



## BEYOND AWARENESS: TURNING THE TIDE TOWARD SUSTAINABILITY

BY JANICE MOLLOY

**H**ave we reached a tipping point of awareness around global warming? Former vice president Al Gore's high-profile movie, *An Inconvenient Truth*, with its dramatic depictions of the looming environmental crisis, gained critical acclaim and record-setting crowds. Sir Richard Branson recently announced that all profits from Virgin Airways and Virgin Train—an estimated \$3 billion over the next decade—will be invested in initiatives to develop new energy technologies. Even President Bush, who had previously expressed skepticism about global warming, seems to have accepted the incontrovertible fact—that human activity is causing climate change.

For most of us, insight into the problem isn't enough—we want to know what steps we can take to become part of the solution. Two new books, taking two very different approaches, offer ideas and inspiration for how individuals and organizations can begin the long journey toward bringing the planet back into balance—and connecting meaningfully with others along the way.



**Low Carbon Diet:  
A 30 Day Program to  
Lose 5000 Pounds**  
by David Gershon  
(Empowerment  
Institute, 2006)

In this accessible, action-oriented workbook, Gershon walks readers through a series of checklists designed to help reduce annual household carbon dioxide consumption by at least 5,000 pounds. With easy-to-follow instructions and a focus on high-leverage activities, these tips make minimizing our environmental footprint seem easy.

The author divides the change

program into three categories. *Climate-friendly lifestyle practices* require a shift in habits, such as taking shorter showers and practicing fuel-efficient driving. *Household systems* are a home's mechanical infrastructures; through periodic maintenance, such as sealing air leaks, you can make them more ecologically sound. But perhaps the greatest leverage lies in the last category—*Empowering others to lose unwanted pounds*. By inviting friends, neighbors, and coworkers to join you on “the diet,” you can scale up the impact of your efforts, create a support system, and begin to lay the groundwork for making changes in the larger systems you are a part of.



**Learning for  
Sustainability**  
by Peter Senge, Joe Laur,  
Sara Schley, and Bryan  
Smith (Society for  
Organizational Learning,  
2006)

Combining thought pieces with tools for individual and organizational change, systemwide explorations with personal stories, this slim volume illustrates how ordinary people can—and must—take extraordinary action in these troubled times. The five disciplines of organizational learning and Robert Fritz's creative tension model provide a practical and highly effective change methodology for groups ranging from massive multinational energy corporations to a small nongovernmental start-up in rural Uganda. On another level, essays focused on “the inner and outer work” of sustainability remind readers of “the personal practices and disciplines that provide the perspective and the internal stability needed to make a difference in the

long run.” Otherwise, even the most dedicated change agent may lose effectiveness and burn out.

One essay in particular synthesizes the possibilities and obstacles in breaking free from traditional constraints to collaborate in new ways. The Materials Pooling working group is exploring methods in which waste from one industry can become a resource for another. Through this model effort, the group has identified many unanticipated barriers to this kind of collaboration, including regulations, lack of information from suppliers, and inability to cross silos within organizations, while setting the stage for future initiatives.

### Swimming Against the Stream—Together

We can't rely solely on governments or other entities to take the lead in solving global warming; each of us has a role to play. And while, in the beginning, it may feel as though we're swimming against the stream, by collaborating with others, the payoff from our efforts will be magnified ten times, 100 times, 1,000 times. Only by acting together will we hit a tipping point and make earth-friendly behaviors the norm. After all, the alternative—a devastated planet as our legacy to the next generations—just isn't an option. ■

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### TEAM TIP

According to Gershon, reading a poem, quote, or other short passage at the beginning of a meeting can connect the group to the meaning and larger purpose of what you're doing.