



The Alarm Sounds. The Challenge Begins.

Fred Jacobson guided his SUV onto the highway, trying not to become upset when, only a few minutes later, he found himself stuck in stop-and-go traffic stretching as far as he could see.

A sip of the still-warm coffee, and bite of the egg sandwich that he purchased on his way to the office each morning, always made the busy CEO's commute more tolerable, provided he didn't spill anything on himself as he continually maneuvered around all of the cars.

"Looks like another Ozone Action Day in the city," the radio blared, "and you know what that means. That's right. Free bus rides, at least for those of you who aren't too lazy to leave your personal vehicles at home!"

"Oh, come on, not another Ozone Day. That makes four in a row," another announcer complained.

"Yeah, four in a row, but who's counting?"

“Well, if you’re not, you should be. Do you know the average person out in Los Angeles sits idle in traffic 82 hours per year? No wonder their air quality is worse than ours ... and if you’re not trying to do your part to cut down on air pollution, heck, any pollution for that matter, you should be. We all should.”

Slamming on his brakes as traffic once again came to a standstill, Fred grimaced as he thought about what he’d heard on the radio.

Moments later, Jacobson’s cell phone rang and the name “Martha Samuels” appeared on the phone’s caller ID. “Strange. Why would my assistant be calling this early?” the CEO thought to himself as he answered the phone.

“Mr. Jacobson, I won’t be able to come into the office today,” Martha’s voice sounded breathless and frightened as she spoke. “We’re having an emergency with Sophie.”

The CEO’s concern grew as the sound of a siren could be heard in the background. “They’re here. I’ve got to go.” And the line went dead.

Fred thought about his assistant’s 5-year-old daughter and what might have happened to her as he caught a glimpse of the downtown skyline, which seemed to punch its way through the brownish haze as if trying to get a breath of fresh air.

Guiding the vehicle into his parking space, Fred grabbed his briefcase, newspaper, the now-empty Styrofoam cup and sandwich container and walked briskly toward the building, absently throwing his trash into the container by the door. A quick trip on the express elevator brought him to the executive suite on the 40th floor.

As the CEO reached his office, he glanced in the direction of Martha’s empty desk and made a mental note to call her before lunch

to find out more about what happened to her daughter.

After the morning's meetings, he dialed Martha's cell phone, only to hear a recording. Leaving a message, he asked her to call if she needed anything, his concern growing about little Sophie.

Settling at his desk to begin paperwork, the CEO opened the morning's newspaper and immediately saw a headline containing the name of his company's largest competitor: "Stocks in downward spiral after spill pollutes community's sole drinking water source."

With a red pencil, he began underlining key phrases within each paragraph. Then, writing several of them on a pad of paper and reading down the list, the executive wrote the letters "N-I-M-B-Y" in bold letters, standing for "Not In My Back Yard," and at that moment he vowed to do everything possible to create a culture that would prevent accidental pollution, a culture to preserve and nurture the planet.

Next, the CEO flipped to a clean page and wrote, "Our Culture of Environmental Stewardship." Then he drew four columns, labeling each with one of the following: "Air" – "Water" – "Waste" – "Conservation." He then began thinking about the impact his company's operations could or – worse yet – *had been* having on the environment. Taking a deep breath, he began writing them in the appropriate column.

Before leaving the office several hours later, Fred wrote some notes for his upcoming management team meeting:

"The lack of a properly researched and well-thought-out company-wide effort to increase our environmental responsibility equals significant exposure to our financial performance and, conceivably, the future viability of the company.

“My goal: Make funds available and identify a person to spearhead this effort – someone knowledgeable of our operations, both foreign and domestic, as well as our culture, willing to help move environmental stewardship – from our minds to our hearts – where real change takes place.”

Two days later, Fred Jacobson met with his senior management team to discuss his vision. “This isn’t a knee-jerk reaction,” he began, “as I think all of you are familiar with our competitor’s problems after their recent spill.”

There were nods of agreement around the table.

Ron Kaiser was the first to comment: “Aren’t we already regulated up to our eyeballs? We’ve been doing business this way for decades. Never had a problem with the Environmental Protection Agency or the Bureau of Oceans or whatever they call themselves, so I don’t see a need to spend time, money and resources on this environmental thing ... and remember, we’ve been recycling shredded waste paper around here for years, so I think we’re doing our bit.”

“Stewardship,” offered Martin Avery, the newest manager at the table. “It’s called ‘environmental stewardship,’ and some companies are way ahead of the curve because they’ve made it a part of their core values. Honestly, we’re lagging behind and that’s concerning.”

“Concerning?” Ron Kaiser hadn’t expected to hear that word.

Avery was new to the group but not bashful in the least. “Yes, it’s concerning because this awareness and willingness to help sustain the environment makes it easier to hire and retain top talent, not to mention capture additional market share,” the young manager pointed out.

“Exactly,” agreed the CEO. “Look how demonstrating and rewarding proper beliefs and behaviors helped us create our culture of safety versus just having periodic safety programs like we used to. While not hurting people would be enough for me, we’ve also been awarded additional contracts in both the Middle East and South America, all based on our safety performance. Morale is the highest it’s ever been ... and our productivity ... well, you’ve seen the numbers, right, Kaiser?”

The man nodded.

“And, as you know, I’ll be participating on that panel next week in Washington, D.C. That’s about leading our industry,” Fred reminded the group.

“But that’s about safety – making sure our people get home every night to their families,” Kaiser countered, beginning to realize his attitude about the environment may be in the minority.

“So, who says making sure we, as a company, don’t harm the environment isn’t just as important?” Fred asked the group.

Responding to the CEO’s question, Avery replied as he turned toward Kaiser, “You’re right, Ron. Safety means saving lives ... or at least preventing injuries, but so does making certain we don’t contribute to poor air quality or fouling a whole town’s water supply. Without establishing high standards of environmental stewardship, we could easily kill hundreds, even thousands of people”

“Let me help emphasize Avery’s point,” Fred continued. “I’m sure most of us around this table are old enough to remember hearing about the 1976 disaster in Seveso, Italy ... caused when a plume of chemically contaminated vapors was released by a pesticide plant.¹

¹ <http://archive.unu.edu/unupress/unupbooks/uu211e/uu211e09.htm>

More than 37,000 people were exposed to the highest levels of a dioxin, a class of chemicals believed to be highly poisonous and cancer-causing, even in micro-doses.”

“I remember hearing about it,” Kaiser admitted.

“Several thousand were treated for dioxin poisoning, more than 80,000 animals had to be slaughtered to keep the toxins out of the food chain,” Fred explained, “and the data collected on the dioxin exposures are still under study.”

“Data? What kind of data?” Kaiser asked, looking skeptical.

“Blood samples from the victims were saved,” explained the CEO. “Today, thanks to technology, scientists can better quantify the damage. Moreover, the name ‘Seveso’ is now the name of a law, requiring every facility that handles quantities of hazardous materials – even if they’re just storing it – to inform the authorities and people living near the plant about the hazards ... plus this same law mandates that the plant develop and publicize ways for the community to respond to major incidents should another occur.”

“But that was a chemical plant ... in a country halfway around the world,” Kaiser pointed out.

“So what?” challenged Avery. “Think about all of the hazardous materials our people use every day. Or the runoff some of our sites produce. And what if there was an explosion or fire at one of our locations near a town?” he added. “Look, Kaiser, even I understand the potential for disaster and I’m a newcomer here.”

“Kaiser, it sounds to me like you still have some of your *bulletproof mentality* – thinking we’ve never suffered a major industrial incident

after all the years we've been in business, so why should we expect to have one now," Fred said.

"Okay, okay, I know when I'm outnumbered," Kaiser responded, holding up his hands in mock surrender.

As the laughter around the table quieted, Jacobson continued. "So our next order of business is identifying someone to begin the process of changing our culture."

"If I may ..." Avery interrupted. "In one of my last college courses, I read an article titled 'Leading Change: Why Transformation Efforts Fail' by John Kotter, Ph.D., a respected authority. Anyway, he listed eight stages we have to go through in order to transform our culture."

"Is this where you start telling us all of the things we're doing wrong according to some textbook?" Kaiser interrupted sarcastically. "That's exactly the reason some of us didn't want to go to college."

"Quite the opposite!" came Avery's somewhat defensive reply. "I was actually going to tell Fred we've already begun the process of changing the company's culture. 1) We've established an urgent reason for change; and 2) the people sitting at this table have the power to drive and lead that change. Next we'll need to create a clear vision and begin developing the strategies for achieving the vision."

"Oh good! Then we're 25 percent of the way there," Kaiser joked. "Sounds like we'll have this completed by dinner."

"I used the word 'process' for a reason," the CEO interjected to stop the banter. "I know this is not a program or an event, and it's going to take time to create a culture of environmental responsibility, or 'stewardship' as Avery called it. So let's get back to who can help us lead this transformation effort."

To everyone's surprise, Kaiser was the first to speak: "I think Kurt Bradshaw is that person. As everyone knows, because of the great job Kurt did helping change our safety culture, we recently promoted him from manager of worldwide safety to vice president of health, safety and environment, and, in his new role, he now reports to Fred."

"I can see the dramatic decline in our incident rates over the last 12 months," Avery said, "but being new with the company, I'm not familiar with what Kurt did."

Kaiser thought for a moment. "Well ... Kurt did a great job recognizing the old-school mindset and bulletproof mentality that kept everyone from seeing the need for change. He also helped our people understand those things they do that put them or someone else at risk – he called them at-risk behaviors – and are the root cause of most incidents. Come to think of it, I'll bet at-risk behavior, or people's behavior in general, is key when it comes to environmental stewardship."

The group sat in stunned silence at Kaiser's apparent insight. "What ... you don't think I see the similarities between creating a culture of safety and creating a culture of environmental stewardship? You show me a truly safe operation and I'll show you an environmentally responsible one. As I see it, they go hand-in-hand."

"Bradshaw's a great change manager and a good choice," Barbara Allen agreed. "He has the ability to translate our expectations of building a culture of environmental awareness, communicate that with our people and provide feedback in a positive manner that motivates people to want to change their behavior. He also demonstrated his obvious commitment to his team, which tells me he definitely has the necessary leadership skills."

“So, it appears Bradshaw’s a unanimous choice. Am I right?” Fred asked as he glanced around the table. “If so, I’ll meet with Kurt later this afternoon to give him the good news”



Kurt arrived home that evening to share the news with his family. “Anybody home?” he called as he put down his briefcase.

“In the kitchen,” answered his mother-in-law, Janet, who had just finished bundling the last of a stack of newspapers. “I’m on my way to the community recycling center,” she said as she reached the front door. “Would you grab those two other bundles?”

Kurt picked up the newspapers and followed Janet to her car.

“This week ... paper, next week ... plastics,” she called as she loaded the papers into her car. “There’s always something that needs recycling ... always some way we can shrink our ecological footprint.”

“Just drive carefully, Janet,” Kurt waved. “If we’re going to save this old planet, we’re going to need all the environmentalists we can find.”

“Environmentalist? I’m not sure I want to be called that!” the older woman exclaimed.

Looking surprised, Kurt asked, “What’s wrong with being an environmentalist?”

“Well, nothing’s wrong with a person taking responsibility for doing all they can to protect the air we breathe, water we drink, or land we use, but oftentimes people think of some crazy radical when they hear the word ‘environmentalist’ ... almost as if to say, ‘Oh, you’re one of *them*,’” Janet said.

“I agree. Movies about global warming and activists throwing paint on people’s fur coats have caused an ‘us-against-them’ mentality,” Kurt said, shaking his head. “I really just want you to know how much I appreciate you taking time to help our environment.”

“You’re sweet for saying that ... but I’ve got to leave if I’m going to be home in time for dinner,” she called out the window as she drove away.

Kurt was reading the newspaper stories that Fred Jacobson had shared while telling him about his new responsibility. Kurt shook his head in disbelief at the devastation detailed in the file and then looked back at the date of each clipping. Every incident had occurred during the last six months.

“Honey, where are you?” his wife, Jessica, called out.

“In here,” Kurt responded.

“Oh, there you are,” the pretty, dark-haired woman said as she entered the room. “Have a good day?”

Kurt stood and held out his arms. “Not sure yet,” he said. “I was asked to take on a new responsibility ... besides safety.”

“No, don’t hug me I’m sweaty from my run,” she said, stepping out of reach and sitting down on the floor to stretch. “So what’s this new responsibility and why aren’t you sure about it?”

“One of our strongest competitors is dealing with lawsuits – big lawsuits – after a spill polluted an entire community’s drinking water. From what I’ve read, I’m not sure the company will survive. Not that I would mind one less competitor, but the environmental disaster, in one way or another, impacts all of us.

“You mean your entire industry could be negatively impacted or we, as in ‘our family,’ could be hurt by the spill?”

“I knew I married a smart girl,” Kurt joked, “but, actually, it’s probably both. The spill will result in more regulations, which means more costs to the company and, ultimately, higher prices for the consumer since those costs will be passed along.”

Listening intently, Jessica asked, “So what’s your role in all of this?”

“Well, as the vice president of health, safety *and* environment, Fred wants me to work on establishing some high standards of environmental stewardship in our company’s culture.”

“Well, if what you did for the company’s safety culture is any indication, they certainly have the right man for the job!” Jessica announced as she jumped up and hugged her husband.

“Yuck ... talk about air pollution; I thought you were sweaty from your run!” Kurt teased, trying to keep his wife at arm’s length.

“You’ll just have to hold your breath,” his wife countered. “I’ll go shower before mom gets back and then the three of us can go eat dinner.”

Once the dishes had been cleared, Kurt’s wife asked, “So, how come when you got home this afternoon and I asked how your day was, you told me you weren’t sure?”

After hesitating, Kurt began: “I know very little about environmentalism, except your mom taking things like paper, plastic, and aluminum cans to the recycling center every week. But, that’s it ... except for what I read in the paper or see in the news ... and I have to admit, I haven’t really paid much attention.”

“Want to learn from an expert?” Janet piped up.

“Oh ... no, Janet. I’m not joining your recycling group, if that’s what you’re suggesting.”

The gray-haired woman frowned. “We wouldn’t let you anyway,” she said, winking. “No, I was thinking you might want to get to know my friend, Jim Corley ... well actually, he’s Dr. James Corley and I know he’s spent much of his career studying and understanding the balance between environmental, social and economic issues. He’s also someone I enjoy spending time with, sort of a nerd with a personality,” she added, smiling.

Sensing her husband’s apprehension, Jessica chimed in, “Might be good, just to talk with Jim. Remember how much Sam Rollins helped when you were working on creating a culture of safety for the company?”

Kurt nodded. “You’re right. Sam was invaluable, and ... I’m beginning to feel outnumbered here.”

“You are,” the two women acknowledged in unison.

“Hey, I have an idea.” Jessica began smiling. “You know we have talked about getting a dog now that Shannon’s in college. Why don’t we get a little boy dog to even your odds?”

“And they have some wonderful puppies at the animal shelter,” Janet added helpfully.

“Doggy recycling, is it?” Kurt joked. “Okay, okay. We’ll think about a dog, but what I need right now is to get some sleep. It’s been a long day and ‘Captain Environmental’ needs to get up early if he’s going to save our planet from those evil polluters!”

Later that night, as he tossed and turned, Kurt recalled experiencing a similar feeling of dread when he had been asked to help improve the company's safety culture. He was confident in his knowledge of operations but wasn't sure he knew anything about safety.

"As we moved through that process, I learned that the leadership skills I used to achieve high operational performance were the same skills I needed to create a culture of safety. Can it be the same when it comes to the environment?" he wondered.

"And what we need to focus on are the things people have in common, relative to the environment, no matter what country they're from." He thought about that a moment longer. "We all want plenty of clean air and clean water, plus enough food and shelter," he said aloud, as Jessica lay sleeping peacefully by his side. "We all want to pass along a healthy planet to our children and grandchildren ... at least that's what we say, but do our actions really demonstrate that?"

His mind went back to the article about their competitor's recent spill. "An entire town without clean water? I wonder if they had to haul in drinking water? What about water for the farmers in the area with their livestock and crops? How far did people have to travel to bathe and wash their clothes? And what about things like the value of people's homes and how much more they might have to pay for homeowners' insurance, or even their health insurance?"

"Wow! The consequences of this single incident could touch thousands of lives for years to come," he realized. "Creating a culture of environmental stewardship could be even more difficult than creating a culture of safety," he thought to himself.

Now fully awake, Kurt climbed out of bed and walked to his study. Thinking more about the steps that had been required to motivate

“safety leaders” across the company, he took out a clean piece of paper and began to write:

- ◆ Build a foundation of trust.
- ◆ Set clear goals and high expectations.
- ◆ Praise progress when people begin changing behaviors.
- ◆ Have the courage to keep going.

“It looks easy on paper,” Kurt observed before heading back to bed. “I guess I’ll call Dr. Corley in the morning,” he thought to himself. “I know with our operations running day and night, not to mention our shortage of personnel, we’ll need an environmental process that our people will use both at work and at home, 24/7.”



SNAPSHOT

DEFINITIONS

1. **Behavior** – Our actions and mannerisms, day in and day out, as we relate with the environment ... our response to various stimuli, whether internal or external, conscious or subconscious and voluntary or involuntary.
2. **Bulletproof mentality** – Thinking we won't hurt the environment as a result of our actions or behaviors.
3. **Culture** – The beliefs and behaviors transmitted from one generation to the next.
4. **Culture of Safety** – Every organization has a Safety Culture, which can range from poor to outstanding. A Culture of Safety implies safety has become a core value that is imbedded into every aspect of the organization's culture.
5. **Ecological footprint** – A measure of human demand on the Earth's ecosystems. It represents the amount of biologically productive land and sea area necessary to supply the resources a human population consumes, and to mitigate associated waste. Using this assessment, it is possible to estimate how much of the Earth it would take to support humanity if everybody followed a given lifestyle.
6. **Environment** – Refers to our surroundings, including all living and non-living things that occur naturally on Earth.
7. **Environmentalist** – A person who broadly supports the goals of the environmental movement, "a political and ethical movement that seeks to improve and protect the quality of the natural environment through changes to environmentally harmful human activities."

8. **Environmental stewardship** – Refers to responsible use and protection of the Earth’s natural environment, through conservation and sustainable practices.
9. **Gyre** – In oceanography it is any large system of rotating ocean currents, particularly those involved with large wind movements.
10. **Incident** – A term used throughout this book, rather than Accident, because Accident implies something happened outside of someone’s control, which is not the case more than 97 percent of the time.
11. **Old-school mindset** – The idea that because “we’ve always done things this way,” there’s no need to share our concerns ... or possibly consider a better way.
12. **Safety leader** – A person, at any level of an organization, whose beliefs and behaviors demonstrate their commitment to their own safety as well as the safety of those around them.
13. **Stewardship** – An ethic that embodies responsible planning and management of resources. The concept of stewardship is linked to the concept of sustainability.

STEPS TOWARD STEWARDSHIP

1. The changes we expect (our expectations) are at the core of building a culture of environmental stewardship and, at the same time, improving every aspect of operations.
2. People will elevate their work practices to the level of environmental protection and awareness that’s expected, particularly if it benefits them, their families, the company and others.

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

1. Research and write a 500-word paper on the Seveso, Italy, disaster. Find out about any additional environmental damage that occurred as a result of the accidental discharge of lethal gas. Look for agricultural impact, such as livestock, crops, and non-cultivated plants, such as trees, landscaping, etc. What about long-term impacts, such as health, economic and quality of life?
2. Determine the long-range extent of the Seveso disaster. In a 500-word paper, discuss the specifics of its impact.
3. Think about the impact of any accidental discharge into the air. Then write about a fictional incident/disaster in your hometown and how life would change as a result. 500 words should allow for plenty of “creative thinking.”
4. Take a look at any three environmental disasters in your country over the past 100 years. From your study of these disasters, total the economic impact, including rebuilding, remediation, etc. Now, compare this to the amount of money spent to prevent similar situations from occurring. Report your findings in writing or through discussion.
5. In your own words, evaluate the environmental culture of your school, company or neighborhood. Are people, in general, aware of their environmental footprint (the environmental impact of their behavior)?

RESOURCES

Environmentalism: A Global History, by Ramachandra Guha (1999)

Environmental Since 1945: The Making of the Contemporary World, by Gary Haq and Alistair Paul (2011)

The New Economy of Nature, by Gretchen Dailey and Katherine Ellison (2003)

Environmental Tips: Things You Can Do

Use Compact Fluorescent Bulbs

Replace light bulbs with compact fluorescent bulbs. By using three CFBs, you will save 300 lbs. of carbon dioxide and \$60 a year.

Fill the Dishwasher

You don't have to run your dishwasher every time you eat. By filling it completely, you can save \$40 and 100 lbs. of CO₂ emission a year.

Use Recycled Paper

By using 100 percent post-consumer recycled printer paper, you can save 5 lbs. of carbon dioxide per ream of paper. Don't forget to invest in recycled paper towels and napkins as well!

Adjust Your Thermostat

If you move your thermostat down 2 degrees in the winter and 2 degrees up in the summer, you can save up to \$98 and 2,000 lbs. of CO₂ per year. Think of the warm sweater or cool bathing suit you can buy with that money.

Take Shorter Showers

Did you know that showers account for 2/3 of all water heating costs? We know – it's shocking. Cut your showers short and save \$99 and 350 lbs. of CO₂ per year.

Carpool When You Can

With gas prices burning a hole in everyone's wallet, save some cash while saving 790 lbs. of CO₂ by carpooling. If your car is too small to fit all of your BFFs, then commute on public transportation or ride your bike.

Source: www.DoSomething.org