

This is an excerpt from Saving The World At Work by Tim Sanders - find out more about the book or join the network at www.SavingTheWorld.net

Joan Krajewski, an exemplary network creator, has always been on a mission to help preserve the planet for future generations. How she might actually do so occurred to her while she was in law school and working part-time at the National Resources Defense Council. She decided that her best shot at making a difference would come from helping companies measure and improve their environmental performance.

The arena so interested Krajewski that she eventually left her law practice for a position at American Airlines in the mid-1990s, where she helped implement an environmental management system (EMS) that measured the company's impact on the planet.

In 2005, Krajewski was approached by Microsoft, which did not have an EMS in place, to become the director of environmental policy of its hardware business unit. Shortly after arriving, Krajewski realized that Microsoft's silo organization would make the installation of a company-wide EMS difficult, so she decided her best bet was to create a cross-company network of eco-minded employees.

Her first action was to recruit participants throughout the computer hardware business unit. Then, a few months later, she fanned out, meeting with other business units such as the software applications group that made Microsoft's Office and Enterprise product lines.

Krajewski next hosted meetings throughout the company to teach others about Microsoft's environmentally related legal risks, allowing her a chance to connect with kindred spirits she might otherwise have never met.

Krajewski used these meetings to identify those who had a real passion for environmental sustainability, so she started out by asking, "What's the biggest environmental problem at Microsoft?" Krajewski followed up with each person who spoke, creating a network database of names.

She then staged cross-company educational events to discuss sustainability and environmental impact, making sure to introduce speakers to each other. For example, she would introduce Paul from the software group to Pam from the MSN Internet group, saying, "You two should get together because Paul has information that you need, Pam; and Pam, you have technology that can help Paul meet his goals in product sustainability."

She also took advantage of corporate resources,

including Microsoft technology tools such as SharePoint, which allows people to share PowerPoint presentations, and LiveMeeting, which allows dozens or even hundreds of people to participate in a live video-based chat.

Once Krajewski had connected people, she focused them on creating results by establishing urgency around environmental issues. She presented data that showed why Microsoft had to be ready for upcoming regulations and carbon-emissions taxes, because otherwise the company could face dramatic financial setbacks. From a branding standpoint, she illustrated how Microsoft would have to be the greenest company in the technology business to maintain its position as an industry leader. She also coordinated the people in her network by issuing ambitious goals to each group, such as establishing a company-wide environmental management system, and reducing the packaging size across product lines by more than 50 percent.

In two years, using this find-connect-focus strategy, Krajewski had built a network of forty saver soldiers representing all business units at Microsoft that was able to create an EMS and implement it companywide. With the data center group, Krajewski also built a software tool that measures carbon emissions on a daily basis; initially for internal use, it's now available for purchase by any company.

Network members also created widely distributed white papers on the business benefits of reducing or eliminating packaging. Inside the hardware group, product designers reduced packaging of products such as the Xbox gaming console by as much as 40 percent; in the software group, network members also innovated how products were packaged, reducing waste and carbon emissions dramatically.

In the end, Krajewski turned what could have been an obstacle--the company's size--into a resource. She used the depth of the employee pool to find coworkers who cared about the environment to create an effective network. Rather than seeing a scarcity of opportunities, Krajewski took the abundance view, believing that the power of many could accomplish anything.

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