

Case study: The Southern Cooperative

“Inspirational and informative conversations that have encouraged me to make positive changes personally and in the workplace. It’s nice to know that I’m not alone in wanting a low carbon future”

“Feel I can make a change”

General overview of organisation

The Southern Co-operative (TSC) is a regional Co-operative Society based in southern England. The cooperative operates over 180 community stores and cover the following counties: Berkshire, Dorset, Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Somerset, Surrey, Sussex, Devon, Bristol Wiltshire and Kent.

The Conversations

The Conversations were run as three half day sessions, plus one follow up session, based at TSC Head Office in Lakeside, Portsmouth. Two people from the Brighton Peace and Environment Centre facilitated the group. The group included seven people from Head Office, End of Life Services, Food Retail and a Post Office. Each session covered both home and workplace considerations and the final session focussed on action planning and recommendations for the work place.

Impetus for including CCs in the organisation’s work

The Carbon Conversations group was designed to be collaborative and participant led, focusing on the openness of experience and encouraging people to explore emotion as well as rational responses to environmental challenges, personally and at work. TSC utilised Carbon Conversations in order to allow participants to reflect on their thoughts and beliefs using a new style of learning.

High level overview of group participants

The group included seven people from Head Office, End of Life Services, Food Retail and a Post Office.

Synopsis of meetings

The Carbon Conversations meetings were found to be extremely successful where participants rated this course an average of 4.8 out of 5, where 1 is ‘Not valuable at all’ and 5 is ‘Very valuable’. All members found sessions and topics useful and indicated that they definitely intend to take action to reduce their carbon footprint both in the workplace and at home as a result of Carbon Conversations.

The Southern Cooperative/cont,

Plans arising

The final session allowed participants to voice their opinions and make recommendations on how to reduce carbon emissions in the workplace. They suggested the following:

- making internal policies for turning off PCs at night
- introducing new posters in stores and break-rooms regarding carbon footprints
- introduce a new volunteering scheme to make Lakeside greener
- advertise the importance of Carbon Conversations within magazine
- highlight importance of saving energy as well as money,
- ensure recyclable waste is recycled,
- introduce a scheme to encourage individuals to walk to work, cycle or car share
- and most importantly
- invest time and money in educating staff in ways to help reduce energy and carbon footprint within the work place by offering them support and advice in various different forms when needed.

The importance of educating customers about the need to reduce their carbon footprints was also mentioned. They suggested putting such information on the customer notice board as well as on customers till receipts.

The organisation also highlighted other key learning points and developments arising from participation in Carbon Conversations:

- Preparatory work with senior management should be encouraged before running a Carbon Conversations in order to tailor it appropriately towards specific workplace environmental area and in line with other initiatives being rolled it. It is vital to have the support of senior management in order to highlight the importance of reducing carbon.
- Creating a post group network/communication structure to support participants to implement their actions or share specific recommendations

Quotes

“The course was very interesting, filled with good surprises. It is the kind of course that gives you a boost and makes you want to go out there and do something about it”

“Has expanded my thought boundaries. I now think broader on the topic”

“An interesting course with lots of new information. It has inspired me to make changed at home and work. I also talk with people a lot more about the subject. This kind of thinking should be facilitated in schools”