



Ecomagination Nation - Good For The Business Great For The Environment

On the Same Page, LLC and GE Power & Water, Jan 1,2013

Summary: 2013 Silver Anvil Award Winner — Internal Communications — Business (More Than 10,000 Employees)

This story takes a global company's external commitment to environmental sustainability inward, and involves employees across the planet. Who would know at the beginning of 2012 that this employee-led initiative would provide water savings equivalent to shutting down Niagara Falls for 77 minutes?

GE Power & Water ecomagination nation was right for the environment and for business. More than 230 ambassadors were recruited across 30 countries and six continents; 18 sites were certified; greenhouse gases were reduced by 49,597 metric tons; water usage was reduced by 669,384 gallons; and there was a documented, projected annual savings of \$2,255,052.

Internal communications includes programs targeted specifically to special publics directly allied with an organization, such as employees, members, affiliated dealers and franchisees.

Full Text: BACKGROUND AND OPPORTUNITY

This is a story about taking a global company's external commitment to environmental sustainability and turning it inward, engaging the ideas and support of employees across the planet. Who would know in the year of 2012 that this employee-led initiative would provide water savings equivalent to shutting down Niagara Falls for 77 minutes?

The story begins with ecomagination*, a companywide commitment by GE to imagine and build innovative solutions for today's environmental challenges while helping customers achieve their objectives – the right thing to do for the environment and for business. The resulting products enable GE and its customers to both reduce the environmental footprint and increase resource efficiency.

In 2011, GE furthered its ecomagination commitment by vowing to engage business leaders in driving greenhouse gas and energy-intensity reductions. GE Power & Water, a division with 41,000 employees and \$28 billion in revenue, took it one big step further in bringing leaders and employees together around the world to work toward certifying their sites for environmental sustainability.

Ecomagination nation, an employee-led environmental sustainability effort, was born based on research and a dream to speed up these efforts across Power & Water. It now is a pilot for all of GE.

RESEARCH

The foundation of ecomagination nation was poured with research conducted three years ago. At that time, a survey of environmental, health, and safety leaders was completed at all manufacturing sites in the Power & Water business to find ways to reduce greenhouse gas

emissions. Ultimately, 20 projects were identified by EHS and facilities managers for funding, in line with the spirit of ecomagination. Although there was some success, this process was both rigorous and time consuming. Leaders then started to assess what it would take to expand efforts and engage more Power & Water employees, while also simplifying the process.

To better engage the entire organization, a second survey was developed. This time all Power & Water employees were asked for their ideas to reduce energy, water usage, and greenhouse gas emissions. They responded with more than 500 opportunities. This was a clear indication that broader, employee-driven involvement could make a powerful difference in reshaping sustainability practices at Power & Water sites.

Early in the awareness stage of the launch, employee volunteers who wanted to become ecomagination nation ambassadors and lead the certification process at their sites were asked to provide responses to several statements. Their responses helped shape the tone of communication and messages making them simple and personal. One ambassador's profile demonstrates the point:

I am an ecomagination nation ambassador because I would like to be part of the solution in the improvement of our environment for our kids.

Cleaner energy and water for future generations is important to me because we only have so many resources. I believe we should mind that we are not alone on the planet.

I am personally dedicated to protecting the environment because I come from a place that has suffered from deforestation and it makes me incredibly sad to see water streams dry out, animals emigrate, and populations impoverished.

My favorite place on earth is the Lacandona Jungle in Chiapas, Mexico.

PLANNING

Strategy: The strategy to drive ecomagination nation was to support sites in achieving certification based on six criteria:

- Identify an ambassador, communicate for awareness, implement an energy shutdown plan, conduct two community outreach projects, host an awareness day, and encourage and act on three energy-saving ideas from employees.

Objectives:

- Engage and educate Power & Water leaders and employees in reducing energy consumption, water usage and greenhouse gases, while tracking cost reduction.
- Develop a program driven by employee ambassadors to achieve certification at 10 sites in 2012

Targeted Audiences / Stakeholders:

- **Power & Water leaders:** President & CEO, corporate ecomagination leader and the EHS leader
- **Power & Water EHS professionals:** A core team of more than 30 subject matter experts who contribute their time, expertise, and insights for supporting sites' certification
- **Human Resources and Communications:** Two important and influential groups for engaging people
- **Ecomagination nation ambassadors:** Employee volunteers to lead certification locally
- **Power & Water employees:** 41,000 employees to support ambassadors in creating the change necessary in reaching the goals

Budget: The total investment in communication to support ecomagination nation was \$63,000.

EXECUTION

Ecomagination nation was launched and came alive in three phases:

- Build awareness of the objectives and recruit ambassadors, Oct. – Dec. 2011
- Take action to engage employees to achieve ecomagination nation certification, Jan. – Feb. 2012
- Drive for results with a “race for certification,” March – Dec. 2012

Awareness: For a successful launch, **leadership commitment** was essential in the form of videos, letters and web chats. Following the launch messages, the ecomagination nation leader conducted presentations to all of EHS, Human Resources, and business leaders – arming them with **personal expectations, key messages, a description of the ambassador role, an outline of the 2012 criteria, and presentation materials**. At the same time, recruitment of ambassadors started with messages from the ecomagination nation leader, including personal phone calls to the first 25 people who volunteered. A **microsite** was built to house critical information and encourage idea sharing. The microsite contains the mission, site certification criteria, ambassadors’ profiles and contact information, presentations, tools, templates for communicating, and opportunities for ordering promotional gear. *In the first 45 days, 98 ambassadors had volunteered.*

Take action: The “**race for certification**” was launched at the first ambassador roundtable, which was used to highlight the criteria, review a toolkit to engage employees, and answer questions. Subsequent roundtables highlighted sites that were well along the process so others could learn from their experience. The **certification review process** was finalized, including recruiting a certification review panel comprised of business leaders, EHS experts, Human Resources professionals, and Communications. The third tactic was to build a **virtual hall of fame** on the microsite where certified sites would be showcased, along with the ambassador champions – those employees who went above and beyond the call of duty.

Drive for results: In this phase, roundtables continued, and the stage was set for the first “race to certification” on July 16, 2012. This included **preparation guidelines** for both the sites and the certification review panel. The second round of certification was on Dec. 11, 2012. A **celebration toolkit** was created for certified sites. Across all three phases, every available existing channel of communication was used to promote ecomagination nation, the ambassadors, tips, the first sites certified in the “race,” and other milestones.

EVALUATION

GE Power & Water ecomagination nation continues to be right for the environment and for the business.

- More than 230 ambassadors were recruited across 30 countries and six continents.
- Eighteen sites were certified, involving 4,745 employees (9.2 percent of all employees).
 - Race one: Five sites across Germany, UAE, and US.
 - Race two: 13 sites across Canada, China, Hungary, India, Mexico, and US.
- Reduction of greenhouse gases by 49,597 metric tons (est.)
- Water reduction of 669,384 gallons (est.)
- Documented, projected annual savings of \$2,255,052 from the certification process (est.)

What stands out most are the stories ranging from a community outreach program for collecting and disposing of electronic waste in Mexico to installing a single automatic shutdown switch at a German facility that eliminated four hours of energy usage each day and that paid for itself in 10 days. Simple and personal.

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