



**CHARLOTTESVILLE AREA  
BETTER BUSINESS CHALLENGE**

**SMART. SUSTAINABLE. SUCCESSFUL.**

## Charlottesville Better Business Challenge

C'ville Coffee

Global Sustainability, Fall 2011

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Community Partners: Better World Betty, Local Energy Alliance Program

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## I. ABSTRACT

By working with C'Ville Coffee in the Better Business Challenge and through our Global Sustainability course, we were not only able to help C'Ville Coffee become more sustainable but also developed our own skills and knowledge of sustainability. Our objectives in the project were to evaluate the level of sustainability Toan Nguyen (owner of C'ville Coffee) had already accomplished, plan additional projects that we could accomplish during the semester, and take action through our collaboration with Mr. Nguyen and Terri Kent, our Community Partner.

Mr. Nguyen had already accomplished a lot through previous participation in the Better Business Challenge and through his own belief in sustainable business practices. More than half of the scorecard was already completed by Mr. Nguyen, but we saw need for growth in the area of customer involvement. This is where we devised the idea to create signs encouraging people to "just use one" paper towel. This idea was taken from the one used on the grounds of The University which encourages people to be more conservative in their use of paper towels. Additionally, we surveyed customers on how many paper towels they generally use after washing their hands. We hope that our signs will influence customers at C'ville Coffee to reduce paper towel waste.

We asked a contact experienced in advertisements and signage to help create the sign to be used in C'Ville Coffee. We used the same color scheme and logo of the Better Business Challenge so that the customers would be aware that the community was backing this idea. The signs were printed, laminated, and hung in the bathrooms and kitchens of C'Ville Coffee—where they are in clear sight for when people use paper towels.

## II. INTRODUCTION

The issue that this project addresses is sustainable business practice, which has to start on a small, grass-roots scale. Through the Charlottesville Better Business Challenge, sustainable change is possible. The mission of the Charlottesville Better Business Challenge is to increase efficiency and sustainability in local businesses, while raising awareness for their efforts. Organizing a friendly competition and implementing cost-cutting strategies lightens the usual struggle of change. By serving as concierges, it was our job to guide C'ville Coffee toward more sustainable practices, some of which they may have previously been oblivious to. The connection between UVA and the competing businesses creates a support system within the community.

Our community partners were Better World Betty and the Local Energy Alliance Program (LEAP); resources that help the community become more sustainable. Through Better World Betty, a local non-profit whose slogan is "green living made easier," the Better Business Challenge was created and has been our focus for the semester.

We have been working as concierges to C'ville Coffee, a local coffee shop located minutes from the Downtown Mall. C'ville Coffee's owner, Mr. Toan Nguyen, informed us of the shop's obstacles, after which it was our job to guide him towards solving these problems. The community itself is a stakeholder, but the business owner will feel the most direct impact. From previous experience, we know that materials best for our environment are not always the most cost-efficient. With rising costs for the owner, come rising prices for the customer—inevitably affecting the community as a whole. Therefore, the economic impact will be the most prominent. One of the smaller, yet significant obstacles we encountered is the fact that Mr. Nguyen

does not own the building or the surrounding property of C'ville Coffee. This proved to be a hindrance to the possible sustainable actions we wanted to accomplish.

C'ville Coffee already implements many sustainable practices into its everyday operations. In addition to large amounts of natural lighting, LED lighting can be found throughout the shop. To reduce waste, C'ville Coffee has actual mugs, plates, and bowls for customers to use. When opting for carryout, C'ville Coffee uses cornhusk to-go containers. These containers are completely biodegradable once put into the environment. Furthermore, C'ville Coffee recycles all of its recyclable material through Van Der Linde Recycling.

The framework of the competition was our primary way to approach the issues at hand. The "Challenge Scorecard" functioned as our guideline for the project and we gained new ideas and insights along the way from our personal experience with C'ville Coffee. The Scorecard contains six categories (Energy, Water, Waste Reduction, Transportation, Leadership, and Purchasing) from which the competing businesses gain points for various sustainable actions that they have already completed or will have accomplished by the completion of the challenge. Through our meetings, we helped to achieve the goals of the challenge as well as some of those specific to C'ville Coffee.

### III. BODY

One of our biggest goals this semester was to create signs to hang up around sinks and paper towel/napkin dispensers in order to encourage reduced waste of paper. Many people use too many paper towels when drying their hands. A simple sign encouraging the use of only one paper towel can help to reduce this waste. This approach is easy to accomplish, simple to implement, and above all, cost-efficient. Sometimes the simplest actions can create the biggest impacts. We planned to create an attractive and informative sign that would blend in well with the ambiance of C'ville Coffee. We were connected with a woman who creates signs for events whom agreed to assist us in the design of the signs, which were then approved by Mr. Nguyen.

In the design process, we sat down with the designer and discussed the best way to create an appealing, yet influential sign. She stated that a catchy slogan was needed to grasp the customers' attention in the few moments they have when reaching for a paper towel. Then once they have seen the sign, including several facts about the usage and environmental effects of paper towels would create the biggest impact. We decided that the idea of "Just Use One" from the Global Sustainability groups on grounds was catchy and would also tie into the community involvement between UVA and the Better Business Challenge. Mr. Nguyen specifically requested that the Better Business Challenge logo be an essential part of the sign because he wanted people to see that it was with the encouragement of the community and not just his own action. This is why we decided to use not only the logo at the bottom, but also use the colors of the logo for the font in the sign.

Image 1 (Sign Design)



In order to determine if our signs will have an impact, we decided to survey a sample of customers asking how many paper towels they use when drying their hands. The survey read, "How many paper towels do you generally use after washing your hands?" with answer options: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 5+. We plan to survey the customers again at a later date and then compare the results of the two surveys to determine the effectiveness of our signs.

In addition to encouraging paper conservation, the signs will be advertising C'ville Coffee's participation in the Better Business Challenge. Furthermore, many businessmen/women are customers at C'ville Coffee, therefore, we hope that the signs will encourage them to participate in the challenge in the future. At the least, the signs may encourage those business people to suggest or implement similar sustainable practices into their respective workplaces.

Another goal for the challenge was to complete the analyses from the free software offered by the EPA and LEAP in order to help Mr. Nguyen create goals for water and energy conservation. We provided an optional, free energy audit from one of the Better World Betty Volunteers (Tim) to assess the lighting of C'ville Coffee. We sent Mr. Nguyen the links for the software, and it remains his choice on whether or not to complete the analyses. Mr. Nguyen believes that these benchmark programs will help him in setting goals for further conservation.

Initially, we had four separate ideas for Mr. Nguyen to consider: a rain barrel, green cleaning products, signage, and the EPA and LEAP assessments. Given the time constraint of one semester, we had to narrow this list in order to set a realistic goal that we could see through to the end.

The idea behind a rain barrel for C'ville Coffee was to allow Mr. Nguyen to grow his own select herbs/vegetables for use in his food dishes. Unfortunately, when the idea was brought up, Mr. Nguyen had several concerns leading us to focus on our other ideas. These concerns included that he mostly employs students who have varying schedules due to workload and courses. Additionally, Mr. Nguyen is always very busy himself, so it was impractical to assign someone the job of taking care of the plants on a daily basis. His fear was that a lot of work would be put into the project and then there would never be a stable schedule for the care of the plants. In concerns to the rain barrel, we did not have enough time to gain approval from the property owner for placement of the barrel outside of C'ville Coffee.

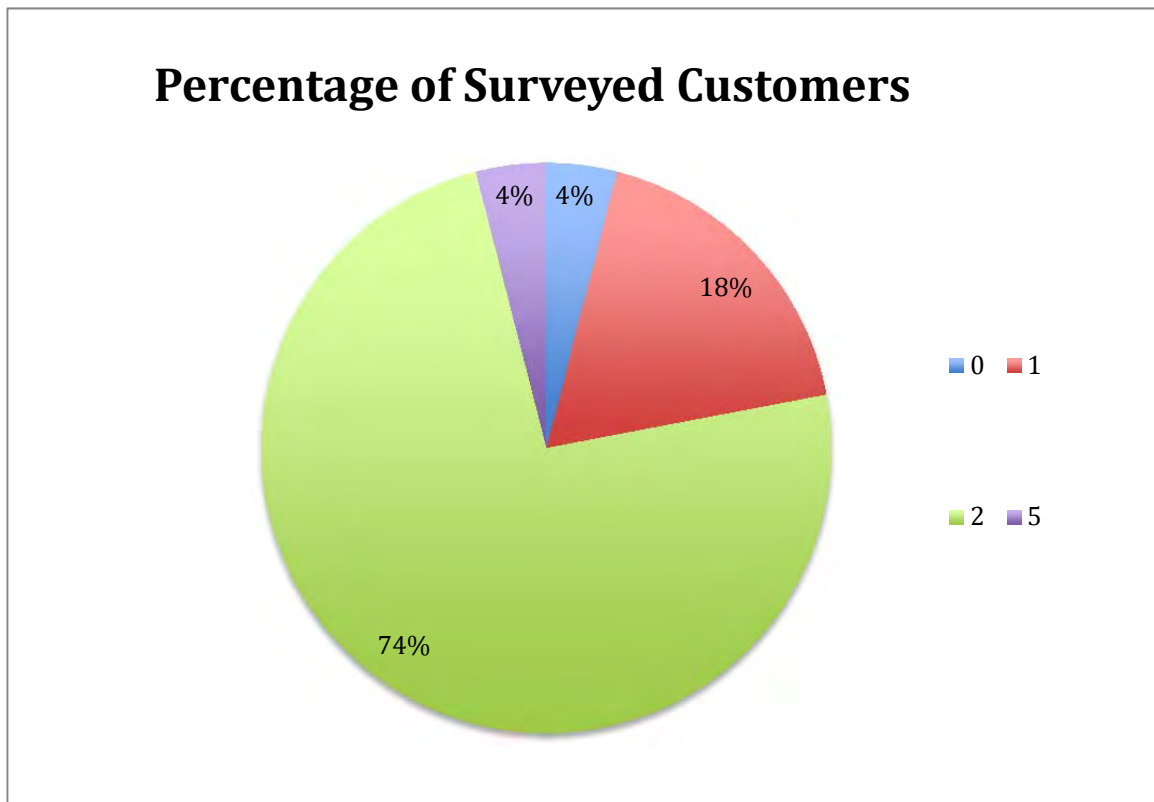
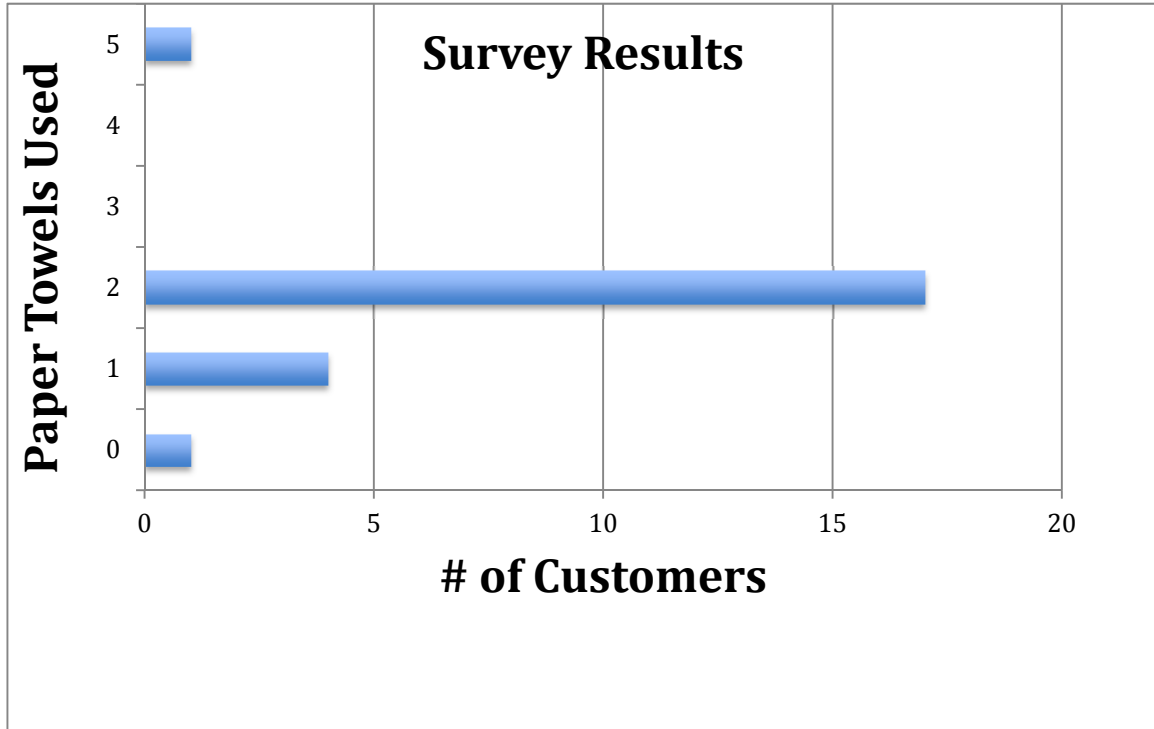
Mr. Nguyen had used green cleaning products in the past, but found their odor to be displeasing to the customers. New products have since been developed, including "Simple Green" and "greenworks." We introduced Mr. Nguyen to these products, but after considering cost differences, it will be his decision on whether to use them.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

The design for our project was to accomplish something in the short run, while fostering growth for a continuation of environmental action in the future. Our greatest accomplishment through this project was not only being able to work effectively with C'ville Coffee and Mr. Nguyen, but also the creation and completion of our "Just Use One" sign. By doing so, we hope that C'ville Coffee will see a reduced usage in paper towel costs and waste. We've also empowered Mr. Nguyen to continue seeking additional sustainable practices. He now has the EPA and LEAP software at his disposal to assess his lighting and water.

The idea of a rain barrel is still possible, but relies on the approval of the property owner for the success. We believe that if Mr. Nguyen finds the time and resources to successfully manage a rain barrel, it would pay off in the long run. Rain barrels are also very effective when using them for toilet basin water. Toilets do not require purified water for usage so the rain barrel water could act as a substitute and reduce costs. Additionally, Mr. Nguyen must assess his budget and determine if green cleaning products are a realistic possibility for C'ville Coffee.

i. Measurement: Survey Results



Our survey results showed that over  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the sampled customers used more than one paper towel after washing their hands. In contrast, only 22% of the sampled customers said they used one or fewer paper towels. Clearly, there is room for improvement and we hope that our "Just Use One" signs can help.

ii. Documentation

Image 2





Image 3



Image 4



## V. FUTURE WORK

Due to scheduling conflicts for next semester, we unfortunately cannot continue as a team in the Better Business Challenge; however, we still hope to keep up with our results. After Winter Break, we hope to survey the customers at C'Ville Coffee once again in hopes that we will see a reduction in paper towel usage. We will change the survey to pertain solely to their usage at C'Ville Coffee so that we can evaluate the effectiveness of our signs. Along with this, we hope to remain in contact with Toan and hear about his new ideas for a more sustainable business. We also plan to send a copy of our sign to Teri Kent who will have the ability to put the sign on the Better Business Challenge website as a resource for other businesses to use

## VI. LESSONS LEARNED

We've learned many things from our participation in this Challenge, both through successes and failures. As we mentioned, the time constraint of one semester was our biggest barrier. We were only able to meet with Mr. Nguyen three times throughout the semester due to varying schedules and obligations. This hindered our ability to move forward with our goals because Mr. Nguyen's approval was required for each step of the process. To overcome this, we set realistic goals that were simple, time-efficient, yet effective and influential. The other minor barrier was the property owner having say over the changes that could be made to the interior and exterior foundations of the building. Resolving this issue remains dependent on Mr. Nguyen and the property owner's cooperation. For people who have never run their own business, this was definitely a big lesson learned for the future. There are many factors to take into consideration while running your own business, some of which people never think about. Business owners must think about the effects their actions take on the customers, such as Toan's problems with previous green cleaning products. Whether or not things are cost-efficient in the long run is another major factor.

A number of our initial goals were found to be ambitious and required a large time commitment. Analyzing C'ville Coffee's spending on cleaning supplies and comparing that amount to the cost of new green cleaning supplies was something out of our scope. However, Mr. Nguyen can still achieve this in the future. Additionally, the rain barrel remains a possibility with the consent of the property owner and the allotment of time by Mr. Nguyen for the management of the barrel. Researching new green options was also something interesting to learn in this experience. The idea of a rain barrel actually came from a restaurant that Abby went to. This restaurant used rain barrels and noted that in their menu. The research to discover costs and other possible uses of the barrels was very enlightening and something that definitely enhanced our experience and engagement in this project.

Creating change, we discovered, is not an easy feat. This is especially true when under the constraints of running a profitable business like C'ville Coffee. The input and assistance of many people is required for a successful change campaign. Most importantly, creating change is a large time commitment and must be a primary focus. The hardest part for us during this semester was finding a suitable time for Mr. Nguyen and us to meet. A business owner and student's schedules are not only very busy but also overlap in obligations, such as operating hours and class times. This is important to consider when taking on a job such as ours.

If doing a similar project in the future, we will want to have a larger allotment of time for completing tasks. This was another one of our major setbacks, and it had a large influence on how much we were able to accomplish.

## VII. APPENDICES

### i. Bill of Materials

Our only materials included the two binders given to us to keep information, slips of paper for the surveys, seven sheets of 8 ½ x 11 paper for the signs, and the lamination for four of those signs.

### ii. Costs and Budget

Our goals were short-term and cost-efficient. In all, the designer for the sign was a friend of ours so the only cost was for the printing and lamination, which was done at the Fed-Ex in the Barracks Road Shopping Center. The printing cost approximately five dollars and the lamination for the four signs cost approximately nine dollars. As a result our total cost was around fourteen dollars. Mr. Nguyen ended up covering all costs associated with the creation of the signs.

### iii. Acknowledgments

We would both like to acknowledge several people who helped us accomplish our goals throughout the semester. First and foremost, Toan Nguyen was always very encouraging, helpful, and enthusiastic about our ideas throughout the semester. Even though he has a very busy schedule, he responded on time to our emails and always gave us his feedback. We would also like to thank Ashley Wooten, who helped us to design the signs now in use at C'Ville Coffee. She gave us guidelines and tips, but ultimately let us learn how to design it on our own, which made for a great learning experience in the area of design. Lastly, we would like to thank both Teri Kent, founder of Better World Betty, and our TA, Harriett Jameson. Both Teri and Harriett helped us to understand various concepts of sustainability through different focuses and were available for questions whenever we needed them.

### iv. Additional Documentation

Potential rain barrel for C'ville Coffee:




#### RTS Companies 50-Gallon Flat Back Rain Barrel Woodgrain 50 Gallons

**\$101** online

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ 22 reviews  1 person +1'd this

Explore all the opportunities that fresh, soft, and free rainwater have to offer with the rts home accents 50 Gallon rain barrel. Our authentic oak barrel texture is molded into each barrel and will not fade, rot or risk insect infestation.

Woodgrain - \$101 

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