

The Scene

- The firm had dabbled in sustainability efforts with the creation of a “green” team, started by a group of interested employees
- The executive leadership had been focused on strategic growth over the last few years and therefore there was minimal green initiative engagement at the management level
- The result was an ad-hoc and fragmented program, with very little employee involvement and no external market positioning

Objectives

- Position the firm as the leader in environmental sustainability among law firms in the region to:
 - enhance firm brand and reputation with clients and potential clients
 - position the firm's green initiative to attract top talent
- Add environmental sustainability as the third component of its overall corporate social responsibility program and build employee collaboration and engagement to enhance morale

Process and Achievements

Management Buy-in and Thought Leadership

- Worked with firm management to obtain leadership buy-in through a number of discussions and presentations
- Collaborated on thought development to set the stage for launching a comprehensive program
- Created a core team to manage the program consisting of leading firm management and including the Heads of Administration, Marketing and Human Resources
- Re-launched the firm's “green” team to provide a platform for idea generation, firm buy-in and future activities as well as overall program direction

Key Stakeholder Assessment

- Interviewed select partners, employees, clients and building management to assess the relevance of sustainability to the culture of the firm, its market brand and client perceptions.

Strategy and Business Case to Identify Key Objectives and ROI

- Facilitated and collaborated with internal leadership to develop an over-all strategy
- Developed short, medium and long term objectives
- Generated a cost/benefits analysis to support the business case for the program
- Defined a successful outcome and developed a plan to achieve it

Environmental Sustainability Policy

- Worked with the firm to create a firmwide environmental sustainability policy
- Promoted the policy throughout the firm and on the firm's website

Sustainability Audit

- Initiated a carbon and business activity discovery process to identify key carbon-producing activities
- Reviewed operational purchases to assess environmental impact of purchased products such as printer toner, cleaning products, and other supplies
- Reviewed all sources of carbon-related data including an assessment of start-to-end data flow and processes, as well as financial accounting and expense systems, data capture and storage

Carbon Footprint for a Measurable Baseline

- Collated all relevant data to calculate the carbon footprint of the firm
- Utilized the ecoAnalyze carbon footprint tool to measure Scope 1, Scope 2 and Scope 3 emissions

Sustainability Initiatives

- Reviewed current sustainability initiatives to enhance coordination and effectiveness of those activities
- Launched multiple new initiatives ranging from a vendor survey to incorporate sustainability into purchasing decisions to a waste program that included composting

Employee Engagement

- Developed internal communications to promote sustainability initiatives including signage and an annual firm competition
- Internal promotion to expand the membership of the "green" team and encourage participation

Employee Engagement (cont'd)

- Calculated the carbon footprint of each employee's commute to encourage greater use of alternative transportation and carpooling
- Promoted a cycle-to-work initiative and provided facilities in the office such as bike parking and showers
- Developed action pledges and an annual award for the most environmentally sustainable employee based on achieving changes both at work and at home

Carbon Offsets

- Researched carbon offset providers to identify those that have projects that are aligned with the geographic location and desired projects of the law firm
- Conducted meeting with each chosen supplier to select the best options for the law firm

Core Client Industry Research and Practice Development

- Conducted market research into one of the firm's main client industries to assess the impact that climate change is having on that industry
- Identified several market opportunities for the firm in relation to climate change practice offerings needed by their clients as a result of climate change

Market Positioning Assessment

- Reviewed all peer law firms to assess the current market position of law firms promoting their environmental sustainability
- Identified opportunities to surpass peer firms and become a leader in their market
- Developed a structured program to achieve leadership position over a twelve month period
- Identified a unique branding position that will differentiate the firm from the other leading law firms in their market

Local and National Recognitions and Awards

- Researched law firm's market, key client industries and geographic location to identify worthy environmental sustainability recognitions and awards
- Gathered all stated recognition requirements/qualifications and incorporated them into the firm's sustainability program to maximize return on efforts and investment
- Coordinated multiple recognition/awards applications and developed a schedule of required deliverables and deadlines

Branding and Public Relations

- Created an environmental sustainability section on the firm's website so clients, employees, future talent, the local business community and general public can review sustainability initiatives on an on-going basis
- Incorporated Sustainability into firm's other marketing communications
- Promoted the firm's initiative directly to selected clients
- Drafted press releases and received local and national coverage
- Developed story and tag-lines for press contacts

Ongoing Roadmap and Involvement

- Adjunct member of the firm's "green" team to aid with on-going development of the program
- Regularly meet with core team to strategize on medium and long term program development
- Establishing carbon reduction targets based on actual carbon generation projections
- Ongoing enhancement of market branding and PR
- Ongoing consultation on building practice platforms to serve these growing client needs
- Counseling on adding LEED qualifications to the Real Estate practice. Conducting additional strategic practice development for the Real Estate practice

Closing Remarks

"While the firm has always been conscious of the importance of the environment to our community, we had not previously had access to the required spectrum of knowledge and expertise to develop a fully integrated environmental sustainability program. With the help of ecoAnalyze we were able to take action and achieved tangible results in becoming an environmentally sustainable legal enterprise. We have quickly seen multiple benefits as a result of the program; these range from operational cost savings, increased employee engagement and enhanced brand recognition, to deeper relationships with clients who are aligned with this core value. I was both surprised and impressed with how important a factor this is to our clients, employees and the local business community at large. The firm will continue to strive for environmental sustainability excellence and we look forward to fully incorporating this worthy attribute into the fabric of our operations, the way we conduct our business, our employees collective behavior and the culture of the firm."

Jeff Eberhard, Managing Partner at Smith Freed & Eberhard