

Climate Change and Business: Eurostar's Environmental Action Plan and its Communication –Lessons Learnt and Guidelines– (ARI)

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Theme: Businesses are under increasing pressure from customers and governments to reduce their environmental impact. This ARI examines the challenges and benefits of adopting an environmental plan.

Summary: The threat of climate change creates a responsibility on governments, organisations and citizens alike to play their part in reducing the impact of human activities on the environment. Businesses that adopt an environmental plan can help their customers, increase their profitability, reduce the consumption of energy and materials (and hence costs), and enhance their reputations.

Analysis:

Introduction

In the wake of numerous political and policy initiatives on climate change, it is clear that businesses must increasingly respond by adopting environmental plans.

This challenge can be seen as an opportunity or a burden. Businesses that respond effectively and fully can expect to enhance their reputation with clients, employees, policy makers, opinion formers and the public. Organisations that fail to respond to the growing expectations of society will fall behind those who recognise that all parties –government, business and consumers– are 'in it together'. They will simply have to try to catch up later. However, the experience of Eurostar¹ suggests that, to be successful, businesses

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¹ Eurostar is the operator of high-speed rail passenger services between the city centres of London, Paris and Brussels via the Channel Tunnel (www.eurostar.com). In 2009 it carried some 9.2 million passengers and now has a market share on both the London-Paris and London-Brussels routes of more than 80% (Railway Gazette, 30 October 2009).

Eurostar operates a fleet of 27 Inter-Capital Class 373 high-speed trains, with a maximum running speed of 300 km/hour (186 miles/hour). Although related to the TGV family of trains, the Class 373s are complex and have four different power systems and four different signalling systems so they can run on the different infrastructures of each of the three countries of operation – Belgium, France and the United Kingdom - and in the Channel Tunnel.

The structure of the Eurostar business is unusual. It is an unincorporated joint venture of SNCF (French Railways), Eurostar UK Ltd - owned by London & Continental Railways, in turn wholly owned by the UK's Department for Transport - and SNCB (Belgian Railways). Legally each of the partners is responsible for running Eurostar services on its own territory, although the strategic and commercial direction of the company is set and controlled by a single management team based in London. With the advent of Open Access for international rail passenger services in the European Union from January 2010 (Railway Gazette, 19 February 2008), (Directive 2007/58/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council), the business will become a single corporate entity in the course of 2010. This move is intended to put the business on a level playing field with future competitors, expected to include Deutsche Bahn (German Railways) among others (Business Week, Jan 2010).

must recognise that the development and implementation of an environment plan requires top-level leadership and commitment, time and resources, employee engagement and (most likely) new skills. Experts in this new field of business activity are few and difficult to recruit; they may have to be 'homegrown'. The media and public scepticism that surrounds the 'green' plans of many businesses means that an absolute commitment to honesty, rigour and transparency in all corporate and marketing communications is also required.

It should also be recognised that many businesses find it difficult to estimate the monetary value of an environmental plan before embarking upon one. There may be little or no data on possible savings. In a review of sustainability developments, the SAM Group found that 'companies care about their brands and invest heavily into brand management, but few report that they are actually able to quantify the values of their brands and the returns on their brand investments' (SAM Group, 2006). An environmental plan is thus a substantial commitment, but can be commercially difficult-to-quantify at the outset.

The Beginning

In 2005 some of Eurostar's largest corporate clients began requesting data on the carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions generated as a result of business travel by Eurostar (Brown, 2008). They were influenced by a growing range of political, legislative and other factors, broadly stemming from initiatives such as the US Global Reporting Initiative and the UK's Carbon Disclosure Project, both launched in 2000. They wanted to collate and publish their emissions as part of corporate responsibility reporting, or had to do so if members of the FTSE4GOOD Index Series.

Eurostar already offered other commercial advantages over flying –shorter check-in times, faster journeys, better punctuality: >90% 'on time' compared with <70% for the airlines (Eurostar, press release, 13/1/2009), more convenient city centre-to-city centre travel, and more productive on-board working environments. But it was unable to provide any emissions data. Conscious that it would be foolish to ignore pressure from corporate clients, and aware that governments were struggling to produce environmental policies, it realised there was a void that business could fill. It commissioned a detailed study to verify the emissions generated per passenger journey on each of its end-to-end routes.

Map 1. Eurostar's Core Routes



The study would use all available specific data on energy generation and consumption, and actual passenger load factors for both Eurostar and the airlines. It would have to be as detailed, robust and transparent as possible, in order to withstand any challenges from competitors, the media, environmental groups and/or other potential sceptics. It would also be critical to maintain the confidence of corporate clients and leisure travellers that the findings were reliable, and were produced by an author whose credentials could not be challenged.

Desk research indicated a preferred supplier who met the requirements. The consortium of Paul Watkiss Associates (Watkiss) and AEA Technology Environment (AEA) had previously worked for the European Commission and UK Government, and would be able to provide an independent assessment of Eurostar's environmental performance.

The study team assembled detailed data on: the electricity supplied to the rail infrastructure in each territory; power station emissions and transmission and distribution losses; actual load factors for Eurostar and the airlines; energy consumption by the trains; and specific emissions for the various types of aircraft and aircraft engines being used on the competing routes. They then began the task of calculating CO₂ emissions per passenger journey for Eurostar and its competitors.

Eurostar published the results of the study in October (Watkiss, 2006). The key message was that a flight between London and Paris or London and Brussels generated 10 times more CO₂ emissions than an equivalent journey by Eurostar. A passenger on a return flight between London Heathrow and Paris Charles de Gaulle would generate 122kg of CO₂, compared with just 11kg for the equivalent return journey by high-speed train. Similarly, a round trip flight between London Heathrow and Brussels would generate 160kg of CO₂ per passenger, compared with 18kg of CO₂ for a return journey by Eurostar (Eurostar, press release, 2/X/2006).

Updated research (Watkiss, 2009), using metered energy data from Eurostar trains, showed return journey comparisons of 6.6kg vs 107.8kg for Eurostar vs Heathrow-Paris by air; and 8.2kg vs 140.6kg for Eurostar vs Heathrow-Brussels by air (Eurostar, 2009).

The study also pointed out that electrically-powered high-speed rail travel was 'future proofed' in that it would generate even less CO₂ per passenger journey in future as a result of more efficient trains, and EU directives to increase the amount of lower carbon, renewable energy generation.

The simplicity of Eurostar's communication –'ten times less CO₂ than flying'– ensured that the message quickly became established among and reported by transport, travel and specialist media. A powerful new communication and marketing storyline had been developed, adding 'environment' to Eurostar's repertoire of messages and creating further advantage over its competitors.

At the same time, it was recognised that customers wanted the promise of future action: Eurostar would have to develop an environmental action plan to further reduce its environmental impacts.

Developing an Environmental Plan

In Eurostar's case, the development of its environmental plan, known as *Tread Lightly*, was based on an internal assessment of what the business could achieve, with sufficient commitment, within five years (ie, by 2012). Rather than select an external template for the plan, which in any case were in short supply in early 2006, Eurostar preferred to assess what was practical and relevant to its own organisation.

The three principles underlying the plan were to:

- (1) Reduce usage wherever possible.
- (2) Source supplies responsibly.
- (3) Re-use or recycle what is used or produced.

Given that the large majority of Eurostar's environmental impact arises as a result of its train operations, it was decided that the first objective should be a reduction in CO₂ emissions per passenger journey. As well as being the most beneficial thing that could be done for the environment, it would also further increase Eurostar's communicable advantage over its competitors.

This could primarily be achieved by a combination of ensuring increased passenger numbers per train, encouraging, training and providing the tools for Eurostar drivers to adopt a more energy efficient driving style, and encouraging the rail infrastructure providers –Network Rail in the UK, RFF in France, Infrabel in Belgium and Eurotunnel– to seek lower carbon supplies of traction electricity wherever possible (Eurostar, like other train operators, does not have direct contracts with the suppliers of electricity on its routes).

After assessing Eurostar's degree of control over the various levers for change, it was decided that a 25% reduction in CO₂ emissions per passenger journey by 2012, against a baseline of 2007, would be a tough but achievable target, based on changing driver behaviour, changing train components such as lighting and heating and in terms of the likely market conditions for passenger demand and electricity supply. It is worth noting, in

terms of reducing emissions per passenger, that Eurostar's trains are of fixed length and cannot be reduced or extended depending on passenger loadings, unlike airlines which can deploy different sizes of aircraft depending on passenger demand.

One of the most important, and arduous, tasks of launching an environmental plan is establishing the baselines from which progress can be measured. Without this process, no plan can be considered credible. It was to take the team more than a year to visit Eurostar's sites, seeking electricity, gas and water meters, gathering data, establishing procurement patterns and measuring consumption.

Data is often hard to come by: shared offices rarely have individual meters for each tenant; and in the case of Eurostar's new maintenance depot, big enough to contain eight 400m-long trains under one roof, there was no dedicated electricity meter from the neighbouring rail infrastructure. Similarly, at the Gare du Nord in Paris, which Eurostar shares with SNCF domestic services, there was no disaggregation of the station's electricity consumption for Eurostar specifically.

Alongside its CO₂ target, Eurostar assembled a 10-point plan (Eurostar, 2007) designed to tackle all its other major environmental impacts. These were to:

- (1) Separate, sort and recycle all on-board waste, including food waste.
- (2) Replace train air-conditioning refrigerants with the less environmentally damaging chemicals by 2008, seven years before the 2015 deadline set by EU Regulation 2037/2000 on Ozone Depleting Substances.
- (3) Help travellers reduce CO₂ emissions when accessing Eurostar services by providing journey planner information and ticket sales for public transport options, and developing new travel initiatives and partnerships.
- (4) Sort and recycle waste from all Eurostar buildings, with the goal of zero disposal to landfill, and with 80% of waste recycled by 2009.
- (5) Ensure that lighting, heating and mechanical plant at stations, depots and offices are as energy efficient as possible, develop a 'switch-off' culture, and procure electricity from greener sources of energy.
- (6) Re-use water from train-washing at Eurostar's train maintenance depot in the UK, and invest in rainwater collection to further reduce consumption (Eurostar does not control the SNCF and SNCB depots that it uses in France and Belgium).
- (7) Reduce paper usage by switching to e-tickets and bar code ticketing downloaded to mobile phones, undertake direct marketing via email and web-based information, and where paper use is unavoidable, source from sustainable forests or recycled paper, and recycling all used paper.
- (8) Ensure on-board disposable items (eg, cups, plates, napkins) are either biodegradable (made from maize extract) or fully recyclable.
- (9) Refurbish or 'de-brand' and recycle used staff uniforms.
- (10) Source on-train food locally in the UK, France or Belgium wherever possible, including organic suppliers, or Fairtrade for overseas supplies.

Eurostar decided not to focus its efforts on a more formalised Environmental Management System (EMS). It was felt that this could delay the important task of making actual progress in tackling environmental impacts and embedding change within the business. It could also have been a burdensome bureaucratic process for a medium-sized business, and it also felt that the rigorous and transparent approach that Eurostar adopted would in itself be sufficient to reassure clients, journalists and other parties of the rigour of the plan.

The development of an EMS based on ISO 14001 for the premises over which Eurostar has full control –ie, its UK offices– was put in progress during 2009. By this time it was felt that a formal system would have a number of benefits, adding value to the efforts now underway, further clarifying accountabilities and measurements, responding to the growing enquiries from corporate clients and reducing the risk, from a reputational point of view, of being found to be non-compliant. Eurostar is hoping to achieve certification by the end of 2010.

Carbon-Neutral Journeys

Some of Eurostar's airline competitors already offered travellers the opportunity to offset the carbon emissions from their journeys. The money is used to buy credits in carbon-reducing schemes, most often in the developing world, that would otherwise not have gone ahead without the additional funding.² British Airways was one of the first UK airlines to introduce such a facility in 2005, but failed to market it properly (House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee, 2007).

More widely, studies have shown that few airline passengers understand or take up airlines' offsetting options (Hooper *et al.*, 2008). Eurostar decided it should be the responsibility of the travel provider, not the traveller, to offset journey emissions. It would become the first train operator in the world to make all journeys carbon neutral, at no extra cost to passengers.³

Eurostar believed that the relatively small additional expenditure involved in purchasing carbon offsets, would be far outweighed commercial gain from the communication of carbon neutral journeys.

It was thus necessary to establish a rigorous carbon offsetting programme. Emissions to be taken into account included:

- Electricity consumed along each route from station to station –based on readings from an on-board meter–.
- Electricity consumed for auxiliary functions, ie, heating and lighting.
- Transmission and distribution losses of electricity supplied to the routes.
- Leakage of greenhouse gases from air-conditioning and refrigeration units on board.

Eurostar hoped initially that it might be possible to find offsetting projects in its core cities, but it quickly became apparent that the necessary additionality requirements could only be met through credible schemes in the developing world. Given the controversy surrounding carbon offsetting (WWF *et al.*, 2006), it was also decided that Eurostar's approach should be as rigorous as possible, and assured by a credible third party.

Requests for information were sent to every carbon offset credit supplier in the UK, France and Belgium –a total of 17 organisations–. After due diligence, Carbon Clear –a UK-based company– was selected because of its robust and positive approach, and alignment with Eurostar's own aims.

² British Airway's projects include a wind farm in Mongolia and small-scale hydro-electric power plants in Brazil and China.

³ This commitment would cover all trains operating in passenger service, but exclude the small number of journeys involving empty rolling stock, and train movements to, from and in maintenance depots.

It was agreed that all projects should be accredited either through the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM), Voluntary Carbon Standard (VCS) or Voluntary Gold Standard (VGS) criteria.⁴ Eurostar aimed to target small-scale projects delivering energy that was either renewable or that used sustainable supplies of fuel combined with energy efficiency, and that had wider social and economic benefits. The credits would need proved additionality (in other words, the projects would not have gone ahead without money from selling carbon-offset credits), robust methodology and third-party verification. The credits used would also be for projects that were already delivered; Eurostar would not use future credits to offset past emissions.

The credits are verified and issued by governing bodies, and Eurostar's were further audited by a third party, Bureau Veritas, to gain assurance on the carbon-neutral status that was then communicated via Eurostar's website and *Tread Lightly* annual report. This assurance work audited both the data and the processes that were adopted by Eurostar to provide carbon-neutral journeys, thus providing maximum rigour and transparency and minimising the opportunity for sceptics to attack Eurostar.

Indeed, companies needed to be vigilant for attacks. Complaints to the UK's Advertising Standards Authority about green marketing more than quadrupled in 2007 compared with the previous year (ASA, 2007). In 2008, four complaints against Eurostar disputed its claim to offer 'carbon neutral journeys' (ASA, 2008). The rigour of Eurostar's approach led the ASA, in a benchmark ruling, to dismiss the complaint, saying 'Eurostar had done all it could to offset the carbon emissions generated by its train journeys in a robust and verifiable manner' (ASA, 2008). Other high-profile companies including British Gas, Shell, Lexus and Ryanair all faced adverse publicity as a result of complaints against them that were upheld.

The final communications need was to seek the endorsement of independent third parties, to add credibility to the plan. Eurostar approached the environmental campaign group Friends of the Earth (FoE), which covers England and Wales, and which was already supporting the use of train over plane for cross-Channel journeys, to see if it would be interested in supporting Eurostar's plan. This would be an unusual move for FoE, which had only entered one previous partnership with a commercial business, the Co-operative, a long-established ethical bank.

FoE is in principle opposed to offsetting but it was sufficiently reassured by Eurostar's approach to the subject, as well as strongly supportive of the far less environmentally-damaging alternative to air travel that high-speed rail offered, that it agreed to support the plan. The partnership led to Eurostar supporting FoE's 'The Big Ask' campaign for an ambitious Climate Change Act for the UK (www.foe.co.uk). The partnership meant FoE

⁴ Carbon offsetting standards are vital as they provide assurance that the purchaser is buying a real emissions reduction. A number of standards exist, some of which were more suitable for small purchasers such as Eurostar.

The CDM Gold Standard was created to meet the requirements of the Kyoto Protocol for certified emissions reductions. It has a strong focus on sustainable development benefits and restrictions on technology types (no forestry, large scale hydro or energy from waste projects), (www.cdmgoldstandard.org).

The VCS was developed by the Climate Group, World Economic Forum and International Emissions Trading Association for exclusive use on the voluntary offsetting market. It is based on the CDM framework (www.v-c-s.org).

The VGS was launched by non-profit organisation WWF-UK in 2006 and is a simplified version of the CDM Gold Standard. It is only available in developing countries and focused on renewable energy and energy efficiency projects with strong sustainable development benefits (www.panda.org).

could gain inside experience of a business seeking to implement an environmental plan, whilst Eurostar subjected itself to the pressure of a 'critical friend'.

In France and in Belgium, it was decided not to seek endorsement from environmental non-governmental organisations (NGOs). In these countries, NGOs tend towards a politically-aligned stance which meant Eurostar considered them less suitable as possible partners.

In the UK, Eurostar secured further public endorsement from Marks & Spencer, a leading retailer which had just launched its own well-received environmental 'Plan A' (www.marksandspencer.com). The support of two further UK environmental groups – Forum for the Future and Transport 2000 – meant that when *Tread Lightly* was launched, Eurostar would be flanked by a broad array of third parties.

Internal and External Communication of the Tread Lightly Plan

For a consumer-facing business, a first principle of any communications campaign is a consistent and coordinated approach to both external and internal communications. It is vital that employees are informed and engaged, so they can respond to customers who are interested in the company's new activity.

Since the employment market offered few experts, Eurostar decided it would call on internal skills to form a three-strong Environment & Energy Team to manage its plan. An employee from the Commercial department with a Doctorate in Theoretical Physics was appointed to head the team, supported by a graduate environmental scientist who was working at the telephone sales centre. A third member of the Commercial department was recruited to manage the programme.

In addition, Eurostar sought volunteers from across its 1,500 staff to become '*Tread Lightly* Champions'. More than 30 were appointed to act as 'eyes and ears' across all departments, advocating the plan, feeding back ideas for further action and implementing local change. Eurostar considered that asking staff to pro-actively volunteer to become Champions, instead of the business selecting individuals, was a crucial move in identifying the keenest supporters and encouraging staff engagement.

Equally, it was considered crucial that the Environment Head should report directly to the Chief Operating Officer, and that the CEO and directors be fully engaged and participative in the plan. The CEO held monthly meetings with the Team, and progress on *Tread Lightly* became a core part of directors' and senior managers' regular face-to-face briefings with employees. Eurostar also launched a monthly update on the intranet, and ensured regular environmental content in the weekly *In Brief* staff newsletter and quarterly magazine *Voyage*.

Further, Eurostar was determined to launch its *Tread Lightly* plan as quickly as possible, aware of the importance of first-mover advantage in its own sector. In retailing, Marks & Spencer had in January 2007 launched its 'Plan A' just three days before a major speech on climate change by Sir Terry Leahy, chief executive of its arch-rival Tesco. The biggest consumer names were already jostling for pole position in the fast-emerging world of green communications.

Interestingly, Eurostar rejected an invitation to unveil its environment plan alongside the high-profile launch in April 2007 of 'We're in this Together' (www.planetark.org) – a group

of major UK consumer businesses backed by the Prime Minister, Tony Blair—. As a relatively small consumer brand, Eurostar was concerned that its messages would be buried under those of much bigger companies and it decided it was better off following its own communications strategy.

Although it was recognised that the launch of yet another corporate environment plan was likely to be of limited immediate interest to journalists, this was not of major concern. Eurostar held the view that the development of a solid environmental reputation would and should take time and substantive progress, not just 'green claims' (or 'greenwash').

On 17 April 2007 Eurostar unveiled *Tread Lightly* (Eurostar, 2007). It announced that carbon-neutral journeys would begin on 14 November 2007, the same day as the launch of services from its new London terminal at St Pancras International, following an overnight relocation from Waterloo. A special 'Green Train' carrying invited 450 guests with strong economic credentials would be the first service to depart, adding further communications weight to Eurostar's biggest change since operations began in 1994.

Eurostar's first *Tread Lightly Report* was published in April 2009 (Eurostar, 2009). It revealed that Eurostar had achieved a 31% reduction in CO₂ emissions per passenger journey, beating its target of 25%, thanks mainly to a switch by Eurotunnel to lower-carbon electricity from France and higher passenger-load factors. The global recession led Eurostar to warn that emissions per journey were likely to increase in 2009; nevertheless, the target was raised to a 35% reduction per journey by 2012.

Eurostar also communicated progress against the targets of its 10-point plan, seeking to be transparent about both what had gone well, and less well. For instance, Eurostar claimed to have made good progress on enabling travellers to reduce their CO₂ emissions when making journeys that connect with Eurostar services. But progress with recycling the waste from on board its trains had proved slower than expected.

It is widely recognised that corporate environmental reports are unlikely in themselves to achieve major press coverage. Whilst Eurostar deliberately made its report just six pages long in order to appeal directly to customers and the media—in stark contrast to many lengthy corporate responsibility reports—the primary role of the report should be to act as a foundation for future media and stakeholder communications.

Communication via the Internet is now a vital tool for reputation enhancement. Eurostar's report was also made available direct to travelling passengers in the days after publication. The website has a link from its front page to its environmental section, where there is detailed information on the *Tread Lightly* plan and what has been achieved (www.eurostar.com). The site also links to a third-party assurance statement from Bureau Veritas.

Many organisations make environmental claims on their websites; what differentiates the best is the transparency and third-party verification that lies behind the reported progress. Unfortunately, too many businesses say they are environmentally responsible but fail to provide any evidence that they are measuring the progress they claim to be making.

Benefits, Challenges and Future of the Tread Lightly Initiative

In implementing a corporate environmental plan, it is important to be clear about the purpose. The primary objective of *Tread Lightly* was reputational, given that the short-term

commercial benefits were hard to quantify. Three years later, the plan has enhanced brand reputation among consumers, the media, stakeholders and staff alike. It has created greater competitive advantage over the rival airlines, positioned Eurostar as a world leader on environment in the rail sector, and strengthened high-speed rail travel as the 'natural choice' for cross-Channel journeys. And by becoming the first train operator in the world to make all journeys carbon neutral, it has a claim that no competitor can seize.

From a level of very limited environmental activity before 2006, Eurostar rose to become recognised as a leading company (and transport-sector leader) in all three countries of operations. In both May 2008 and May 2009 it was rated among the Top 50 Green Companies in an independent study for the UK's biggest selling quality newspaper (*The Sunday Times*, 2008 & 2009).

In addition, Eurostar and/or high-speed rail travel have become frequently recommended in the British press as the environmentally-preferred alternative for short-haul travel between the UK and continental Europe, both for business trips to Paris and Brussels, and for longer leisure journeys to destinations across Belgium, France, Germany, the Netherlands and beyond (Millward, 2010).

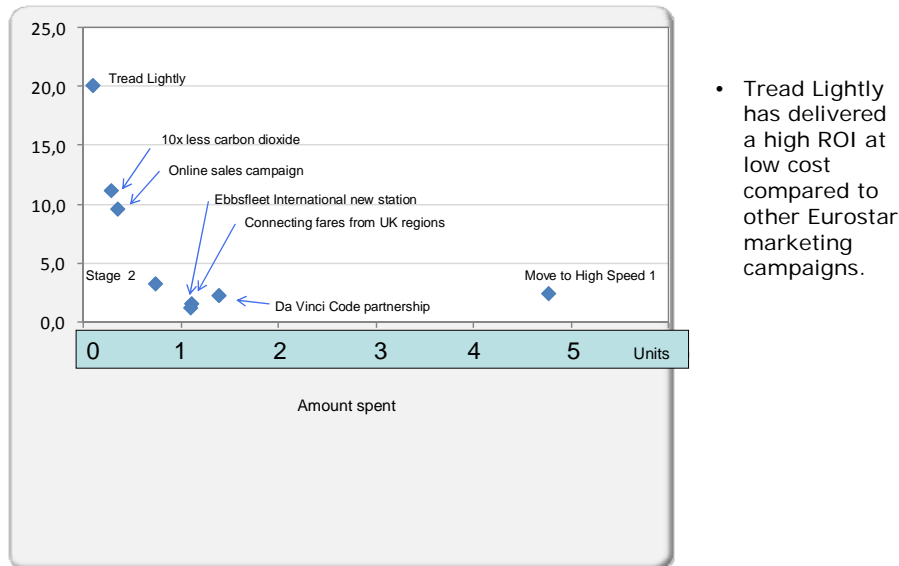
Internally, there is now a high level of awareness of *Tread Lightly* among Eurostar staff. In employee surveys conducted by *The Sunday Times* in 2008 and 2009, the score for 'I receive regular communication on environmental issues from my employer' improved from 80% to 88% year on year, whilst the score for 'progress against our environmental policy is communicated regularly' rose from 77% to 83%. In 2009 Eurostar was first in its category for internal reporting and communications due to 'consistently strong employee scores in this area' (*The Sunday Times*, verbatim feedback).

Eurostar has not published the annual cost of implementing its plan and of offsetting; however, it is believed to be in the order of £0.5 million to £1.0 million per year. Given that sales in 2009 amounted to £675 million (Eurostar, 2010), it would require as little as a 0.1% increase in sales as a result of *Tread Lightly* to cover the purchase of offsetting credits. Eurostar believes, however, that *Tread Lightly* has created long-term commercial advantage and that the much of the ROI is yet to come.

Statistical analyses have identified that Eurostar's environmental communications and marketing are positively correlated to increases in ticket sales. The research indicates a return on investment (ROI) of 4:1 for business sales and 15:1 for leisure sales, with Eurostar describing its *Tread Lightly* communications as having 'quite low expenses' and being 'very efficient compared to other campaigns' (Masson, 2010).

Graph 1. Return on Investment and Expenditure for Various Eurostar Media Campaigns

ROI and spend for various Eurostar media campaigns



Tread Lightly has also encouraged Eurostar to improve its procurement procedures and to increase the importance of the environment when scoring tenders from potential suppliers. Tenders now have a minimum of 15% of the overall score allocated to environmental performance.

Whilst Eurostar believes its *Tread Lightly* plan has proved comprehensive and been positively received, many lessons have been learnt, providing experience to modify some targets and develop new ones. Eurostar needs to build on the progress it has made and, also, if the plan is to mature and continue to meet the expectations of corporate clients, stakeholders and employees, to add further elements that are better aligned with established international reporting standards.

In short, *Tread Lightly* has proved to be a successful way of building an environmental reputation at low cost and in a small number of years. It has created a foundation for Eurostar's future marketing and media communications that should further enhance the brand's reputation.

What is surprising is the number of organisations who are missing the opportunity to develop their own environmental reputation, and who continue to run a serious risk of losing out to competitors that will surely, sooner or later, recognise that taking environmental action represents a long-term competitive advantage.

Conclusions: This paper has set out how Eurostar conceived, developed and has implemented its environmental plan *Tread Lightly* (known as *Voyage Vert* in France and Belgium), and the challenges and benefits that it has brought to the business. The plan has involved a number of commitments, challenges and upfront costs including:

- Recruiting a new, dedicated team with appropriate expertise.
- Ensuring full commitment of the CEO and Management Group, and engagement and motivation of staff.
- Measuring (or 'benchmarking') energy and materials use in order to establish starting points for the subsequent measurement of progress.
- Dealing with the lack of direct control over some facilities used by Eurostar (stations, depots and offices in France and Belgium, and electricity supplied to the infrastructure).
- Identifying and purchasing high-quality credits in CO₂ offsetting projects in the developing world.

However, the plan has been successful in a number of ways, including:

- Tackling and reducing environmental impacts, including CO₂ emissions, use of materials, waste, etc.
- Significantly enhancing the reputation of Eurostar as a business that is a pioneer in the responding to climate change.
- Raising awareness of high-speed rail travel as a less environmentally damaging alternative to air travel for short-haul journeys within Europe.
- Improving procurement, reducing costs and increasing sales, such that the plan has been more than justified by the return on investment (ROI).
- Creating a new culture of environmental awareness and staff engagement within Eurostar.

It is clear that stakeholders, clients and customers alike now expect businesses to play their part in tackling climate change. It is hoped that other companies will benefit and draw confidence from Eurostar's experience in developing and implementing an environmental plan, and create their own in order both to demonstrate responsibility, and achieve reputational and commercial advantage.

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