

Lenses, Language & Engaging People

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Have you ever had a conversation with someone where you thought you were not in agreement, and then after some discussion you realise you're both actually on the same page, it's just that you were just approaching the same thing from a different starting point? It can be amusing when you both get to that 'a-ha!' moment!

People *might not know* what they are looking for. They might not yet know to look for it. They might not know where. They may have a number of things they are concerned about, or want to see change in their communities or their own lives, but aren't yet able to articulate it. They use the words and concepts THEY know, whether it's online or offline. So although you are singing a beautiful song of change, others may not be quite tuned in to your frequency.

**I STILL HAVEN'T FOUND WHAT
I'M LOOKING FOR**

Words & Music by U2

Tuning:
④ = E ③ = G
② = A ① = B
⑤ = D ⑥ = E

♩ = 100

D5 G5 F5 G D

* Gtr. II D5

* Use Distortion

1st Verse

I have climbed (the) high-cot

Rhm. Fig. 1

mountains, I have run through the fields on-ly to

(*Denal7.8)

* Parenthetical chords refer to sublead guitar

A colleague speaking to her interstate counterparts discovered they were engaging in what they called "Secret Sustainability". Having discovered that about a third of the number of people would turn up to a 'Fair Food Week' event (or similarly framed environmental or social justice get togethers) as they did to cooking events, they now run 'cooking demonstrations' attended by many more people – and at which fair food, food waste etc messages can be easily incorporated.

Further, while it is important for all the 'green' groups to know what each other is doing and work with each other where there are opportunities to do so, I see it as just as important that they are building relationships with other groups where there are commonalities; for example connecting with a local school or sporting club around energy saving or health themes, or with migrant groups who have food growing or 'maker' skills (which is also good way of helping to integrate these groups into the wider social fabric), or engaging with the local chamber of commerce on how transition-style relocalisation might support small business.

At the very least, sustainability *incognito* may well be the means to the ends.

In organisations, consider whether the language of 'kilowatt hours' and 'tonnes of CO2' resonates with the different audiences you need to influence to gain support for sustainability.

For **accountants and financial managers**, present a business case that shows short term cost savings (such as energy bills) and also speaks to longer term value, such as insulating the organisation against future shocks as resources become more expensive or scarce.

For **business development** folks, demonstrate how sustainability could drive innovation and create new opportunities – and highlight the risk of inaction such as loss of competitive advantage.

For **marketing and PR-types**, show how sustainability can help with brand/reputation and market positioning, such as when large organisations are looking to 'green' their supply chains – early adopters will be ahead of the curve.

If you want others to hear your tune, then sing the song of your intended audiences.

Go forth with your initiative *in mind*, but if you can connect to a wider base of groups with approaches that use *their language*, and address *their interests*, then you start to build some traction with mobilising other latent sources of time and energy.