

How to Present and Sell Sustainability - “One of These Days, the Younger Generation Will Come Knocking at My Door” (Henrik Ibsen – The Master Builder 1892)

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Keywords: Sustainable, Environment, Young, Language, Value

SUMMARY:

It is only six months since Al Gore quoted Henrik Ibsen during his acceptance speech for the Nobel Peace Prize here in Stockholm on December 10th but 116 years since the great Norwegian playwright wrote in 1892 about a older man’s fear that he would be replaced by the younger generation before he had been able to reconcile his professional success with his personal sacrifices.

FIG (Federation Internationale des Geometres / International Federation of Surveyors) was founded in Paris, 130 years ago in 1878. Was Ibsen aware of FIG? Did he have FIG in mind when he described the mental torment of Halvard Solness about the legacy he would leave behind? Perhaps not but it is an interesting thought, sitting here in a conference entitled “Integrating Generations”, that Ibsen chose a Master Builder as his subject knowing full well that his profession lay at the core of human existence, the places in which we live and work and play and which form the very fabric of our lives.

Can FIG live up to this legacy? FIG has done a great deal to advance our skills but Global Warming means that “the needs of the markets and communities we serve” have now changed in a fundamental way. FIG must find a “common” language with which to engage its clients at their own level and emphasise the long term “soft issue values” derived out of taking a sustainable approach to development rather than the short term costs of its application.

This paper will consider the language of sustainable surveying, how to translate our professional conversation into something that the “common man” can readily understand and build upon. At the same time, it will aim to ensure that long term environmental and social benefits are not outweighed by short term economic costs.

FIG’s mission is to “ensure that the disciplines of surveying and all who practice them meet the needs of the markets and communities they serve”. If I were to add “in the present without compromising the needs of future generations”, then this statement would virtually match the classic 1987 Brundtland definition of Sustainable Development. Here she is:

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GRO HARLEM BRUNDTLAND

Not a surveyor but a former Prime Minister of Norway and Director General of the World Health Organisation. Sustainability is ultimately not about property but about the World’s health!. Here’s the definition again:

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT DEFINITION

“Meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”

GENERATIONS TO COME

And here are those “generations to come”, wondering whether they should dip their feet in the sometimes turbulent waters of property, surveying and the environment?

SO WHY BE A SURVEYOR?

So, if a young person is interested in environmental issues, why should they become a surveyor? When I was much younger, there were not the wide range of career opportunities that are open to young students today. My father was a project manager and my brother a quantity surveyor so, although I played briefly with the ideas of being a famous astronaut (like Yuri Gagarin but my eyesight was too poor!) or a famous footballer (like Bobby Charlton but my legs were too thin!), in the end a surveying career came naturally to me.

MORTEN GAMST PEDERSEN

The Norwegian footballer Morten Gamst Pedersen is doing what I would have liked to do but it’s not saving his village from the perils of Climate Change! I use this slide as an example of what you sometimes need to do to engage people, particularly younger people, whose interests are not always focussed on the environment but who can be “linked” to it through another subject that they ARE interested in.

WHAT’S MORE INTERESTING?

Since I first thought about what university degree to follow, the essence of building has appeared to remain much the same. Find a suitable site, design and erect a mixture of

materials, link it to the services you want and move in. It can be challenging, frustrating and satisfying but does it still compare with the modern employment opportunities offered by sports science, web design, internet entrepreneurship or hedge fund management!

Surveying doesn't seem as exciting. For a young person with a keen environmental conscience, does a job in property match up? Buildings are said to contribute as much as 40% to the UK's carbon emissions, so they're not very environmentally friendly. And although they can now be made "greener" and more sustainable, that generally costs a lot more money, especially up front in the short term. There may well be long term benefits but can the cost of achieving them be afforded now?

Why not instead go directly into Environmental Science or Management and specialise in one of the many other diverse areas in which detailed expertise is needed?

ONE ROUTE TO CES – MANY ROUTES TO CENV MORE ROUTES TO SOCENV

If you want to become a Chartered Environmental Surveyor (CES), you have only one route through the RICS but if you want to become a Chartered Environmentalist (CEnv) through the Society for the Environment (SOCENV), you can choose any one of 17 different routes in addition or as an alternative to RICS qualification. So why RICS?

Let's assume that an environmental career really IS more attractive. To my mind the answer to the question "why become a surveyor?" would be to consider who is it that really drives the process forward? It's not always the architects or engineers but often the surveyor, as project manager, who takes the clients initial ideas and costings, brings the professional team together and develops the concept. Efficient functioning of the "Chain of Procurement" is vitally important and it's equally vital that someone capable is there to run it, making sure that it really is a strong, interactive chain with the required information being moved around, backwards and forwards.

Young people are fired with enthusiasm for the environment, they want to make a difference. The majority of people now accept the principle of Climate Change as a given fact, if only because the traditional seasons seem much less reliable and the occurrence of extreme and unexpected weather more frequent. And so they also accept the need to do something about it, in this case to build more sustainably.

THE LANGUAGE OF SUSTAINABILITY

But in striving to do so, is everyone reading from the same textbook and even if they are, do they have the same understanding of what it says? If the text were in a foreign language, most would require some form of translation in order to use the information properly.

The language of sustainability and green building, whether it be English, German or Swedish, is frequently highly technical. That's only to be expected in a relatively new field of study where the market for sustainability advice is immature and with few widely recognised or required qualifications. There are effectively very few barriers to entry as an advisor.

FIG is rich in technical experts who pride themselves quite rightly on their scientific expertise. That is how you differentiate yourselves from others to make your reputation and sell your services. You speak a common scientific language which joins you together, allows you to disseminate and analyse ideas and research. Good research drives more research and more particularly drives grants and research budgets. It is a vital element in how we inform and educate ourselves in order to do things better.

At the same time, if our experts want the results of their research to be recognised and acted upon in the wider world, either for academic benefit or for profit, they have to ensure that their work is understood by their clients, who wish to put them into everyday practice. This is a very "non-technical" paper, for which I make no apology. If we want non-professionals of all ages but especially the younger generations to follow us and inherit our legacy, then they must be helped to understand that legacy.

LAGGARDS MODEL – ROGERS BELL CURVE

The Rogers Bell Curve, which describes the process for adoption or acceptance of a new product or innovation, illustrates the point I'm trying to make. Many of you here today will be in the first 16% of "Innovators" or "Early Adopters", leading research from the front. But most of your clients will be in the latter 50% of "Late Majority" or "Laggards". They need to be able to "see" over the top of the curve in order to get your message.

This is not to say that researchers and professionals should "dumb down" their expertise. Their research should remain accessible and understandable to their colleagues and peers but to be properly effective and profitable and consequently drive a virtuous circle of more funding and research, it needs also to be spread widely in a language recognised by the mass market. The success of sustainability in bringing about a real world solution to Climate Change depends not upon a relatively small number of brilliant leading papers understood only by the few but upon their translation into action by the many.

There is I fear a danger that in trying to maintain the high ground and differentiate themselves, many environmental and sustainability experts are inadvertently creating barriers to mass understanding that may serve to prolong Climate Change. For example:

CORPORATE GREENING FORMULA Ref 3

The phrase “Prosocial Extrarole Behaviours” had me guessing as to its real meaning? I think it’s referring to employees doing “charitable” acts outside the workplace and thereby also benefiting the employer but as much as I feel sure that such a scholarly piece of research must be valuable, I not only don’t understand the formula but I’m actually and unfortunately “turned off” by it.

CONTRACTION & CONVERGENCE Ref 6

If you’ve ever tried to understand or explain the theory of Contraction and Convergence, which could be so key to a deliverable solution on Climate Change, you will know what I mean. It doesn’t have to be exclusively this way. This graph, taken from the Global Commons Institute website (and the quality is as it appears on the website) leaves me confused, even though I have a Masters degree in Corporate Property!

I’m not saying everything has to be reduced to a child’s level but it can be very effective and it’s worth considering exactly why that is the case, so that in marketing your own thoughts and research, you have the best chance of being understood. Contrast this with:

THE CARBON COACH BALLON MODEL Ref 4

Here is Dave Hampton’s own description:

“C&C is child’s play: forget the weasel, now it’s pop goes the balloon!

As well as the kids loving the beauty, symbolism (Earth) and pure slow motion grace of the huge 1 metre purple balloon floating and bouncing around their school hall, I also gave them a quick visual demo of C&C – C&C for six year olds!

We got four volunteers up front, and asked them to represent someone from UK, China, India, and Africa. Then I gave them 11, 4, 1 and 0 small purple CO₂ balloons respectively. (16 balloons in total). They understood that the balloon represented the persons share - of BOTH pollution and fossil fuel.

I asked them if they thought that looked like a good idea. They said NO. I asked what they would do. SHARE them out! they said, unprompted.

So we redistributed the balloons until UK, China, India and Africa people had 4 balloons each but I explained that this was still about 4 times more than Nature could deal with and that we only had one planet not 4 so we had to cut back quite a lot of CO₂.

So we popped three of the four balloons for each person - 12 loud bangs later – we were left with one person one balloon and a round of applause – we’d fixed the planet!

They got it - even if their parents and politicians can't or won't!!"

GREEN VALUE REPORT Ref 7

In November 2005, RICS published its "Green Value – Green Buildings, Growing Assets" Report. It concluded that a clear link was emerging between green features and market value. Green buildings are not only good for the environment, healthier to live in and more productive to work in but can also command higher rents and prices, reduced tenant turnover and lower operating and maintenance costs. Here are a couple of interesting findings:

GREEN VALUE EXAMPLES SLIDE Penn Light & Power / CABB

At the time, there were still comparatively few green buildings. More study was needed, particularly on the share of benefits between owners and occupiers. Since then, those studies have continued. In March 2008, a new study by CoStar Group has found that sustainable green buildings do indeed outperform their peer non-green assets in key areas such as occupancy, sale price and rental rates, sometimes by wide margins.

The results indicate a broader demand by property investors and tenants for buildings that have earned either LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certification or the ENERGY STAR label (sponsored by the US Environmental protection Agency). This strengthens the "business case" for green buildings, which proponents have increasingly cast as financially sound investments.

SUMMARY OF COSTAR RESULTS Ref 1

According to the study, LEED buildings command rent premiums of \$11.24 psf over their non-LEED peers and have a 3.8% higher occupancy. Rental rates in ENERGY STAR buildings represent a \$2.38 psf premium over comparable non-ENERGY STAR buildings and have a 3.6% higher occupancy/

And, in a trend that could signal greater attention from institutional investors, ENERGY STAR buildings are selling for an average of \$61 psf more than their peers while LEED buildings command a remarkable premium of \$171 more psf. Many investors were reported as now suggesting that if you're building today without LEED, you're building in obsolescence and depreciating value.

This growing recognition of how green research is producing green technology and building methods that are now driving green value is the clearest possible indicator of how, once the virtuous circle of research to results is joined up, then the acceptance and production of more and more sustainable buildings gets faster and faster. It is vital, therefore, that to stimulate the information flow and the market processes that drive these buildings, the information itself is disseminated in a readily palatable, digestible and well understood form.

KEEP IT SIMPLE DO IT WELL Ref 2

Your motto should be “Keep it Simple and Do it Well”. Bill Bordass and Rab Bennetts are referring here to building design but the message is a very good one in general. Your research will still be very detailed and to most eyes the methodology and results may still be indecipherable but to input effectively to the Chain of Procurement and produce the desired value improvements, the salient facts flowing from the research must be translated, if necessary to the simplest level of child-like understanding. One can gear up from this “lower” level to higher levels of understanding and involvement but if you start high, you may well miss your audience altogether?

There are many excellent studies on the marketing of green behaviour to individuals and corporations which could be very valuable if their message is understood and actioned. But often the message may just as well be in a foreign language for readers not familiar with the jargon and script employed.

FUTERRA: RULES OF THE GAME 2005

It's very important that professionals understand better how to market themselves and their services and how to communicate effectively to that end. Sustainability is such a wide-ranging, all-purpose concept, inter-linking virtually every aspect of life, especially in regard to the use of physical resources. Like all things conceptual, people are often heard to say that “they can't get their head around the subject”. Without aspiring to be a marketing expert, there some basic ground rules which can help to get your own message across more effectively.

Futerra, the sustainability marketing consultancy, first developed “The Rules of the Game” for the UK Govt in February 2005 in order to establish essential principles of climate change communications. Most of these are seen as pure common sense once thought through but some consideration of what it is you're trying to say, who you're trying to say it to, whether they understand it and want to hear it and what if anything they will do or let you do about it, can be very helpful in the effective translation of your research or your advice.

NEW RULES NEW GAME 2007 Ref 5 **NEW RULES NEW GAME HEADINGS**

In the light of experience, Futerra updated these basic rules in 2007 with their “New Rules: New Game”. In that short period, there had been a sea-change of general acceptance for the principal of Global Warming. Most people didn't really need convincing any more and instead just wanted to know what they could do about it. So the Rules were refined and shortened, albeit the messages were essentially the same – “who are you talking to?”, “Giving the right message”, “Picking the right messenger”, “how to reach people”, “beware” and

finally “tactics for change” – the last is especially relevant because, as in all things, the world around us doesn’t stand still and we need to constantly re-evaluate where we and our advice stands in relation to others, particularly our clients.

KNOCKING AT OUR DOORS

The younger generation are already knocking at our doors. We must give them a clear and valuable message that they can take forward with confidence, not so much repeating Al Gore’s message “What were you thinking? Why didn’t you act? but rather What **IS** your thinking” and “ Why didn’t you help others to **UNDERSTAND** your thinking?”

NEW LUDDITES

Agricultural Luddites in the 19th century tried to stand in the way of the Industrial Revolution. Don’t be a 21st century Economic Luddite and stand in the way of the Sustainability Revolution!

NEW ORLEANS

Or this could happen here in Stockholm?!

REFERENCES

- REF 1 – Australian Green Building Council - 2008
<http://www.buildings.com/articles/detail.aspx?contentID=5854>
<http://www.usgbc.org> and <http://www.energystar.gov>
- REF 2 – Bordass B & Bennetts R – 2007 28 Sept Building Magazine
- REF 3 – Ramus Catherine A & Kilmer Annette B C – Donald Bren School of Environmental Science & Management UCSB - 2005 19 Oct Wiley InterScience
www.interscience.wiley.com
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- REF 4 – Hampton Dave – 2007 18 June Communique Issue 18 www.carboncoach.com
- REF 5 – Futerra – 2007 www.futerra.co.uk/downloads/NewRules:NewGame.pdf
- REF 6 – Global Commons Institute – <http://www.gci.org.uk/contconv/cc.html>
- REF 7 – RICS – 2005 www.rics.org/greenvalue

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES:

Economic:

BSc (Hons) Estate Management, Reading University 1979

MSc Corporate Property Strategy, City University 1999

Qualified as a valuation surveyor and experienced in asset management, investment and development work for both public and private sectors on many award-winning schemes,

TS 4E - The Surveyors Role in Promoting Sustainability and the Use of Sustainable Resources 8/10

Jim Green

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Integrating Generations

FIG Working Week 2008

Stockholm, Sweden 14-19 June 2008

including residential, commercial and social. Wide ranging, practical experience as both client and agent of the economic, planning and social drivers underlying the development process. Currently specialising in the creation and project management of mixed-use regeneration schemes, both urban and rural. Awareness of sustainability raised by 1999 MSc Dissertation “Can Green Design add Value?” Always keen to emphasise that projects are not sustainable unless they are also “profitable” on a triple bottom line basis, recognising the need to balance short term hard costs against long term soft benefits through a realistic approach to whole life appraisal.

BAYLIGHT PROPERTIES plc Development Manager 1996 – current day

Asset management of existing portfolio, project management of ongoing schemes, sourcing, appraising, acquiring and realising new investment and development opportunities. Currently preparing Baylight’s CSR and Sustainability Policies and investigating eco-credentials for better designed suburban housing. Baylight has a strong reputation for high quality and integrity of design, developing its understanding of sustainability, studying, speaking, writing, discussing and formulating policy. The company prefers to reinvent existing buildings, reflecting its distaste for demolition and waste. While the “Green Agenda” isn’t permitted to over-ride sound economic principles, since the 1999 Dissertation, policy has been developed to incorporate a keen understanding and application where possible of sustainable design principles, including structure and materials choice, energy, water and waste reduction and recycling, social and community initiatives. Baylight acknowledges that achieving “perfect” sustainability is probably an unrealistic target but is determined to continue working steadily towards that objective, making sustainable gains wherever possible.

ENVIRONMENTAL:

RICS Environmental Faculty Board 2001

CIEF (Construction Industry Environmental Forum) Management Board 2002

CES Chartered Environmental Surveyor 2002

RICS Presidential Commission on Sustainability 2003

EDGE Committee 2005

CENV Chartered Environmentalist 2007

CIC (Construction Industry Council) Sustainable Development Committee 2008

BERR Industry Liaison Group - Strategy for Sustainable Construction 2008

SOCIAL:

London Marathon 1982 & 1995

Player-Manager New Ash Green FC 1986

RICS Football Club 1993

Vice-chairman Wandsworth Challenge Partnership 1999 regenerating Southside shopping centre and Arndale residential estate, using £19.6M of SRB funding to create an inclusive

community partnership leading capital and social projects, including employment, education, health, mobility and transport initiatives.

Midhurst Milers 2004 cross-country, 10K and South Downs Relay

Chairman Midhurst Community Partnership 2006 www.your-midhurst.org forming structures and alliances to stimulate local consultation and project participation aimed at fulfilling objectives of the Town Plan, such as the Midhurst Centre, in a sustainable manner.

EDGE Committee 2005 www.at-the-edge.org.uk – a high level group of architects, engineers and surveyors dedicated to influencing policy on design, climate change and sustainability

West Dean College of Arts: 2006 “Sculpting with Steel in Space”

2007 “Crime Writing” & “Photography – Abstracting the Landscape”

SELECTED PRESENTATIONS:

SPROG July 2000 “Green Buildings – What are they? Do we want them?”

SOLO 34 Winter 2001 “Why RICS members should be more aware of Green issues”

CIEF Manchester June 2002 “Refurbish or redevelop – is there a sustainable option?”

RICS Foundation/SDRN July 2002 “Performance Indicators for Urban Sustainability”

Bldg Perf Summit Olympia Sep 2003 “The Business Case for Sustainable Occupancy”

RICS London Nov 2004 “Sustainable Career Opportunities for Graduates”

MIPIM Cannes March 2005 “Sustainable Buildings – at what cost?”

CIEF London May 2005 “Whole Life Sustainability: costing & valuation”

HEEPI Leeds Dec 2005 “Green Value – the business case for sustainability”

TCPA London Jan 2006 “The Business Value of Green Building”

MIPIM Cannes March 2006 “Green Value – Green Buildings – Growing Assets”

RICS Guildford April 2007 “Green Value Day”

CES Guildford July 2007 “Buying Green - Property as a Fashion item?” (PhD synopsis)

FIG Stockholm June 2008 “How to Present & Sell Sustainability”

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