

## ShowCase

### EcoTeams

**Topic:** Sustainability

**Organisation:** Global Action Plan

**Location:** Communities across the UK

**Dates:** 2005 to 2008 (with further funding until 2011)

**Website:** [www.ecoteams.org.uk](http://www.ecoteams.org.uk)

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### Overview

EcoTeams originated in the Netherlands in the 1990s and since then over 150,000 people have participated worldwide. This case study examines EcoTeams' development in the UK between 2005 and 2008, which tested three models of delivery: standalone, semi-facilitated and fully-facilitated.

An EcoTeam is a group of householders who get together once a month over a five- to six-month period to follow a step-by-step process of manageable actions on sustainable living. Team members measure their household's environmental impact, share their experiences and agree together on practical, lasting changes.

### Results

Households who participated in semi-facilitated EcoTeams:

- Reduced their waste by an average of 20 per cent
- Increased their recycling (proportion of total waste) by an average of 5.1 per cent
- Reduced their electricity consumption by an average of 7 per cent
- Reduced their gas/heating energy consumption by an average of 20.8 per cent
- Reduced their direct CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by an average of 16.6 per cent
- Reduced their water use by an average of 14.9 per cent
- Made average savings of £148 per year on their energy and water bills

## 1. BEHAVIOUR

- For small groups of households to adopt greener lifestyles, by making small but significant improvements across a wide range of consumption activities, over a period of five to six months

## 2. CUSTOMER ORIENTATION

- Regular group meetings to discuss participants' needs and behaviours and set objectives
- Testing and refinement of EcoTeams model with different communities
- Participant survey – To track EcoTeams' impact on participants' motivations, behaviours and lifestyles
- 49 depth interviews and 4 focus groups with past EcoTeams participants – To analyse how the process works to assess longevity of its impact
- Analysis of quantitative web data – To show how successful EcoTeams can be at helping households reduce environmental impact

## 3. THEORY

- Uses innovative social engagement model – Provides practical ongoing support for households, enabling them to take practical action
- Effectiveness of three delivery models tested: Fully facilitated (high cost); Semi-facilitated (medium cost); Standalone (low cost)
- Semi-facilitated model delivered greatest environmental behaviour change

## 4. INSIGHT

- Taking personal responsibility for environmental action viewed as 'very important' or 'fairly important'
- Practical support to reduce environmental impact viewed as 'very important' or 'fairly important'
- Weighing and measuring waste output and energy consumption is crucial for engagement and impact assessment
- Behaviour changes that fit easily with participant's existing lifestyle are more likely to become habitual and routine

## 5. EXCHANGE

### Barriers to more sustainable living:

- No point doing it alone
- No point making small changes that won't make any big difference
- Hard to break ingrained habits

### Benefits to being part of an EcoTeam:

- Building confidence and self-efficacy
- Building social capital
- Obtaining trustworthy information on how to reduce environmental impact
- Fulfilling prior green intentions

## 6. COMPETITION

- Existing non-sustainable behaviours
- Perceived time and effort required to participate in EcoTeams

### Solutions:

- Participants encouraged to make small changes that fit with pre-existing lifestyle

## 7. SEGMENTATION

### Community groups:

- Low income communities
- Communities of employees
- Communities of interest
- Communities of influence
- Geographical communities

### Participant typologies:

- Mapped against Defra's segmentation model

## 8. METHODS MIX

- EcoTeams are groups of six to eight people who each represent their household
- Meet once a month for five to six months
- Provided with set of resources to address environmental issues
- Participants discuss issues and map out practical actions to reduce environmental impact
- Participants weigh waste and recycling output and measure energy and water consumption
- EverGreen process – Modified version of EcoTeams designed to engage harder-to-reach communities