

Welcome Your Skeptics into the Fold When They Eventually Convert

Regardless of how difficult others have made it for you to succeed, you now acknowledge them as partners. Every saver I've interviewed told me that they faced doubters who, bearing blank stares and folded arms, disagreed with the facts presented and accused them of stridency or idealism. Sometimes such skeptics even attempt to undermine your work through counter-evangelism, attacking you personally.

Later, when they come around, be large enough to welcome them. Skeptics can become the most passionate converts. Many of the most significant movements are led by those who admit they were once in the dark but now see the light.

Don Ostler is a saver soldier who used these three rules effectively to evangelize a controversial idea. The delivery operations manager at Green Mountain Coffee Roasters, Ostler oversees twenty-four trucks driven by forty-eight drivers covering four warehouses around the country.

Concerned about global warming, Ostler realized that transportation was a primary driver of Green Mountain Coffee Roasters' carbon footprint, so he decided to try to cut transportation-related emissions.

In 2004, Ostler started experimenting with mixing traditional and nontraditional fuels, as well as placing nose cones on the front of his trucks to reduce wind drag. None of these efforts moved the needle, but the process educated him on the different variables that determine fuel efficiency. As he pored over fuel data, he stumbled upon the culprit that generated most of his fleet's eco-waste: engine idling during deliveries and pickups. This one factor accounted for 30 percent of all gasoline used by his fleet.

Ostler also realized that his drivers tended to leave their trucks running the entire day, even as they loaded and unloaded trucks during delivery stops. Drivers believed that idling preserved comfortable temperatures in the cabin, and that repeatedly turning an engine on and off could damage it.

Because Ostler knew these beliefs were long-standing, he couldn't simply mandate change. If the drivers didn't believe in an idle-reduction policy, they'd ignore it. Instead, Ostler decided to educate the drivers through a curriculum of presentations, events, and progress reports.

So Ostler kicked off the company's 2005 annual drivers' meeting with a fifteen-minute PowerPoint presentation that offered up a few facts, including how much fuel idling wasted, how much money that cost, and what it all meant to the company's bottom line.

Next, he asked drivers to explain why they idled during deliveries. They told him what he already knew: climate control and engine wear. He responded by giving several of them a homework assignment: Try turning off the engines and testing climate preservation. Ostler promised that, in the meantime, his maintenance group would research the issue of whether turning off the

engine created wear and tear.

Most of the crowd was visibly skeptical. But over the next few months, drivers discovered that their cabins stayed cool or hot long after they'd turned the engine off. Meanwhile, Ostler's maintenance crew found evidence that idling ran an engine hotter than normal and contributed to its wear and tear in the long run.

Ostler presented his ongoing findings at quarterly warehouse luncheons, during which he told drivers that while there might not be any individual savings here, he was concerned about the big picture. The company should do its part to help the planet because the planet needs help. This is what the company stood for, and so should the drivers.

Ostler convinced several drivers to turn their engines off during deliveries. But he still had skeptics, so he knew his job wasn't done. Ostler's presentation at the next meeting focused on the accomplishments of a handful of drivers in that first year. Then he created a scorecard system that helped each driver measure his own idle time and fuel efficiency. One man, a vocal naysayer from the beginning, was so impressed with these accomplishments that he converted and soon became one of the no-idling movement's leaders inside the company.

During 2006, the idle-reduction program helped save the company 5,000 gallons of gasoline. Idling dropped from 30 percent of engine running time to less than 10 percent. Ostler was so proud of his team's accomplishments that he created and distributed T-shirts saying, "GMCR Saved 5,000 Gallons of Gas Annually with Idle Reduction, and I Helped."

The joke at the company is that the drivers have so bought into this program that they now shut off their engines at a long stoplight. Once he knew this program had worked, Ostler took up a new cause, evangelizing bio-diesel fuel to business managers at the company. Over time, he has helped enhance Green Mountain Coffee Roasters' image as a sustainable company, adding to its longstanding reputation as a fair-trade advocate. Through their persistent efforts, Ostler and the rest of his Green Mountain evangelists helped the company finish at the top of *Business Ethics* magazine's 2006 Top Corporate Citizens list.

This is an excerpt from Tim Sanders new book, *Saving The World At Work*. Buy a copy or find out more at www.SavingTheWorld.net