Everybody’s business: In Gustavson’s classrooms

“How do you take the concepts of sustainability and put them in the real world?” asked Jason Boyce, Sustainability Manager of Nature’s Path Foods.

And why implement sustainability at all?

Jason, who has worked at the Richmond-based international company for five years, brought those blue-sky issues right down to grass roots when he spoke to all five cohorts of COM 362 Business and Sustainability on Oct 29, 2014.

Corn and wheat plants, he explained, need cool nights in order for the grain to ripen. With climate change heating up the nights as well as drying up the days, those staple crops have suffered in recent years. What doesn’t grow can’t be harvested; it can’t be sold to food companies or eaten at breakfast tables. That kind of growing problem has spurred even conventional food companies like Kellogg’s to join Business for Innovative Climate and Energy Policy in support of carbon-capping policies.

However, Nature’s Path didn’t wait for climate and crop crises to develop its sustainability mandate; it was born that way. Founder Arran Stephens built the company on his farmer dad’s philosophy: Leave the Earth better than you found it.

For the 30-year-old family-owned firm, that means better for the community, employees, suppliers and customers, as well as the dirt itself.

After Jason explained those values and the state of the business (sales to 42 countries from three North American plants), he challenged the students to look at some statistics, identify a goal, and figure out how to engage employees to improve one Key Progress Indicator (KPI) like less electricity used or more granola bars produced.

“It was interesting to see that Nature’s Path drives engagement by developing KPIs that employees can control,” one student said afterward.

Another added, “I liked that sustainability was right in [Nature’s Path]’s mission statement.”

For COM 362, that’s mission accomplished.

Join our mailing list. Leave our mailing list. Ask a question. Share a great idea.

cssi@uvic.ca @CSSIRachel CSSI Gustavson

Investing

Innovative approaches to investment are cropping up in a range of places and institutions. From the movement toward institutional divestment of fossil fuel holdings to Socially Responsible Investments to Impact Investing, there are lots of terms and initiatives.

Stakeholder Engagement and Sustainable Corporate Community Investment by Anna Lee Rowe et al in Business Strategy & the Environment, Nov 2014, explores the value and impacts of corporate community investment (CCI) through community partnerships.

Standards and agreements

Global voluntary agreements such as the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) have emerged as alternatives to apparent State failure to enforce law. This research questions how effective RSPO is in attaining its claimed conservation goals.

Towards global voluntary standards: Questioning the effectiveness in attaining conservation goals: The case of the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) by Denis Ruysschaert and Denis Salles in Ecological Economics, Nov, 2014

Living the New Economy

Five days of events, live and livestreamed, designed to inspire new collaborations, facilitate new project partnerships, accelerate the work of social entrepreneurs, and showcase local innovation.

Sat Nov 8-Wed Nov 12, 2014 in Victoria, BC.