

6 Generate Respect.

Like nothing else we know of, *Sustain-it* understands the importance of being up-front and open. The approach respects the skill-sets and time-constraints of all stakeholders that are impacted by the effort.

7 Promote the Passion.

Creating passion should be a strategic goal built into any plan. Employees will detect a lack of commitment and passion. If you are not passionate about the program, initiative, product, they won't be either. *Sustain-it* takes into account the importance of delivering the passion by ensuring that the incentives and promotions that are built into any program are effectively communicated to keep managers and employees involved, interested and committed to sustaining the change.



8 Keep it Fresh.

In order for any program to be sustained it has to evolve over time and incorporate new messages and channels. *Sustain-it* recognizes the need to re-visit, reinforce, re-think and re-invest time in programs that are critical to a company's success and helps organizations stay committed to implementing for the long-term.

9 Reinforce the Messages.

For programs and initiatives to have the impact and meaning intended, the message needs to be communicated often and in many forms. Among other techniques, this is done by consistent branding of the program as an important aid to memorability and recall.

10 Leverage Corporate Assets.

Leverage Corporate Assets. How many times are corporate assets reinvented when a new leader emerges? Often. *Sustain-it* recognizes the importance of a new Leader putting their mark on a program or initiative, while balancing the tendency to "re-invent the wheel". *Sustain-it* ensures that your corporate assets, investments and knowledge are protected into tomorrow.

The executives we talked to felt that due to the expense, difficulty and high failure rate of program and process implementations, it was a matter of time before smart companies started focusing on sustaining their internal changes for the long-term *before* implementing them.

We agree wholeheartedly. For those companies, *Sustain-it* is already available to deliver, implement and ensure results. It can turn around failing programs and it can ensure the shine never comes off ideas that once seemed so brilliant when they first were in the planning stages. For progressive companies, it is a method and a means to guarantee the long-term effectiveness and sustained power of their internal programs and communication plans.

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Don't just implement it, *Sustain-it*™

Judy McLeish

Over the past year, we've been meeting with Executives, Customer Service Managers and Operational Managers in an attempt to learn why companies are having such a difficult time implementing and sustaining corporate initiatives and programs.

Regardless of where or who we visited we found that the story was always the same. Corporate efforts were losing focus, falling short of projected expectations, or dying with barely a whimper, after great expense and fanfare. We asked ourselves, what was the problem? We soon had answers:

Trend #1: Too Much Information!

The first thing we found was that information overload isn't a far-fetched media myth. It's real and in today's corporate milieu it's reaching epidemic proportions. We witnessed it personally at meeting after meeting. At one meeting, we asked a high-performing Branch Manager to identify what corporate initiatives and programs had been delivered to the branch within the past month. The results shocked us. Here's a list of materials and mandates that they had received:

- A new Money Laundering program and video. Viewing was mandatory.
- A six-minute summary video launching a new strategic vision.
- A Home Loan video, which remained un-opened, in its original package and had expired past its expected launch dates.
- A customer service program, which was to be communicated and implemented over the coming four-week timeframe.
- A new internal program launch that the Branch Manager had to be familiar with immediately, as it involved opening branches on Saturdays.

The Branch Manager's response to this overload of corporate information packages and timetables was one of undisguised frustration. She told us frankly that, "So much is thrown at us. They implement to death and pay lip-service to maintaining the programs." She pointed to the launch of another service program. "It's a duplication

of efforts. We already have a program that focuses on the essentials of service. It is merely the same program with a different name and another implementation style!"

Trend #2: Program Results – Great Programs that Miss the Mark on Execution.

The good news is, there's no shortage of great programs or imagination or big ideas percolating down from the top. On the contrary, we found that brilliantly packaged programs and initiatives arrived in droves, piling up on desks across the country, awaiting only proper implementation. These included programs for introducing new products, initiatives to improve sales, increase customer satisfaction and loyalty levels and other well-intentioned plans. However, they were failing somewhere along the line. The question was, where? We started finding clues:

- An RSP video at a major downtown branch still un-opened, nearly two months after the end of the RSP season.
- An employee in a leading retail environment wearing a t-shirt saying "Ask Me About XI" (A new product.) When asked, the employee professed complete ignorance and admitted that they should have found out about the product before putting on the t-shirt!
- A "funky" plastic card describing service standards that was made available at each teller-station in the Branch. When asked what it was for, the employee stated that it was, "just another marketing campaign from head-office."

Trend #3: Acquisitions, Joint Ventures, Alliances and Outsourcing Deals that Don't Deliver the Expected Results.

In our research, we found that intelligent Executive-office plans for improving corporate performance were continuously falling short of their intended results. We came across several outsourcing deals in crisis. In one instance, the deal was wonderfully thought out, smart and well-intentioned. Yet it was failing to meet the original objectives.

What had gone wrong? According to our source, the Executives knew the deal in intricate detail. They understood the rationale, the impact and the associated benefits. But when communicating the deal, the information was not successfully translated from the top to those most impacted.

The result was a lack of clarity around the rationale, the negotiated service level agreements and the changes to the existing program. More importantly, there was confusion as to how the deal impacted those most affected by it. The result was a good deal in crisis.

These are just some of the horror stories we heard over the past year. The truth is, it simply doesn't have to end this way. Smart companies are now recognizing the impact of these trends and are changing the way they communicate, deliver, implement and sustain corporate programs and initiatives. Which leads to the last trend we discovered.

Trend #4: A Few Get It.

All is not total gloom and doom. There are a few smart companies out there doing it right. We found them winning in three key areas, they were:

- Helping their employees cut through the information clutter by segmenting the information and delivering it in targeted, easy-to-use, motivational and entertaining ways.
- Meaningfully connecting with their employees. They are listening carefully and are aggressively rethinking how to grab the attention of their employee base.
- Focusing on not appearing as if they are racing after every new "fad" by demonstrating a commitment to long-term sustainable change.

Ensuring your implementation efforts don't become costly mistakes

According to independent surveys conducted by META Group, Gartner Group and the Standish Group, "the cost of strategic initiatives and project failure in business enterprises, government and other institutions ranges between \$80 and \$145 billion annually. In this context, "failed" is defined as programs and projects that were started but never

completed or those that were completed but were out of scope, behind schedule or over budget. More than 70% of all projects, including strategic initiatives, are canceled or have major problems before completion." For companies ready to launch programs, projects or initiatives, we have developed a unique approach called *Sustain-it*.

Sustain-it is a proven, customizable, flexible approach for ensuring that corporate efforts are not only successfully implemented, but are sustained indefinitely.

Before *Sustain-it* ►► The *Sustain-it* Approach

Generic Employee Communications	Highly Personalized, Segmented Communications
Customer-oriented Information	Customer and Employee-based Information
Professional	Highly Entertaining, Motivational
Statement of Facts	Emotionally Engaging
Executive Talking Heads	Learning, Anticipation, Surprise
Complex Program Delivery	Easy-to-use, Navigational
Values	Passion

Ten Guiding Principles that Help Sustain the Change

Sustain-it was designed to prevent grand implementation efforts from running out of steam. The following are the theoretical foundations of the product:

1 Make it Personal.

Companies have long understood the need for custom communications programs for customers. They spend huge amounts of time understanding, segmenting and tailoring messages to their important customer base. Yet, when it comes to implementing and communicating change with their employees they often send out generic messages, bland training packages and undifferentiated information kits. In contradistinction, the *Sustain-it* approach has been developed with the individual employee in mind. Each employee audience is assessed, analyzed and segmented. Once the segmentation is defined, information is carefully targeted to ensure that the "right employees are hearing the right messages at the right time."

2 Grab Attention.

Competing for your employees' attention is getting harder. You have seconds to impress and connect with them. If it's not stimulating and relevant the information won't be internalized. The *Sustain-it* approach understands that people are overwhelmed by the amount of information they receive. So, it ensures that companies cut through the clutter and meaningfully connect with their employees and leaders.

3 Embrace Emotion.

We agree with David Calne – "the essential difference between emotion and reason is that emotion leads to action while reason leads to conclusions." The *Sustain-it* approach recognizes that it is critical to inspire employees with a call to action that builds momentum and excites passion and challenges possibility. Our approach focuses on inspiring employees about what is new, while also answering questions around what may be both potentially frightening and threatening to them.

4 Bring it to Life.

According to Don Wetmore, an internationally acclaimed expert on time management, "We retain 10% of what we read. We retain 20% of what we hear. We retain 35% what we see. We retain 50% of what we hear and see. We retain 70% of what we say. We retain 90% of what we do." The *Sustain-it* philosophy incorporates sophisticated learning, anticipation and surprise in every part of its communication plan.

5 Make it Easy.

The increasing trend toward launching new products and services through a combination of video, web-casts, radio, brochures, binders, newsletters has not increased the chances of long-term success. The equation is simple. If it is hard to use, it will die. The *Sustain-it* approach is centered on this fundamental belief.

