

“Story of Stuff” Discussion Tool

Objectives

- To create greater dialogue and connection with co-workers around the principles of sustainability.
- To encourage reflection on the impacts of *consumer culture* on personal and planetary health.
- To achieve more in-depth learning and discussion on particular issues (e.g. “Story of Change”, “Story of Broke”, Black Friday) or items (such as electronic waste, cosmetics, bottled water).

Background Information

Our work as Green+Leaders is not only about encouraging people to adopt one-off behaviours like turning off lights or recycling properly, but also to create deeper conversations about sustainability and how we can create community where we work. This tool is designed to help you lead a conversation about the ‘Story of Stuff’.

The ‘Story of Stuff’ is a series of short videos that look at the impact of our materials economy on people and the planet. This series touches on a lot of important topics related to sustainability such as systems thinking (i.e. seeing the whole picture), how we use our natural resources, the psychological impact of consumerism, waste and the toxicity found in our products and manufacturing processes. It is sure to inspire an enriching discussion.

Remember, not everyone has to agree with what is presented in the video and the discussion should be based on the following working assumptions*:

- *Everyone has wisdom*
- *We need everyone’s wisdom for the wisest result*
- *There are no wrong answers*
- *The whole is greater than the sum of its parts*
- *Everyone will hear others and be heard*

You may wish to write these assumptions on a whiteboard or read them out to people at the start of the session.

Steps

Step 1:

Organize a time for your team to spend about 45 minutes together. It might be that you have a special meeting or do a lunch n’ learn.

Step 2:

You can access the Story of Stuff video series from YouTube or the Story of Stuff website:

<http://www.storyofstuff.org/movies>. The easiest would be to watch it streaming on the internet. If you need to download it, make sure your computer can play a .mov file. If you cannot, then contact the Green+Leaders Program Coordinator to get a .wmv file sent to you.

**Group Facilitation, Focused Conversation Method. The Canadian Institute of Cultural Affairs, 2012.*

Steps

Step 3:

On the day of your meeting, start by showing your participants any of the Story of Stuff videos. Note that each video is self-contained and does not need to be shown together with any of the others (including the original video released in 2007). Before you start, you can introduce the video and set the context using the following speaking notes or your own:

- This is a 20 minute video that looks at our materials economy and its impact on people and the planet
- As you know, I'm part of the Green+Leaders program that focuses on bringing sustainability into the workplace
- An important part of this work is creating connections with the people I work with and inspiring a culture of openness and dialogue about the issues we are facing
- I think the Story of Stuff provides touches on a lot of important issues that face us (especially here at work) and provides a rich context for some great conversation

Step 4:

Once the video has concluded, lead the group in a 20 minute discussion using the ToP© Focused Conversation Method. This method asks a series of questions in a natural order (using the same sequence the brain uses to process information).

Questions:

- Objective:** What parts of the feature do you remember? What images from the video are still with you?
- Reflective:** What feelings did you have when you listened? How did you feel at the end?
- Interpretive:** What came through to you as very important? What did you learn that you didn't know before?
- Decisional:** How specifically did you find this video helpful?

If you have a large group (more than 12) then consider breaking people into small groups for the discussion. If you do this, make sure you ask each group to share a theme that emerged from their discussion with the larger group.

Step 5:

Wrap-up the session by asking participants to share any final thoughts. Consider asking your co-workers if they would be interested in setting up regular (perhaps bi-monthly) discussions like this and plan a date for the next one.

Evaluation

Share any outcomes that emerged from the meeting as well as anything you learned from this experience to Green+Leaders Program Lead at sarah.currie@fraserhealth.ca