

## Engaging the Local Business Community

Thursday, June 16, 2016 Morning Session

Businesses play an important role when it comes to energy efficiency. Businesses How to engage business, one on one human interaction

**Moderator: Jo Fleming, Executive Director of the California Green Business Network**

**First panelist: Kellie Carlson, Environmental Specialist, Port of San Diego**

### ***“Port of San Diego’s Green Business Network”***

Kellie Carlson spoke about the Green Business Network in her community. Key points:

- Focused on businesses of all sizes. They range from a sunglass hut to a ship builder warehouse.
- Talk to tenants directly
- Build relationships
- The Port of San Diego adopted their own climate action plan which is a new and interesting solution to business engagement
- Gave incentives and valuable reasons why businesses should join the Green Business Network which include:
  - No cost energy audits, awards, provided with resources, grant funding , networking and promotional opportunities
  - Businesses will also learn about composting, waste management, recycling, energy efficiency, water reduction and many other sustainable concepts.
  - Possibility for grant money for EV charging stations
- Many businesses just need help getting started or need education. They are simply uninformed and don’t know where to begin
- Success: Port authority now has a better idea of what businesses want over the next 5 years, so they can help them with specific projects
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**Second panelist: Marisa Creter, Assistant Executive Director to the San Gabriel Valley Council of Governments**

### ***“Engaging Local Businesses: Challenges and Opportunities”***

- Build personal relationships with the businesses and know who is currently working there and who the points of contact should be. Many businesses have a high employee turnover rate
- Engagement: Put on workshops, networking events, have people speak, send out a newsletter or email reminders. Have healthy competitions between businesses as an interactive way to inform and encourage.
- Showcase cost savings and promote and educate businesses on grant programs, rebates and incentives.
- Use the programs provided by the utilities!
- Give customers self-audit checklist
- Try to develop a plan of what customers can accomplish in a year
- Benchmark buildings can be a very helpful tool and indicator for a starting point

Problems:

- Property manager vs. tenant: often times the tenant will want to go through with the program but the owner will not
- Language barriers
- Hard to get property manager's approval

**Third panelist: Antonia Castro-Graham, Assistant to the City Manager, City of Huntington Beach**

***“City of Huntington Beach Sustainable Business Certification Program”***

- Partner with direct install program
- Creatively brand your PACE program
- How do you target businesses?
  - Reach out to Chambers of Commerce
  - Attend business conventions, forums, and other events
  - Attend community events
- Focus on economic benefits
- Huntington Beach has a Sustainability Business Certification Program
  - Target customers: Offices, retail shops, hospitality, and food businesses
  - Acts as a business advocacy program
  - Provides an opportunity to develop relationships with these businesses
  - Focuses: Waste reduction, pollution reduction, energy efficiency and water conservation
  - Certification process is simple: Fill out an application, get evaluated, complete required tasks and then get certified
  - Benefits: Businesses get a sticker, notoriety, get put on the website and database, recognition
- Huntington Beach also has a Disadvantaged Business Certification Program to certify disadvantaged businesses

Challenges:

- Tough to convince customers to join the program
- Businesses think sustainability is costly

**Table Discussion:** Jo Fleming asked the audience: What would be the best way to overcome barriers, if money, time, and political support weren't an issue?

Group 1: They shared a solution to targeting potential businesses:

- Look at property management companies to have their buildings participate
- Separate businesses into categories: buildings that are owned and those that are leased

Group 2: When canvassing for new businesses to enter the Network, provide success stories from previous businesses that have saved money and energy from the program.

Group 3: Incorporate social media for promotion and perhaps create a map of where green businesses are located and convert this into an app. Create an app that helps citizens to local green businesses in a given area.

**Moderator: Jo Fleming, Executive Director of the California Green Business Network**

Reviewed what the Green Business Network is and provided updates. They are currently working on updating a business directory.