. Advanced group facilitation training helped me to recognise this fear, and develop strategies for overcoming my reticence.[8] I am aware of strong emotion and of denial as regular and reasonable phenomena. I no longer see it as a personal failing (or success) and I do not argue with other people's emotions.

There are a number of techniques with which I now feel comfortable.

Direct questions

Asking an open question to the group: *'How are you feeling?'*

Kick-starting a round of disclosures, or paired discussion: *'I think this would be a good time to share what you feel about what we have been learning.'*

Responding to a participant's display of emotion: *'Jo(e), you sounded sad/angry/enthusiastic then, can you tell us about what you're feeling?'*

Spectrum lines

This needs a room with space for everyone to line up along a wall or an imaginary line, one end being the 'not at all' end, and the other being the 'extremely/completely' end. Once the question has been asked, participants place themselves along the line. These human sculptures can be used to catalyse a conversation about how people feel about the group's attitude to something. It is important to ask a clear question that does not imply a 'right' answer. For example: *'How likely do you think it is that the world's governments will take action on greenhouse gas emissions?'*

8 Led by Mike Eales of Global Resonance in the UK; www.globalresonance.com.

When everyone has placed themselves, the debrief might include questions such as 'how do you feel about where you are on the spectrum?' and 'how do you feel about where everyone else is on the spectrum?'

Engaging the whole person

I use techniques and approaches that engage more than just the intellect:

- Creativity. I use posters, pictures, video, music and props (product samples, games, the natural environment) in my presentations, and I encourage participants to use their own creativity during exercises and assignments
- Ethics. Exercises such as the Earth Evacuation spark discussions about ethics—who should be on the spaceship, and what criteria should be used to decide?
- Physical. Some exercises use physical objects and movement to explain planetary systems
- Imagination. The use of stories and metaphors can illuminate the deeper truths and implications behind environmental and social problems

These approaches help people access their own non-intellectual sides—including their emotional responses—helping to make them explicit and therefore amenable to choice, and also helping to illuminate any contradictions between intellectual and emotional acceptance.

Incisive questions

Incisive questions are designed to replace 'limiting assumptions' (which are self-imposed barriers) with 'freeing assumptions'.[9] This technique can be used to enable people to acknowledge and directly address the barriers created by emotions, which in turn arise from deeply held assumptions. For example:

Facilitator:	*'What are you assuming that may be stopping you from acting?'*
Participant:	*'Our customers don't value sustainable development when they buy, so there's no point pushing this in my department.'*
Facilitator:	*'That may be true or it may not. What else are you assuming?'*
Participant:	*'I'm assuming that it's too hard to find customers who do understand, and that if I fail to find them soon, my boss will be angry with me.'*
Facilitator:	*'What else are you assuming?'*
Participant:	*'I'm assuming that I won't be able to work with my boss to come up with a plan.'*
Facilitator:	*'If you knew that you can work with your boss to come up with a plan, what would you do?'*
Participant:	*'Well, I'd come up with some proposals for researching and segmenting our customer base, and talk them through with him. We'd set a timetable and test out the strategy. Now I have a plan!'*

The higher the degree of trust in a group, the more honest people are likely to be in this kind of conversation.

9 From the work of Nancy Kline, and developed in detail in Kline 1999. See also www.timetothink.com.

Sphere of influence, sphere of control

It is easy to slip into feeling powerless (and it may be a comfortable place to be). I help people identify their power and feel comfortable with using it, by drawing up the spheres and asking them to think about (and sometimes to list) what they alone have control over, and what they can influence (see Fig. 2). This can be done individually, in pairs or in small groups.

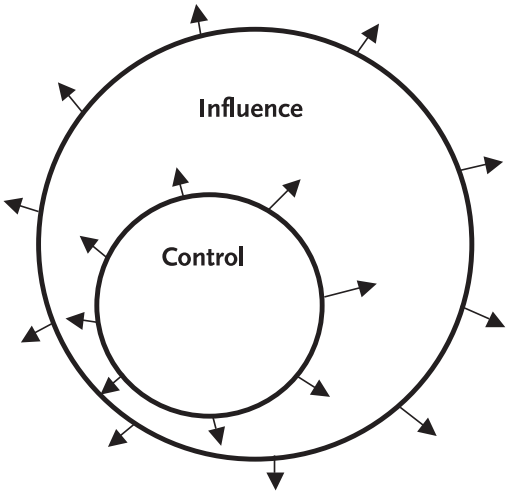

Figure 2 SPHERE OF INFLUENCE, SPHERE OF CONTROL

Everyone has some ultimate control, even if it is only over whether they switch the lights off when leaving the room. Most people, when they stop to think, have more control than they realise (although exercising it may take some effort—choosing to cycle rather than drive to work). Everyone also has plenty of influence—every conversation is an opportunity to champion sustainability.

Over time, with practice and support, people can extend their spheres of influence and control. Getting an accurate picture of these spheres helps to show opportunities that were hidden, and also helps people see where they can influence but not control, helping them to avoid being made vulnerable to disappointment by their enthusiasm.

It is important to allow people to identify their spheres of influence and control for themselves, rather than the facilitator telling them what they ought to be doing. First, they are bound to know their jobs better than the facilitator does. Second, handing over responsibility to the participants demonstrates the facilitator's trust in their capacity to work it out for themselves; this will carry over beyond the course, when the participant will need to identify opportunities and make decisions without the facilitator. (The facilitator can ask good questions to push them further, but should not make direct suggestions.) Third, this engages and rewards the participants' enthusiasm and motivation.

Conversations around these spheres also include the question of courage: will I be courageous enough to champion sustainability in my workplace?

Reflecting on motivation

The facilitator can ask the group to think about motivation. Focusing on a positive experience (asking 'what keeps you motivated?', rather than 'what demotivates you?') will

help people believe that they can motivate themselves and others. Typical responses include:

- Positive feedback
- Nice things happening
- Sunny days
- Getting a response to my enthusiasm
- Doing something about it

A short discussion session such as this can be a useful prelude to a discussion where the facilitator invites the group to commit to action, particularly to supporting each other.

Equipping participants to support each other

One of the key implications of denial for action is, according to Marshall, that 'People will never spontaneously take action themselves unless they receive social support and the validation of others' (Marshall 2001).

A workshop setting, with a group of peers sharing a learning experience, is a good situation in which to generate social support and validation.

Putting time aside near the end of a workshop to look at how to prevent faltering can be invaluable. The initiative can be handed to the participants: small groups can come up with suggestions for keeping the momentum up after the workshop. Suggestions typically include:

- Compiling action lists with names and deadlines, and circulating these after the workshop
- Pairing people up to act as 'buddies', to check progress on action points and provide a sounding board
- Setting times for progress meetings, where participants can celebrate their achievements, identify and solve problems, and set new commitments (it may be appropriate for these meeting to be facilitated)
- Setting up an email group so that participants can stay in touch with each other
- Sending email reminders to people about the commitments they made
- Spending time in the workshop identifying specific barriers, and discussing how to avoid or overcome them
- Setting a time to visit an interesting or enjoyable place as a group—reinforcing a team feeling, and providing informal opportunities to discuss progress
- Making contact with other people in the organisation (or outside it) who will help them change

Researching the client

In some cases, the facilitator will be working with participants from a single client organisation. The clearer a picture the facilitator has of the organisation, the more accurately he or she can guide participants when they are discussing what action they want to take and how they want to change their behaviour. The organisational information that I have found most useful is:

- Who is the sponsor of the learning programme, and what is their level of authority?
- What structures exist in the organisation that might support (or frustrate) participants, and how can these be influenced (e.g. management systems, site committees, performance appraisal schemes)?
- How willing to change is the senior management?
- What are the biggest sustainability issues for the organisation, as judged by itself, and by its stakeholders? How willing is the organisation to address its biggest issues?
- How clear is the organisation on what it wants these participants to do with their new understanding?

If it is not appropriate for the facilitator to research this beforehand, these are questions that participants might want to research for themselves.

How do I judge my success?

The nature of my work makes it hard to evaluate in a rigorous way, although I build in opportunities for clients and participants to give me feedback and I also make time to reflect on workshops and what I have learned from running them. These are some of the comments that have reinforced my own perception of being a more skilled and effective facilitator, since beginning this learning journey.

Overcoming their own and others' reluctance to address sustainable development is highlighted in some people's comments: 'It's a really big help having you here: we talked about things that really needed saying' (project manager, NGO). 'We need a better understanding of what we're talking about—we need to get people talking about it—it doesn't come up as a topic . . . This needs to find its way onto our agenda' (senior managers, chemical company).

The importance of commitment and motivation has been highlighted by participants. 'It's not really about [the company]—I'm committed to making sustainable development happen inside and outside [the company]' (construction engineer).

Participants are sometimes asked to identify the significant, striking or important things that happened during a workshop. Here are two sets of extracts:

Committed communication
Everyone's interested
Level of commitment
More aware and committed
Revitalised initiative
A new dawn!! (We hope)
Re-energised

Enthusiasm from group
Group commitment
Buy-in to project by team
Many ideas extracted from group
The level of enthusiasm of team

More lasting effects are also reported: 'I was very pleased the way the day went, even more when I found that some of the participants were still enthusing about it two days later in a Design Team meeting' (project manager, construction company); and: 'The sales training we planned went ahead, all the European sales team has been trained and

people are out there talking to customers about it [sustainability] and winning orders as a result' (sustainability manager, manufacturing company).

What do participants identify as having helped them and their peers to become enthused and achieve these changes? 'Imagining the future success we may create.' 'Thinking forward to what a sustainable future might be like.' 'Collective recognition of the team that we can make a difference.' 'Oh—10 year vision—spooky!' (multi-organisation construction team). 'Interaction, very frank discussion.' 'The basic ideas and the openness and honest way the ideas were presented and discussed' (construction company).

This organisation now has around 60 sustainability champions from all levels of the organisation, who are taking forward a variety of action plans appropriate to their own job responsibilities. There are regular forums for these champions to meet, supporting each other's efforts and problem-solving. Having identified certain internal core management systems as barriers to greater progress, some champions have raised this with senior management and gained support in changing them.

In this case, the courage to be honest, coupled with a critical mass of peers committed to sustainable development, has empowered these junior and middle-ranking managers to confront underlying causes related to core business practices, as well as the more obvious 'housekeeping' issues (paper recycling, bicycle storage) which, while important, only scratch the surface of organisational change for sustainable development.

Conclusions

My experience of teaching sustainability is in situations where the purpose is not purely educational, attending only to someone's level of knowledge and understanding. My work is change management, or even change catalysis, and I have developed my understanding of personal and organisational change to help make this more effective.

To catalyse change for sustainable development, ideally, one would have in place:

- Knowledge and understanding
- Structures and incentives
- Leadership
- Motivation
- Social support and validation

The facilitator can enable knowledge and understanding, motivation, and social support and validation. Sometimes, these three together can be enough to overcome a lack of leadership from above, and a lack of strong external incentives or obligations.

There are some special features of sustainable development which make attending to the emotional responses of participants particularly important:

- The evidence of the crisis can overwhelm some participants with grief, anger or fear
- For others, the evidence of the need for change is at once too terrifying and not immediate enough to their own experience, leading to denial phenomena
- The behaviour change implied by the evidence is at once onerous for the individual, and yet will not make a significant difference to the problem if only that individual acts

- Participants may be returning to workplaces where they will not be supported in transferring their learning

Emotional responses will occur, whether the facilitator intends this or not. The facilitator can choose to incorporate techniques that enable participants to recognise, reflect on and discuss their emotional responses, noticing whether their hearts and their heads are 'on different planets'. Open discussion can free participants from being trapped by their emotions and give them an opportunity to try out having different emotional responses, some of which may be more empowering. The facilitator can also make time for participants to plan together in some detail the action they will take, in effect creating a peer support group—reducing the chances of action being put off back in the workplace.

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