

The World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD)

The World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD) is a CEO-led organization of forward-thinking companies that galvanizes the global business community to create a sustainable future for business, society and the environment. Through its members, the Council applies its respected thought leadership and effective advocacy to generate constructive solutions and take shared action to drive business action on sustainability in the coming decade and beyond. The WBCSD aims to be the leading voice of business that will support companies in scaling up true value-added business solutions and in creating the conditions where more sustainable companies will succeed and be recognized.

Members work together across sectors, geographies and value chains to explore, develop and scale up business solutions to address the world's most pressing sustainability challenges. Through work to change the rules of the game and drive measurable impact, WBCSD is emerging as the leading and most compelling sustainable development business voice with multilateral institutions such as the United Nations, World Bank, UNFCCC, as well as with global platforms like the UN Climate Summit and COP negotiations.

Leaders of the Future

Tomorrow's business leaders need the skills and competencies to cope with an increasingly complex world as well as the social and environmental challenges across a changing competitive landscape. A sustainability perspective is critical to managing relationships, bringing about change and planning for the future.

The WBCSD's Future Leaders Team (FLT) program is a unique professional and leadership development opportunity that aims to mold leaders for the future who understand sustainability challenges and can position these to make strategic decisions.

The program is designed to help upcoming business leaders grapple with the complex topics, issues and concepts that will influence their future, as well as the future of their organizations. The program creates a global network of dynamic business leaders, capable of acting as sustainable development ambassadors both within their companies and in society.



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business solutions for a sustainable world

RSVP Design's Involvement in the Future Leaders Program

RSVP Design were invited to make a significant contribution to the 2014 FLP. Our learning design specialists, led by Dr. Geoff Cox, worked in partnership with WBCSD and academic staff from the University of Cambridge, to create the first residential module of the international 9-month program, for approximately 30 Future Leaders. The module was structured in a way that:

- Introduced the participants to each other and created expectations about learning in a collaborative, supportive, diverse and respectful culture
- Built teams of people who would continue to work together on a range of real projects, around the world, during the program
- Established a common language and vocabulary with which to explore multiple aspects of the Sustainability Agenda, with a theme of 'Bridging the Capitals'
- Introduced key concepts around innovation, change and leadership for the future
- Raised awareness of the attitudes, skills and behaviors needed to be future 'thought leaders' and influencers of people in their own organizations and beyond.

The integration of RSVP Design's resources and skills

Our objective was to raise awareness of, and create commitment to, a sustainable leadership culture which:

- Values decisions made for long term benefit rather than short term gain
- Is self-sustaining: leaders develop other leaders and a key success measure is the extent to which the next generation of leaders is empowered
- Sets out a clear vision of the future and engages employees through encouraging commitment and conviction
- Recognizes that leadership can be exerted and applied from anywhere in an organization
- Identifies potential for more sustainable practice and builds commitment to implementation(based upon the simple, visual, HBDI model)

The structure of the program meant that we integrated a range of RSVP Design learning activities and processes into 2 days, weaving them through the academic content, linking them to WBCSD's presentations and using them to illustrate a range of attitudes, behaviors and beliefs within the group.

The RSVP Design content

1. An introduction to different types of thinking, based upon the Whole Brain ®Thinking model of Ned Herrmann. This was linked to the **Transformational Leadership activities** identified in the **CEO Study on Sustainability** and provided an opportunity to reflect on the nature of leadership thinking. It also allowed the learners to reflect upon their personal thinking style preferences and the impact that these have upon their own leadership choices.
2. Introductory activity: Colourblind® - a team exercise in achieving common meaning through the use of verbal communication. This allowed the participants to become more aware of how the different types of thinking translate into behavior, and the impact of this behavior on the task and other people.
3. Inter-group exercise: T-Trade. This exercise, which involves negotiation between groups, was used to highlight some key aspects of achieving sustainability: the balance between short/long term gains, the establishment of success measures other than financial ones, the importance of collaboration and partnership working.
4. Change Management activity: Challenging Assumptions, leading into a short session on the use of questions in innovation and change management, and a basic introduction to coaching as a tool for gaining commitment from individuals to a development agenda.
5. A practical leadership simulation: Top Priority. An extended, more complex task which requires overall and sub-group leadership: a simulated organization in which participants can apply and experience leadership in a more authentic context.
6. An extended debrief of the leadership exercise and a re-visiting of the Whole Brain ®Thinking model to identify where individuals can develop and extend their personal leadership practice in the remainder of the program, in relation to themes from sustainable leadership:
 - Realism and context: Understanding the scale of the challenge and the opportunity
 - Growth and differentiation: Turning sustainability to advantage and value creation
 - Value and Performance: What gets measured gets managed
 - Technology and innovation: New models for success
 - Partnerships and collaboration: New challenges, new solutions
 - Engagement and dialogue: broadening the conversation
 - Advocacy and leadership: Shaping future systems

RSVP Design's Training of Facilitators

The 2014 FLP has been so successful, numbers have increased significantly for 2015.

This year, WBCSD's own facilitators and sustainability experts will facilitate the introductory module themselves, in the USA in association with Yale University. To support and prepare them, Ann Alder from RSVP Design will work with the facilitators over two days, to extend their understanding of the learning design process, the activities involved and the methods for facilitating the activity reviews to ensure that the desired learning is achieved.

During this training, the WBCSD facilitators will facilitate the activity sessions with a group of their own colleagues, with mentoring from Ann, to ensure they feel completely confident in taking over the role for 2015.

This process is a live example of our commitment to sustainability and capacity-building: the transfer of our expertise into the client organization where it can be developed and handed on to others in future.

Feedback and testimonials from FLP participants (names removed for confidentiality)

"I think it is great! Diversity and competence were the basis of constructive discussions on sustainability between people from all over the world, working in different functions and sectors. The opportunities to discuss, share best practices, doubts and ideas really have developed each of us. We achieved so much in a short period of time, both from a learning point of view and also from a team-building perspective. In my opinion, the decision to involve people who do not normally work on sustainability was useful and brought the sharing of external and critical points of view."

"For the people engaged in the program, it's an amazing and fun way to develop leadership skills and to build knowledge on specific dimensions of sustainability."

"In addition to the technical knowledge I gained, we spent a substantial amount of time throughout the program on core skills such as leadership, networking, team, project, and time management. When I look back at my experience with the FLT program, I am mostly proud that at the end of the program I came to know and befriend 28 other amazing individuals from all around the world."

Further Information

To learn more about how we can help you to integrate powerful, learner-centered learning activities into your OD and change management initiatives, or to ask us to contribute to extended executive education programs, please contact:

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