



**CHARLOTTESVILLE AREA
BETTER BUSINESS CHALLENGE**

SMART. SUSTAINABLE. SUCCESSFUL.

CHARLOTTESVILLE BETTER BUSINESS CHALLENGE

Mudhouse

Global Sustainability, Fall 2011

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Table of Contents

- I. Abstract
- II. Introduction
- III. Approach
- IV. Schedule
- V. Conclusion
- VI. Future Work
- VII. Lessons Learned
- VIII. Appendices
 - A. Sample Scorecard
 - B. Bicycling Brochure

Abstract

As student volunteers working with the local nonprofit organization Better World Betty, our group participated in the Charlottesville Area Better Business Challenge by assisting one of the more than 100 businesses taking part in the Challenge in their efforts to better implement sustainable business practices. Specifically, we worked with Mudhouse, a coffee shop located on the historic Downtown Mall that serves delicious coffee in a hip, funky atmosphere. In our meetings with Dan Pabst, Director of Operations for Mudhouse, our initial goal was to help him become more acquainted with the structure of the Better Business Challenge and to start thinking about areas of the business that could use some improvement.

In our discussion of Mudhouse's daily operations, the physical condition of the building, and the sustainable decisions being made in purchasing, preparing, and serving their products, it seemed as though the business had already taken great steps towards sustainability and we were having difficulty identifying additional projects to undertake. However, when we reviewed the six categories of "action items" that composed the Challenge scorecard, it became evident that transportation was the one area in which Mudhouse was lacking compared to the other points already earned.

Based on this objective, we began brainstorming ways in which Mudhouse could earn more Challenge points for transportation. Given their convenient central location in downtown Charlottesville and the fact that they have created a fun, relaxed vibe in their coffeehouse where customers come and hang out, we decided to focus on educating Mudhouse employees and patrons about alternative modes of transportation, especially bicycling. Dan Pabst expressed interest in adding a bike rack in front of or behind the building to encourage people to ride their bikes to work or to get coffee. We also wanted to create a colorful brochure that could be handed out to customers and staff members that listed some benefits of cycling and resources around the Charlottesville area that would hopefully encourage them to practice a more sustainable lifestyle by biking more and driving less.

Introduction

For our local sustainability project, our workshop is partnering with the nonprofit organization Better World Betty, founded by Charlottesville resident Teri Kent in 2008, to facilitate the implementation of the Charlottesville Area Better Business Challenge. Teri's mission for Better World Betty is to encourage Charlottesville community members to adopt a more sustainable lifestyle, especially those who believe being environmentally friendly is too difficult a task. Teri focuses on providing people with all the materials they might need to make more "green" lifestyle choices through an extensive directory of local, state, and national resources relating to sustainable living. Teri utilizes various sources of media such as an informative and user-friendly website, regular radio talk show appearances, and in-person outreach events to educate people in an easily accessible and interactive way.

Better World Betty, along with other businesses and organizations including the Local Energy Alliance Program (LEAP), the James River Green Building Council, the University of Virginia Darden School of Business, Dominion Resources, and the City of Charlottesville and Albemarle County government councils, have been working to establish the Charlottesville Area Better Business Challenge in order to promote sustainability among business owners and consumers. The philosophy behind this initiative is that businesses know they should become more eco-friendly, not only because they recognize the impact they have on society and the natural environment but also because incorporating sustainable practices into their business model will ultimately help them become more competitive in the marketplace. Even though companies realize this is a smarter way of doing business, they often believe they lack the resources and knowledge to affect change. The Better Business Challenge attempts to remedy these problems by helping companies in the Charlottesville community achieve the new "triple bottom line" of profits, people, and the planet. This goal hopes to ultimately be achieved through a friendly competition among neighboring businesses designed around a points-based scorecard, organized to help each business identify its current performance, set goals to improve eco-friendly practices, and recognize their accomplishments along the way.

Our workshop will be split into pairs of students, with each pair assigned one participating business to work with. Our role was introduced by Teri as a "conciierge" (or consultant) for our particular business in order to help the owner gain more information and make progress in the Better Business Challenge. Specifically, each pair will be responsible for meeting with the business owner during the month to answer any questions they might have and to offer suggestions for tasks listed on the scorecard and how they could implement those ideas. We will keep in contact with the business owner throughout the month, keeping detailed accounts of our conversations, and meet with our community partner, Teri Kent, to discuss the progress we make and any difficulties we may encounter. Our goal for this project is to provide excellent service to our assigned business to help inspire sustainability in the Charlottesville community.

Approach

After Teri Kent introduced our workshop to the Better Business Challenge, she surveyed the 100 businesses that agreed to participate regarding interest in the "student concierge" program. Based on this information, each pair in our class was assigned a particular business to contact. Originally, we were matched with the Habitat Store in Charlottesville; however, since neither of us have access to a car in order to get to the location, we requested to partner with a different business that was more easily accessible.

We were then assigned to work with Mudhouse Coffeehouse located on the downtown mall in Charlottesville. What started as a small cart being pushed up and down the mall, was transformed into a cool, trendy neighborhood coffeehouse that attracts all types of creative people looking for a comfortable place to relax with a cup of high-quality coffee. Recently, Mudhouse has expanded to include a second coffeehouse location in downtown Crozet, as well as smaller espresso-smoothie bars at three Exxon stations throughout Charlottesville.

In our role as a "student concierge" for Mudhouse, we will be meeting with Dan Pabst, the Director of Operations, to help with the business's progress given their limited staff and time to devote to the Challenge. Our responsibility will be to support Mudhouse throughout the process by meeting with Dan once a month to understand his goals and note any questions he has, and then to conduct research and deliver possible solutions.

In order to identify goals for the business to tackle, we will be referencing the Challenge scorecard, which lists "action items" that are the source of available points that the business can earn. The scorecard is divided into six categories - energy, transportation, waste reduction, water, purchasing, and leadership - with each category broken down into a "Ready," "Set," "Go" format that facilitates the planning and goal-setting functions of the Challenge. Although the full scorecard can be accessed by the business by registering for an account on the Challenge website, a sample is provided in Appendix A.

Schedule

Due to the change in business partner at the beginning of the project, our group was finally assigned to work with Mudhouse around the middle of October. We contacted Dan to introduce ourselves and set up our first meeting for Wednesday, October 19th. At the initial meeting, our first priority was to help Dan create an account on the Better Business Challenge website and to complete the online scorecard in each of the six categories. By talking with Dan and filling out the scorecard together, we realized that Mudhouse was already a very sustainable business, but there were a few areas we identified that Dan wanted to work on, especially in transportation.

After our meeting with Dan, we met with Teri on Thursday, October 20th during our workshop and discussed the business's current progress and initial goals. Based on our report, Teri gave us feedback on our proposal for installing a new bike rack and suggested we contact Michael Promisel, a second-year UVA student also working with the Better Business Challenge as a concierge who was researching similar information for another business. After this meeting with Teri Kent, we spent some time researching possible alternative sources from which to request a bike rack and emailed Mike to see if he had found any useful information.

We received an email back from Mike on November 8th with the following information:

The City of Charlottesville has a small number of bicycle racks they are looking to install near bus stops. They have not determined the exact locations yet. So, if you are a business within the City of Charlottesville, are within eyesight of a bus stop, and are interested in having a bicycle rack, contact the City and ask to be considered. Contact: Jeanie Alexander, City Traffic Engineer, (434) 970-3182

With this new development, we then emailed Dan Pabst from Mudhouse on November 14th to let him know what we had been working on and to confirm that he was still interested in pursuing this concept. Teri came back to talk to our group during our workshop on November 17th, at which point we updated her on the status of our project and talked to her about creating a brochure about bicycling that Mudhouse and other businesses could use. We then received Dan's confirmation on November 20th that he was excited about the city's initiative to install more bike racks, and tried to set up a meeting with him before Thanksgiving but it did not work out with our schedules.

After returning to UVA from the holiday break, we called Jeanie Alexander, the City Traffic Engineer, who explained that a bike rack on that part of the downtown mall seemed like a good idea because it is a busy area with many businesses, but that due to the historic nature of the pedestrian mall, a bike rack could only be installed further down the road rather than right by the storefront, which we said would not be a problem. We also created a brochure about bicycling and emailed it to Teri Kent so that Mudhouse and other businesses participating in the Better Business Challenge could benefit from the resource. Before the end of the fall semester, we tried meeting with Dan again to discuss the progress we had made and plans for the future, but did not hear back from him.

Conclusion

Mudhouse's downtown Charlottesville location was opened in 1995, but recently underwent a full interior renovation. Although the historic exterior of the coffeehouse was not able to be changed, many sustainable choices were made when designing the new interior space, including changing the lighting fixtures to LED lights and installing a hot water heater that is powered by excess heat from the kitchen's ovens. Mudhouse also minimizes waste from plastic water bottles and disposable coffee cups by serving beverages in reusable drinkware, and offers spent coffee grounds to customers for free to use as fertilizer in their gardens.

Spurred by the renovation, one of the personal goals Dan expressed to us was calculating how much of a reduction in energy and water consumption the business had achieved through the recent renovations. Although he admitted to be a bit of an idealist, Dan said he was hoping to realize a 20% reduction in energy costs and a 5% reduction in water usage by the end of the Challenge, which he can determine by comparing past and future utility bills, and possibly conducting a post-renovation energy audit.

Secondly, the one category of the scorecard that we identified as being much lower than the others was transportation. To work on this aspect, Dan communicated an interest in installing a bike rack behind the building in order to encourage employees to consider more sustainable transportation options. Since the business does not have substantial financial resources to contribute to something like this, we spent time researching to see if there were any free, or at least significantly subsidized, bike racks that the city of Charlottesville might be willing to install.

Looking at prices online, a new bike rack would cost upwards of a couple hundred dollars, which was well outside the available budget. When we learned about the city's program for installing bike racks near bus stops, we thought this would be an ideal solution because the free downtown trolley stops at the intersection right by the Mudhouse location. In the general vicinity around Mudhouse there were already four bike racks, but through observational research it was clear that during peak hours of the day they were all full to capacity with bikes, which would discourage employees. Although we compromised on the fact that the bike rack would not be installed behind the building as Dan originally requested, this was the best alternative.

Finally, when designing the brochure, we thought it was important to include information that would highlight the economic, personal health, and environmental benefits of bicycling. We also included safety tips and the contact information for several bike stores and repair shops in Charlottesville, in addition to a section about the bike mentor program offered by the Alliance for Community Choice in Transportation (ACCT), which are great resources for people living and working in Charlottesville.

Future Work

We are very inspired by the sustainable business practices already demonstrated at Mudhouse, but we believe there are still plenty of things they could do to improve throughout the course of the Better Business Challenge. One step would be to implement a program to educate customers and other businesses about sustainability at Mudhouse. Simple messages placed on tables each month, or an article with sustainability updates in an online newsletter would be an easy way to communicate with customers and spread the word about sustainability issues.

Since there are quite a few businesses in the food industry participating in the Challenge, another future goal could be to start a quarterly "sustainability at the kitchen table" program for local businesses to have a chance to see what others are doing and share ideas. The participating restaurants and cafes would take turns in hosting fellow business owners to discuss sustainability issues, which would help to foster collaboration and make significant steps towards more environmentally friendly businesses.

Although our role as "student concierge" ends at the end of the semester in December, we hope that Mudhouse will continue the efforts that they have started, and will keep earning scorecard points on their way to gaining recognition in the Better Business Challenge.

Lessons Learned


It was very inspiring to work with Mudhouse because the business was already so sustainable, and we enjoyed working with Dan Pabst because he was open to new ideas on ways to improve. Some challenges we faced in the planning of our project were the limited budget for further sustainable improvements, especially following the recent completion of the interior renovation; the strict preservation guidelines on the store's exterior façade and front patio space due to the historic nature of Charlottesville's downtown pedestrian mall; the difficulty of coordinating our student class and activity schedules with Dan's busy agenda in order to meet with him in person, rather than entirely communicating via email; and most significantly, the limited time within which to complete the project, as it had to be something large enough in scope to make a noticeable difference for the business, but yet small enough that it could be reasonably accomplished within the timeframe of a single semester.

Besides learning to work within these constraints, it was very interesting to talk to some of our fellow classmates and learn about different businesses around Charlottesville and the kinds of sustainable programs that they are implementing. Simply going through the different "action items" on the Challenge scorecard was a beneficial experience, as many of the tasks we had never heard of before and after researching some of them, learned that many were practices we could participate in even as individuals. Overall, serving as a student concierge in the Better Business Challenge was a very rewarding experience and a unique way to learn about the practical application of sustainability principles within a local context.

Appendix A: Sample Scorecard

THE BETTER BUSINESS CHALLENGE SAMPLE SCORECARD FOR CERTIFICATION 		
GET STARTED NOW! CERTIFICATION TAKES JUST 40 POINTS. Below is a <i>sample</i> of actions you can take today. All actions on this scorecard earn 1 point toward certification. You can even include scorecard actions you have <i>already</i> taken!		
 ENERGY	 TRANSPORTATION	 WASTE REDUCTION
Have you developed a list of energy conservation or efficiency action items? Do you use natural lighting whenever possible? Do you use task lighting to minimize overhead room lighting? Have you replaced 50% of incandescent light bulbs with CFLs or LEDs? Have you set company thermostats to recommended ENERGY STAR settings? Have you set water heaters at 120 F and added an insulation blanket?	Have you met with staff to solicit ideas on reducing fuel costs or improving transportation options? Does your company promote transportation options including public transportation, biking and walking? Have you conducted an inventory of company vehicles to identify opportunities for replacing low MPG with more efficient ones? Does your company regularly check fleet tire pressure for optimum fuel use? Have you instituted a no-idling policy for company vehicles, delivery vehicles (i.e. vehicles delivering goods to your company) and/or customers? Has your company participated in Clean Commute Day?	Have you met with staff to solicit ideas on reducing waste? Does your company recycle? Do you regularly use double-sided printing and copying? Do you have newsletters, reports, paycheck vouchers, etc. available online? Have you converted from Styrofoam and single-use containers to reusable items? Do you donate used electronics or use e-waste recycling options? Do you minimize water bottle usages by providing a water cooler or filtered water pitcher? Do you offer discounts or rebates for customers who bring their own packaging (e.g. bags or cups)?
 WATER	 PURCHASING	 LEADERSHIP
Have you met with staff to solicit ideas on water saving options? Have you detected and repaired any plumbing leaks? Have you minimized irrigation of lawn and landscape areas? Have you replaced inefficient fixtures with low-flow varieties? Do you have signage to encourage employees and clients to conserve water use? Do you have guidelines for reducing water use when washing fleet vehicles?	Does your company prioritize selection of products and supplies that incorporate recycled materials? Do you use at least 30% or more post-consumer recycled printer/copier paper? Do you select recycled-content paper products (paper towels, toilet paper, and so on)? Have you eliminated use of single serve bottled water? Do you regularly select local sources when making purchasing decisions for goods and services, including food? Do you use "greener" cleaning products (e.g. GreenSeal or GreenLogo)? Do you purchase computers and similar electronic equipment EPEAT certified?	Have you appointed an internal "green team" or green team leader to champion the company's sustainability efforts? Have you publicized the company's participation in the Challenge? Have you submitted before/after photos of Challenge actions? Have you shared sustainability goals, policies, and practices with your staff and customers? Have you recruited at least three other businesses to join the Challenge? Have you advertised the company's green practices to clients and prospective new employees? Have 50% of your employees signed up for Better World Betty's and LEAP's e-newsletters?
See cvillebetterbiz.org for information.		


ASSISTANCE AND TRIP ROUTES



DEPENDING ON WHERE YOU LIVE, THERE ARE MANY DIFFERENT POSSIBLE ROUTES FOR A BIKE TRIP. THE ALLIANCE FOR COMMUNITY CHOICE IN TRANSPORTATION OFFERS A FREE BIKE MENTOR PROGRAM THAT LINKS A PERSON WITH A BIKE MENTOR. THE BIKE MENTOR WILL HELP PEOPLE BY SELECTING THE BEST ROUTES FOR THEIR TRIP, MAKING SURE THEY HAVE GOOD EQUIPMENT, AND WILL GO WITH THEM ON THEIR FIRST RIDE OR TWO.

TO REQUEST A BIKE MENTOR, PLEASE CALL AT (434)295 6554 OR EMAIL INFO@TRANSPORTATIONCHOICE.ORG

RESOURCES:
-WWW.RIDESHAREINFO.ORG
-WWW.AFTEROILEV.COM
-WWW.ADLTBICYCLING.COM
-WWW.TRANSPORTATIONCHOICE.ORG



WHY DRIVE TO WORK WHEN YOU CAN BIKE?

BENEFITS OF CYCLING INCLUDE:
SAVING MONEY
REDUCING THE CARBON FOOTPRINT
GETTING A GOOD EXERCISE

BIKE SAFETY TIPS:

- ALWAYS WEAR A HELMET AND APPROPRIATE CLOTHING
- BE VISIBLE, ESPECIALLY AT NIGHT
- DO NOT RIDE TOO CLOSE TO THE CURB
- MAKE EYE CONTACT WITH DRIVERS TO MAKE SURE YOU ARE SEEN
- DO NOT USE HEADPHONES
- USE SIGNALS TO INFORM DRIVERS OF YOUR INTENTIONS
- ALWAYS BE AWARE AND TRY TO PREDICT A DRIVER'S INTENTIONS

Back Cover

Front Cover



How IT CAN SAVE MONEY:

STATISTICS BASED ON A 25 MILES PER GALLON CAR WITH \$3.3 PER GALLON, A 10 MILES ROUNDTRIP TO WORK AND BACK, AN APPROXIMATION OF TAX, MAINTENANCE, AND INSURANCE IS INCLUDED.

- CYCLING INSTEAD OF DRIVING A CAR TO WORK CAN SAVE YOU UP TO \$125 A MONTH!
- THAT MEANS IT CAN SAVE YOU \$1510 ANNUALLY TO CYCLE TO WORK!



REDUCING THE CARBON FOOTPRINT:

- YOUR CAR EMITS AROUND 20 POUNDS OF CO₂ PER GALLON!
- FOR ABOUT EVERY 10 MILES YOU DRIVE YOU RELEASE 8 POUNDS OF CO₂ GAS!
- CYCLING ON THE OTHER HAND DOES NOT EMIT ANY CO₂ AND IS ENVIROMENTALLY SAFE!

EXERCISE

How CYCLING CAN IMPROVE YOUR HEALTH:

IT IS ONE OF THE EASIEST WAYS TO EXERCISE

CYCLING BUILDS STAMINA, STRENGTH, MUSCLE TONE, AND IMPROVES CARDIOVASCULAR FITNESS

CYCLING TO WORK INCREASES CARDIOVASCULAR FITNESS BY 3-7%

CYCLING 20 MILES A WEEK REDUCES THE RISK OF CORONARY HEART DISEASE BY 50%

STEADY CYCLING BURNS UP TO 300 CALORIES PER HOUR AND HELPS BUILD MUSCLE

CYCLING CAN ALSO REDUCE STRESS AND IMPROVE COORDINATION!

BICYCLE SHOPS IN CHARLOTTESVILLE:

BLUE RIDGE CYCLERY 1043 MILLMONT STREET, CHARLOTTESVILLE, VA 22903 PHONE: 434-995-2453

BIKE FACTORY OF CHARLOTTESVILLE 198 ZAN RD. CHARLOTTESVILLE, VA 22901 PHONE: 434-975-2453

BLUE WHEEL BICYCLES IX CENTER - 941 2ND ST. SE, CHARLOTTESVILLE, VA 22902 PHONE: 434-977-1870

C'VILLE BIKE & TRI 629 BERKMAR CIRCLÉ, CHARLOTTESVILLE, VA 22901 PHONE: 434-975-1900

PERFORMANCE BICYCLE 234 ZAN ROAD SEMINOLE SQUARE SHOPPING CENTER, CHARLOTTESVILLE, VA 22901 PHONE: 434-963-9161



Inside Left

Inside Right