



Case Study

ANHEUSER-BUSCH'S A PLEDGE AND A PROMISE: TOTAL EMPLOYEE INVOLVEMENT

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Anheuser-Busch is a large, diversified corporation, both in its products and in its environmental efforts. It is well-known that Anheuser-Busch is the world's largest brewer, with twelve operating breweries and a thirteenth under construction. It also operates the largest aluminum can recycling network in the world, Anheuser-Busch Recycling (A-BR). A-BR recycled more than 600 million pounds of aluminum in 1991, or more than 17 billion cans. This article describes how Anheuser-Busch has put TQEM ideas into practice involving all of its employees.

This is an article about some small things—an aluminum can (Budweiser, of course), a piece of plastic strapping, and a beechwood chip, and how a company and its employees can take care of them in ways that protect the environment. Note the emphasis on employees: They are the most important factor in any company's environmental accomplishments.

Whether it is an engineer who searches until finding a secondary market for Anheuser-Busch's famed beechwood chips or an employee who comes to a brewery environmental committee meeting during vacation, employees are driving our success. The environmental accomplishments achieved by Anheuser-Busch are simply the sum of the many small choices made by each employee every day.

This employee involvement takes place within a framework of a company that has long considered resource conservation a part of its daily business. Anheuser-Busch began recycling spent brewers' grain into animal feed a century ago. We have been recycling cans, bottles, scrap metal, and corrugated from our breweries for more than twenty-five years.

In 1970, our then chairman, August A. Busch, Jr., pledged the company's resources to work toward solutions to the major environmental problems, particularly solid waste. This was contained in a publication, *A Pledge and a Promise*, given to all employees. That still is the theme of Anheuser-Busch's environmental efforts today—in manufacturing operations, in recycling, in stimulation of citizen involvement, and in wildlife presentation.

ENVIRONMENTAL ORGANIZATION

The fact that Anheuser-Busch employees are empowered to act as environmental stewards does not mean our company's efforts are isolated or disorganized. We have a senior-level environmental policy committee that meets regularly to discuss environmental issues facing the company. Two years ago, Anheuser-Busch distributed to all employees an *Environmental Policy Manual* that spells out our philosophy. The primary message is summed up by this one sentence: "Every choice we make regarding the earth, air and water around us is made with the objective of

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preserving it for all the generations to come." The message to employees could not be clearer.

About two years ago, with the support and encouragement of the brewery's senior management, environmental quality committees were established. First, there is an operating committee with representatives from each brewery. This committee is cross-functional, with industrial and environmental engineers, purchasing agents, packaging experts, operations managers, technicians, and operators. Every segment of the employee base is involved.

Also, there is a steering committee with representatives from three breweries, brewing, communications, legal, R&D, safety, operations, packaging and shipping, engineering, government affairs, and others. All these employees volunteer their time. Their environmental coordinating work is over and above their other duties.

Open communication is encouraged. On our committees, everyone is equal. All members are encouraged to share any environmental opportunities they identify and to take part in any solutions that are developed. Teams have been *built*, not just formed.

Communication is key to what we do. We meet face-to-face and we also communicate extensively through electronic mail, enabling a widespread sharing of information.

Through consultations with employees, our committees have developed goals to protect the environment. It is a simple concept: Imagine a bubble over a typical Anheuser-Busch brewery. We want to minimize the amount of raw materials and waste materials that pierce the bubble, while maximizing the quantity of beer produced.

Beyond that simple statement, however, are some specific goals:

- We will reduce our solid waste to the landfill by 40 percent by weight by the end of 1993.
- We will reduce the water used to brew each barrel of beer by 10 percent, reduce per-unit wastewater flow by 15 percent, and reduce per-unit organic strength by 10 percent.
- Toward air quality, we will cut energy use by 20 percent over the remainder of this decade. We have already reduced energy use by 30 percent over the past twenty years.

These goals were developed after consultations with employees in all affected departments. They have the full support of senior management.

The specific goals, and even the "bubble" diagram, have been printed in employee newspapers and presented at numerous meetings at all of our facilities. The simplicity of the concept makes execution possible. We all need to understand what the environmental bottom line of our job is.

The notion of environmental stewardship is driven home to all brewery employees every spring with an event called "Green Week." It is devoted to environmental awareness and education. Tips are provided to use on the job and at home. Some breweries have organized groups to engage in such activities as cleanups or tree plantings in their communities.

To encourage more thought about the environment, the environmental operating committee organized an art contest at each brewery. The contest was entered by children, but it was really aimed at employees. The task was for a child to draw a picture of what a relative does at work to protect the environment. Of course, the only



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way a child could do this was by talking to the employee, who had to think about the subject and explain it to the child.

MEASURING SUCCESS

Now that we've noted how Anheuser-Busch has encouraged employees to conserve resources and protect the environment, we turn to some of their accomplishments, which help us measure new endeavors.

The amount of trash that went to landfill from our brewery in Baldwinsville, New York, dropped from 8,000 tons in 1990 to 5,000 tons in 1991—a 37 percent reduction. Much of that decrease was accomplished by employees taking small steps. They were using a materials processing center to remove recyclable materials from the brewery's dumpsters. Upon finding that significant amounts of glass and cardboard were being thrown away rather than recycled, they stepped up education efforts to ensure that every bit of glass and cardboard was recovered from the brewery.

We know from these figures that the effort was a success. But there is one anecdote that confirms it: In the spring of 1991, the same materials processing center told Anheuser-Busch that no more dumpsters should be sent because nothing recyclable was left inside.

At our brewery in Williamsburg, Virginia, an environmental engineer thought that the thin plastic straps that hold incoming cans on pallets should not be thrown away. She began an effort that also involved others throughout Anheuser-Busch to get manufacturers to standardize the material from which this strapping is made. Our breweries now chop this strapping into small pieces and either return it to the manufacturer to make it into new strapping or to sell to firms that make other plastic products. *These straps seem like a small matter, but our breweries receive 1,000 tons of strapping a year and no longer send it to landfills.*

One of our biggest breakthroughs—courtesy of efforts of employees at our breweries in Newark, New Jersey, and Fort Collins, Colorado—is in the handling of the beechwood chips that are used in the fermenting process for all Anheuser-Busch beers. When they were no longer usable, they had been landfilled. But after work in Newark and Fort Collins showed the way, we are finding secondary markets for this wood product.

In Fort Collins, we worked with the city's resource recovery farm, which takes our chips, combines them with sludge from the municipal wastewater treatment plant, and composts the mixture. This is then applied as a soil conditioner at a farm, where alfalfa and other cover crops are grown. In Newark, our employees located a landscaper who now uses our spent beechwood chips for mulch on his projects.

On the subject of composting, Anheuser-Busch set up the first commercial compost facility in the food industry three years ago at its brewery in Baldwinsville, New York. This converts the undissolved solids from brewing wastewater into a useful soil conditioner for gardeners and landscapers. In one year, the facility produces more than 40,000 cubic yards of compost, enough to renovate more than one hundred football fields or beautify nearly three hundred acres of gardens.

At our brewery in Fairfield, California, water supply is an important issue due to the six years of drought in the state. Employees have provided more than two hundred suggestions for conserving water; some 90 percent have been implemented.

Each of these examples involves an employee or group of employees asking themselves, "Can we do this better?" With an affirmative answer, they then take action to improve our environmental performance.



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MEASUREMENT AND RESULTS

The end of all this, of course, is results. We are dedicated to resource conservation, and we have to document that we have achieved it. Our motto in this regard is taken from Lord Kelvin, inventor of the temperature scale that bears his name:

When you can measure what you're speaking about, and express it in numbers, you know something about it; but when you cannot measure it, when you cannot express it in numbers, your knowledge is of a meager and unsatisfactory kind...

We find that by measuring our progress and sharing results, we create the following effects:

- Accomplishments documented and understood
- Pride, participation, and momentum
- Areas for improvement identified
- Friendly competition stimulated
- Need for additional resources justified
- Organized information for other needs

In 1991, even though we weren't truly up and running until after the first quarter, we reduced the amount of waste going to landfills by 7,700 tons systemwide. We figure that created enough room in landfills to serve the needs of 3,000 families for one year. Our goal, by the end of 1993, is to reduce that amount five-fold.

BUYING RECYCLED

In 1992, there has been much written about the need to "close the loop" in recycling. Businesses cannot just keep recycling our waste products and consider the job done. We must move to the next level and begin buying the products made from recycled materials.

To that end, Anheuser-Busch and two dozen other large corporations have formed the Buy Recycled Business Alliance within the National Recycling Coalition. Its aim is to lead by example—to open markets for recycled content products.

Anheuser-Busch is one of the largest packagers in the world, and much of our packaging contains post-consumer waste. Our brewing subsidiary, Anheuser-Busch, Inc., purchased more than \$2 billion worth of packaging materials containing recycled content in 1991. These purchases kept nearly one billion pounds of materials out of the nation's landfills.

In addition to packaging materials, Anheuser-Busch has made a major push to purchase recycled office product supplies. Our most recent annual report was printed on recycled paper. We are using business forms with recycled content—about thirty kinds of multipage forms. We have purchased more than 100,000 pounds of letterhead and envelope stock and 5,000 pounds of business cards. Just this summer, we began using recycled computer paper, with 10 percent to 20 percent post-consumer waste. We estimate we will use more than 50 million sheets of it a year.

To further our belief that employees are crucial to our success, Anheuser-Busch has a system in place to encourage direct action—we work to establish goals, measure our progress, and communicate our successes. As we look around our world and see the vast amount of work that must be done to preserve our planet, it might be tempting to lose heart, to think that the job is too big. We have not done that. We've taken to heart the advice Peter Drucker likes to give: "The best way to predict the future is to create it." ♦



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