HOW GRASSROOTS SUSTAINABILITY INITIATIVES CAN BE FACILITATED IN THE CORPORATE SECTOR

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BACKGROUND

• Sustainability practices, like Reuse Seattle, are gaining increased attractiveness in the corporate sector (Figure 1)
• However, implementation strategies (top-down vs bottom-up) may determine their success
• Grassroots (bottom-up) efforts could create greater dedication and engagement
• My research aims to uncover factors that encourage grassroots sustainability initiatives

RESULTS

• Mix of top-down and bottom-up sustainability strategies which can be influenced by:
  - Organizational-wide discussions about company's sustainability policies and broader environmental issues
  - Supervisory and colleague support for engagement with sustainability
  - Building norms and company values
  - Make sustainability more manageable
  - Understand how new practices will affect employees on an individual level
  - Switching from compliance to innovation

• For more effective communication and personalization, companies could tap into employee motivators (Figure 2)

BROADER IMPLICATIONS

• Employee-led initiatives may be linked to employee engagement with sustainability practices
• With greater engagement, the implementation of Reuse Seattle or other sustainable practices may have better success
• The success of Reuse Seattle can influence other companies to take similar steps toward a more sustainable workplace

KEY TAKEAWAYS

• As companies implement sustainability practices, like Reuse Seattle, employee receptiveness will be important to consider for its success
• Organizational and employee-led sustainability engagement may be influenced by a variety of factors (Figure 3)

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WHAT FACTORS FACILITATE GRASSROOTS SUSTAINABILITY INITIATIVES AND EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT WITHIN COMPANIES?

INTERNERSHIP & METHODS

• Interned with Seattle Public Utilities' Reuse Seattle team
• Conducted 6 Zoom interviews with senior-level corporate leadership
• Created an online survey on broader employee experiences with company sustainability

RESEARCH QUESTION:

• What factors facilitate grassroots sustainability initiatives and employee engagement within companies?

Figure 1: This chart reflects the willingness of 14 entry/mid-level employees to adopt Reuse Seattle, a reusable serviceware (food and beverage containers) system, at their workplace

Figure 2: Survey ranking frequencies of entry/mid-level employees' sustainability motivators (24 responses)

Figure 3: Themes from senior-level leadership interviews. Themes of "communication/education" and "work culture" were also discussed in the literature I reviewed.

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