

A report on the two week internship at:

Village Green Managed Sustainable Services
Level 1, 2 Stephenson Street
Richmond Victoria 3121
Australia

from 7 to 18 August 2006

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(ENSEARCH)
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SUMMARY

The Sustainable Business Management (SBM) program by Village Green applied to Small to Medium sized Enterprises represents community based environmental education, that exhibits the five components of environmental education through its activities. Village Green believes behavioural change in protecting the environment is possible through SBM by focusing on the financial, social, cultural and environmental performance. Village Green as the facilitator forms collaboration with the State Government, Local Council and Water Retailers to initiate the program and to keep it going, conducts sustainable audits, provides workshops, training and recommendations for improvement. Through behavioural change, Village Green aims to achieve reduction in environmental impact, increased business profitability and increased community involvement for a sustainable living on Earth.

INTRODUCTION

Environmental education is a learning process that increases people's knowledge and awareness about the environment and associated challenges, develops skills and expertise to address the challenges and foster attitudes, motivations and commitments to make informed decisions and take responsible action (Tbilisi Declaration, 1977). These five components of environmental education: awareness, knowledge, skills, attitude and participation – is the core of teaching and learning model in developing and transforming an individual or a community towards a sustainable living on Earth.

Environmental education is crucial at all levels of a community and can be delivered formally or informally. The two week internship with Village Green Australia provided an insight to the informal approach of environmental education that is a community based environmental education. The objective is to encourage change of behaviour in communities in order to make informed decisions with the environment in mind which would lead to improved business profitability.

Who is Village Green and what do they do?

VILLAGED GREEN – MANAGED SUSTAINABLE SERVICES

Village Green (VG) is a private organization, specializing in sustainable management and change systems for the small business and retail sectors. VG targets small business as it is the hub and incubator of the local community. VG believes real change in protecting the environment will occur if the small business of the communities adopts a visionary stance. This is possible through the Sustainable Business Management (SBM) programs which focuses on the four pillars of sustainability: environmental, economic, social and cultural.

Sustainable Business Management is a model by Village Green to help small traders who are low in resources to succeed in their businesses. The approach is to transform the

behaviour of Small to Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) to incorporate the four pillars of sustainability into business practices, hence resulting:

- Reduced environmental impact
- Increased business profitability
- Increased community involvement

Through behavioural change, sustainable business management programs aims to achieve the following:

- Increased community awareness of sustainability
- Increased community engagement
- ‘Black’ energy reduction consumption
- Reduction in water consumption
- Reduction in volume of waste to landfill
- Greenhouse Gas abatement
- Increased business profitability

SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS MANAGEMENT PROGRAMS

Village Green began its sustainable program back in 2003 in Collingwood Victoria with the participation of 20 businesses (Table 1) and gradually expanded into Lugarno of New South Wales in 2004; Sunshine of Victoria, Sydney Central Plaza and Broken Hill of New South Wales in 2005. The new programs for 2006 are Northern Sydney, Unley of Adelaide and 5 regions of Victoria.

VIC 1000 is a 3 year sustainable program working with 1000 SME in 5 regions throughout Victoria. They are: Metro East, South West, Metro North, Metro West and Central Victoria. Each region has 5 local councils and from each council the participation of 40 businesses is encouraged, which brings to the total of 1000 businesses in Victoria. Each sustainable program takes about 12 to 16 months to complete and it can be at different stages of progress depending when they started.

Table 1: An overview of the sustainable programs managed by Village Green.

| Year | Project | Businesses | Began |
|------|---|------------|---|
| 2003 | Collingwood, Victoria Smith Street | 20 | September 2003 |
| 2004 | Lugarno, New South Wales Forest Road | 25 | January 2004 |
| 2005 | <i>Sustainable Sunshine</i> Sunshine Victoria | 40 | March 2005 Awards night – August 2006 |
| | <i>Sustain Sydney for a Brighter Future</i> Sydney Central Plaza | 28 | August 2005 |
| | <i>Outback Oasis</i> <i>Creating A Sustainable Future</i> Broken Hill New South Wales | 200 | September 2005 |
| 2006 | <i>VIC 1000</i> Victoria | 1000 | February 2006 to 2009 |
| | <i>Sustainable Cities, Connecting Sydney's Northern Communities</i> Northern Sydney | 40 | March 2006 |
| | Unley Adelaide | 20 | May 2006 |

HOW IS SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS MANAGEMENT PROGRAM CARRIED OUT AT A COMMUNITY LEVEL?

1. Collaboration

A sustainable program is launched through the support of the State Government, Local Council, and Water Retailers who have environmental targets to achieve. These stakeholders would also have funds available for environmental programs. Hence, this program is provided at no cost to participating businesses. Village Green acts as the initiator and consultant in facilitating sustainable programs from the start to the end. The participation and commitment of traders is essential in determining the implementation and success of this program.

2. Site visit

Once collaboration has been initiated, Village Green conducts the first site visit. For instance as part of *VIC 1000*, VG visited the following places in the South West region of Victoria :

- Colac
- Bannockburn
- Torquay
- Queenscliffe
- City of Greater Geelong
- Portalington
- Lara.

The first visit provides an overview on the type of businesses and the size of a town. In the next few visits, pamphlets are dropped in to create awareness about the program and followed by communication on a one to one basis to persuade the traders to participate in the program. Some traders may take a couple of days to decide. To participate, they are

required to sign a registration form (Appendix B) for their commitment throughout the program. The form also ensures the confidentiality of their personal information.

3. Sustainable Audits

Sustainable audit is a process that covers almost all activities or business practices in a small business, such as energy and water consumption, waste generation, transportation and estimation on greenhouse gas emission. This auditing process provides an account of details on resources used as well as money spent, thus creating awareness. The report allows the trader to analyze and reflect upon what has happened/ is happening. This leads to the question - how can one reduce consumption and increase business profitability?

VG as the consultant/ facilitator would guide the trader on a one to one basis on simple methods and its implementation to reduce consumption, hence reducing the impact on environment. Simple method includes turning lights off when a room is not in use and installation of energy and water saving devices by qualified plumbers and electricians. By taking these responsible actions, the trader also saves in direct operating cost.

Sustainable audits are conducted twice for each trader, once at the start of the program and the other towards the end. This record keeping enables all stakeholders – especially the traders to identify the differences/ improvements - before and after the adoption of sustainable practices, which includes a series of workshops and training. Sustainable audits measure energy, water, waste, transport and business practices.

It consist of three levels:

- Level 1 which is a walkthrough, whereby the auditor conducts an informal survey.
- Level 2 gathers more details such as types of appliances used, frequency of usage, at standby mode
- Level 3 involves data input of the above information into a data log device called Internal Workflow and Auditing Software (IWAS). IWAS generates the calculation of total usage and cost per year and estimates the sequestration of greenhouse gas as presented in *VIC 1000 Individual Audit Report A* (Appendix C).

IWAS is a software developed by Village Green with their consultant Blue Duck Solutions. Its basic function is similar to Excel and together with software Crystal, IWAS generates qualitative and quantitative report as presented in *VIC 1000 Individual Audit Report A*. As a new software it continues to evolve, to be more efficient with the input and output of reports from auditing round 1 and 2. Verification of details is essential throughout the auditing process.

4. Audit Reports

Sustainable audit generates two types of reports: the individual audit report and the group report. The individual audit report is for the participant only. It includes auditing on energy, water, waste, transport and sustainable business management and provides *Greenscale Recommendations* as presented in *VIC 1000 Individual Audit Report A*

The group report is submitted to the major sponsors like Country Energy, State Government, Local Council and Water Retailers. It provides a general overall report of sustainable business management and audit results of all traders as in *Outback Oasis Managed Sustainable Services Audit Report* (Appendix D).

Greenscale Recommendations is a list of suggestions ranging from simple, easy task to high level of commitment necessary for successful outcomes. These suggestions are offered to traders to reduce environmental impact while improving the business profitability. It is necessary to offer traders a few choices in order to encourage them to participate in reducing the business impact upon the environment instead of non-participation.

5. Workshops and training

In educating the traders, a series of workshops and training are held on monthly basis. This is to equip the traders with awareness, knowledge and understanding, skills to identify and resolve, and attitudes of concern in addressing issues/ barriers relating to sustainable business practices. Topics include:

- sustainable business management and auditing
- energy conservation and management
- water management and conservation
- waste reduction and management
- chemicals and your business: safety and the environment
- transport and your business: efficiency targeted to save your money
- visual merchandising: capturing your market effectively
- marketing and communication

6. Program branding

Every sustainable program has its own branding, for example *Sustainable Sunshine* (Appendix E) for the town of Sunshine in Victoria. The brand consist of a design (logo) with a caption which best describes the township in relation to sustainability. How is branding created for a program? It's through consultation with the local council/s and traders (15% of the total participants):

- Step 1 – distribution of group branding questionnaire.
- Step 2 – information gathered is used for the creation of the design and caption.
- Step 3 – the brand is presented to the community for their approval.

This new brand would appear on all merchandise and promotions which include street banners, enviro-shopping bags and program stickers; and on websites of all stakeholders. Eventually the brand becomes part of the community that the locals can connect to or identify with.

7. Awards and recognition

The final phase of a sustainable program is the awards night. During this event, participants are acknowledged and recognized for their efforts and achievements. Awards are presented to traders who exhibited significant improvement in the area of financial, social, cultural and environmental concern. During the internship, I had the opportunity to attend the award's night for *Sustainable Sunshine*. Officially, the sustainable program has ended but the interactions among the stakeholders continue through Village Green News newsletter (Appendix F) and program governance.

Village Green News is a web-based newsletter circulated once a month. It focuses on sustainable environmental practices especially in business. It is a proactive way of keeping records on its development: an update on all sustainable programs and the current development at VG. An interesting feature during the internship was VG's new partnership with smart Australia which provided two environmental friendly cars to promote *VIC 1000* program as well as the smart car.

8. Program Governance

In program governance, VG the consultant works with the Trader Associations (Local Council and traders) of a township in developing strategies for healthy and sustainable growth. I had the opportunity to attend the Sunshine Traders Association meeting – such meetings provide a ground for communication and addressing issues related to the businesses, the community and the environment. For instance, plans to make the community shopping more vibrant, setting up an education fund for local schools, other issues may include addressing parking problems at shopping centers.

CONCLUSION

The two week internship at Village Green proved that environmental education can be delivered successfully to Small to Medium sized Enterprises (SMEs) through the Sustainable Business Management program. In order to create behavioural change in small businesses, SBM program conducted a series of activities which exhibited the five components of environmental education – awareness, knowledge, skills, attitude and participation. A significant aspect of SBM activities is the audit reports which provide details on consumption of energy and water, production of waste and direct operating costs and recommendations for improvement. The support and commitment of all stakeholders is necessary – State Government, local council, water retailer, consultant (VG) and SMEs in ensuring the launch and success of SBM. The fact is when behavioural change is adopted with the environment in mind one *truly* saves money, *reduces* the environmental impact and *creates* a sustainable, healthy environment to live in. In July 2006, Village Green was awarded the Banksia Education Award for their outstanding achievement in educating SMEs through the Sustainable Business Management Model. The evidence that Sustainable Business Management program by Village Green has been successful in Australia indicates we can implement it in Malaysia too – for a sustainable living before further damage is done to our environment.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I am grateful to ENSEARCH for this excellent opportunity of a two week internship at Village Green, Victoria Australia. I am thankful to Village Green for generously sharing their knowledge and approach on the management of best environmental practices among traders and communities.

LIST OF APPENDIX

Appendix A: Pamphlet on Village Green Managed Sustainable Services

Appendix B: Registration Form

Appendix C: *VIC 1000* Managed Sustainable Services, Individual Audit Report A

Appendix D: *Outback Oasis* Managed Sustainable Services Audit Report

Appendix E: Branding sticker – *Sustainable Sunshine*

Appendix F: Village Green News