

Going GREEN

Panelists:

- **Susan Roothan**, Founder and Executive Director of A Nurtured World. She offers regular workshops, “More in your wallet, less from the environment,” to help people eliminate waste in their day to day activities. In addition to being a dynamic, engaging speaker, she is also an engineer with 20 years of environmental experience, including work in government and private industry.
- **Brandi Clark** (moderator) has been very active in Austin’s environmental movement. She’s on the board of Austin Car Share, started Environmentality 10 years ago, and is a former co-chair of Sustainable Business Council. She been a “green” marketing consultant, organized several Earth Festivals, and is working on starting a socially and environmentally responsible bank with a triple bottom line (people, planet, profit).
- **Jon Luden**, has been Austin Energy’s Commercial Conservation Manager since 1984. In that time he’s helped countless businesses throughout Austin become more energy-efficient. He’s always looking for way to make it even easier for companies to participate in the energy saving programs.

Quick Summary:

Brandi Clark, Jon Luden, and Susan Roothan shared a wealth of knowledge and strategies about how individuals and businesses can make smart decisions to save money, make money, and help the environment. All three speakers spoke from experience – they’ve witnessed first hand how much business sense it makes to be environmentally responsible. Waste = profit loss, quite simply. Efficiency saves money and the environment. It allows us to use less resources to fulfill customer (and our own) needs.

The speakers reported that there have always been environmentally responsible actions that could have big financial payoffs, but that today it’s truer than ever. Rising costs of gas, energy, and water make efficiency savings even greater. And, the growing demand for efficient, “green” products and services make green businesses even more profitable. This is especially true in Austin – where Austin Energy subsidizes green building and provides lists of approved contractors – there are lots of business opportunities for builders and installers... As Al Gore’s recent Nobel Prize emphasizes, environmentalism is here to stay.

The good news is that there are *lots* of opportunities to take advantage of these money saving/money making green strategies. All three speakers are great resources and they identified many other useful resources. Austin Energy and A Nurtured World both focus on helping businesses and households become more resource efficient – and they both focus on *affordable* solutions – it’s all about saving money, too. Some attendees at the workshop had already made the energy efficient changes to their businesses and testified to the helpfulness of the Austin Energy program for small businesses. Some had even started to market the green elements of their businesses.

BRANDI CLARK: Introduction

- Emphasized that there are many resources available to people want to make their business more “green.”
 - Co-op America (<http://www.coopamerica.org/>) is a D.C.-based group that publishes that National Greenpages: (www.greenpages.org). She says it’s cheap to join and offers practical strategies.
- **Waste in nature = waste in business**, so wasting less means less profit loss.
- Gradually, the concept of capital is expanding to include:
 - Human capital (rates, training, customer relationships, family)
 - Manufacturing (often can **co-purchase or share** big investments)
 - If one business needs a trailer every once in awhile, can buy into Austin Carshare or share that investment with another business. Price of membership includes insurance, parking.
 - Cut down on the expenses you assume you need to buy.
 - Take advantage of opportunities to invest in something reusable.
 - Natural capital: natural resources are economic resources.
 - Waste = typical externalized costs – it’s easy to pass pollution on to other people. “where’s away? There IS no away.”
 - Need to think about the whole cycle – what we draw from the earth should safely return (“cradle to cradle”). If it can’t return naturally to the earth, then:
 - The product needs to be reused – or broken down and then use the parts to make something new.

JOHN LUDEN

- **Green business is a MEGA-TREND, it’s here to stay.**
- Last Sunday (October 7) the editorial page of the Statesman was all on energy and conservation issues.
 - Ken Kramer “Over the next 15 years, boosting markets for efficient products can eliminate 80% of forecast growth in electricity demand.”
- There are SO many opportunities to save or make money through energy efficiency: **providing; installing, purchasing...**
 - HVAC systems, window treatments, roofing
- “Virtually unlimited potential” to tap into green/efficient energy market. **Haven’t come close to meeting it yet, but the issues are now popular.** Al Gore’s Nobel Prize has contributed to this momentum, and energy efficiency is gaining a foothold.
- The Commercial Energy program began in 1985 with only lighting, but it now provides incentives and information about 50 energy efficient technologies (air conditioning, chillers, variable frequency drives – basically anything that reduces peak demand).
- 700 megawatts of demand have been saved so far through AE’s program.
 - **This is the same as 1 average sized power plant (Holly Power Plant produced just a little bit less)**
 - A lot of public money (including bonds) saved through energy efficiency
- **10-30% of the cost of energy efficiency improvements covered** by Austin Energy (\$4 million invested so far). .

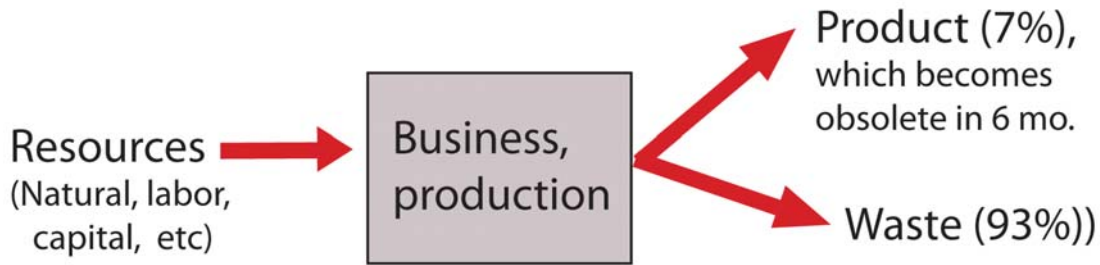
- **Energy savings lead to quick payoffs!**

Examples:

- Energy efficiency lighting: High Bay T5 lighting strips instead of traditional fluorescent lights (such as HID lights which are glaring and color distorting).
 - Better color rendition
 - **Payback in just over 2 years**
 - Tremendous energy savings.
 - HEB just shifted – it feels a lot more pleasant there now and it saves money.
- Even faster paybacks come from window films or a screens, or white coatings on roofs
- A small East Austin business (insurance company) just went through the Austin Energy commercial program and took **2 months to recover its investment (\$250)**.
- Churches: \$780 investment paid back in 2 months.
- FREE IMPROVEMENTS
 - Vending machines that shut off when no traffic is around
 - **Programmable thermostats** – you can program your air conditioner to turn off and start. AE will even replace your batteries!
- AE working hard to make it so that there's *no direct problem* for companies to go energy-efficient – want to make it so it's "all gravy"
 - Financing for major projects has been somewhat of a problem, but they're working on resolving it. AE is looking to establish relationships with banks (and John even took advantage of the Economic Summit to explore some relationships with banks!).

SUSAN ROOTHAN

- Ms. Roothan is an "ex-engineer" who used to work with small businesses, industries, and metal finishers on energy efficiency. After focusing a long time on the business side of things, she got frustrated that no work was being done to drive up *consumer demand* for less waste, less pollution, more efficiency. She started "A Nurtured World" to try to help people see how they could save money through environmentally responsible action, and continued to help businesses do the same.
- Paint manufacturer example:
 - One of its major costs was the disposal of expensive paint that had gone bad. Instead of focusing on disposal cost, she asked them how much they would have sold (and what profit they would have made) if they only produced what they could sell and didn't let excess go bad.
 - General question: How money can you make with the least amount of resources going in??



How much of the resources you invest are actually going towards **customer fulfillment?**



**great business opportunity:
get to the real thing that people want**

- As the chart above shows, unfortunately, most of the production process results in *waste* which basically means profit loss AND damage to the environment. Only 7% goes to the product, which often becomes obsolete in only 6 months. So, only a very small amount of the resources that go into the system create lasting customer fulfillment. **If you can produce the real thing people want, using fewer resources, you've got a highly profitable (and environmentally responsible) business.**
 - Look for ways to be energy-efficient
 - Consider producing products that can satisfy customers for a longer period of time
 - Focus on what people really need and want.
- What is it that customers want?
 - Natural Step example: European electric company that focuses on providing lighting and comfort – not just electrons! They offered their customers the option of a fixed rate at 10%, and in less than 1 year went back and retrofitted entire system to be more energy efficient: providing what people want/need, but with as few electrons and other resources as possible
- No business or person is going to be “environmentally responsible” just because it’s a good thing to do. There has to be some direct payoff in:
 - **TIME**
 - **FINANCIAL PAYBACK**
 - **PERSONAL PAYBACK** (“I don’t want to be miserable”)
 - There are many ways to achieve all of these...
- At the personal level, you need to ask the same questions as business: ***how much of the money you spend goes to fulfillment, and how much goes to waste?***
 - Most people how do this calculation find that only 50% went to fulfillment.
 - Need to find ways to make as much as your money go toward realization of your values...

- Through her workshops, participants report saving an average of \$1,600 per year and up to \$9,800 per year. The average participant reduced their carbon footprint by 2 tons!
- Lots of opportunities to be more efficient: most of household income is spent on FOOD, TRANSPORTATION, and HOUSING. These are also the areas that are the most environmentally wasteful!

TRANSPORTATION

- \$650 per month spent to own a car, which is a depreciating asset (it **loses** value over time). Costs include insurance, gas, maintenance (\$.50 per mile is IRS's rough reimbursement figure))
- Yet, it costs only \$50 per month for Austin Carshare, plus a bus pass.
- Even if you own your car, you can plan better trips and save miles and time... (For instance, FedEx saved lots of money when it required that its delivery trucks make routes using only right turns – no more long waits at lights...)

FOOD

- 15% of food purchased is thrown away and goes to landfills
- Many Texans, and Americans in general, are significantly overweight
- Food production is incredibly water and fossil fuel intensive – most of our food is transported from far, far away.
- Toxics accumulate as you move up the food chain (the bigger the animal, the bigger threat).
- WATER - How long would it take to get back your investment in a really nice \$15 water bottle, assuming that you spend \$1 a day on bottled water? (15 days). And you'd keep a lot of plastic out of a landfill...

HOUSING

- Energy efficiency savings are huge! Can save \$50-100 per month.
- By being water efficient (or by using rainwater), you are also energy efficient. – **Water supply (pumping, etc) is the biggest use of Austin Energy's energy!!**
- **Opportunities exist for low-income families to increase home-efficiency!**
 - **One House at A Time**, <http://www.1houseatatime.org/>: this project of A Nurtured World works with Meals on Wheels to save low-income households money through water and energy efficient home improvements including:
 - Home **weatherization**, new energy and water **efficient appliances**, new or upgraded **HVAC systems**, **low flush toilets** and efficient water fixtures, rain barrels, and energy saving devices such as **programmable thermostats**, compact fluorescent bulbs, and easily accessible power strips to reduce phantom loads.
 - Austin Energy also has home improvement programs for households with a wide range of incomes – free improvements for low-income, and zero-low interest loans for many others.
- **Opportunities for all to save money and save resources:**

- **Freecycle:** <http://austin-freecycle.tribe.net/> “One person’s trash is another’s treasure” – A site where people can post their trash and others can claim it for free.
- **Triad Recycling** (Austin company that recycles construction materials)
- **Environmental Directory** <http://environmentaldirectory.info/Austin/>,
- **Loanables:** <http://www.loanables.com/> a website with posts about things neighbors have that don’t get used enough and are available to borrow (usually at some price).
- **Austin Eco-Network,** <http://www.austineconetwork.org/>, a list-serve that sends you all sorts of emails about environmental news, events, and tidbits around Austin.
- **Energy Star appliances**
- **Duplexing printers**