

Managing to Be Green*

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***Managing to Be Green**

Training Package produced by Eve Ash and Peter Quarry who are both psychologists and training consultants.

Distributed by Seven Dimension PTY LTD, South Yarra, Victoria.

Package contains: Three Videotapes; The Challenge, Green Leadership and Green Power. A video guide complete with separate training session plans and worksheets for Managers and Staff and Workers.

A book: Kathleen Ralston (1990) *Working Greener*, Green Press, Adelaide.

We now stand where two roads diverge. But unlike the roads in Robert Frost's familiar poem, they are not equally fair. The road we have been long travelling is deceptively easy, a smooth superhighway on which we progress with great speed, but at its end lies disaster. The other fork of the road - the one 'less travelled by' - offers our last, our only chance to reach a destination that assures the preservation of the earth (*Silent Spring*, Rachel Carson, 1962).

Written over thirty years ago *Silent Spring* gave the earth's inhabitants its first glimpse at the consequences of environmental ignorance and apathy. The message since this time has been clear 'if we don't clean up our act we are all doomed'. We are encouraged to find new roads, new ways of acting out our lives so that we 'learn to tread softly on our earth'. We are told we need to recycle, reduce and reuse resources, minimise our energy and water use, plant trees, compost, wear jumpers, ride bikes and buy environmentally friendly products. We have given birth to a new commodity - 'the green guide' - the guide to environmentally responsible human existence for the new 'environmentally friendly consumer', consumers with an environmental conscious.

The training kit *Managing to Be Green* is another example of how to market environmental responsibility. 'The Challenge' is for companies to 'care about the government, care about others and *still* care about the environment'. Why should we be green? According to the producers, it is for our children, the new environmentally aware generation, is it because there is a new breed of entrepreneurs, environmentally sensitive managers who are rising to positions of power and because it makes sense economically, if we are working green we will be working more efficiently

and we will be able to seize new opportunities for business and profit:

Going green increases profits... it is a competitive advantage to pick up the environment challenge... its good economically and it gives a market advantage to those who take up the challenge early (quotes taken from presenters in the video 'The Challenge').

The ideological position that is reinforced in this training kit and the 'green guide' phenomena *per se* is that of individualism: 'it is a moral and ethical responsibility for individuals to change behaviour for the good of the earth, those who don't are compromising our children's future'. In my view, this position disregards the social and political constructs of being environmentally conscious and fails to address issues of inequity in the workplace. The training session for the staff and workers starts out by questioning the individuals' personal and professional environmental ethic:

How strongly do you personally feel about environmental issues? Strongly? Don't care much? Why? What, if anything, do you do at home, or in your personal life, to try and preserve the environment? What, if anything, do you do at work to try and preserve the environment? What is stopping you doing more at work to preserve the environment?

And then encourages them to assess their bad habits, reduce consumption and to influence others.

The managers, in contrast, are encouraged to take on a hegemonic role by reviewing workers performance, developing environmental policies, developing strategies to make a profit on the new 'green' opportunities and to review the processes of production so they become more effective and efficient in order to increase business success. Their personal or professional environmental ethics are never questioned.

Although technically the videos and the materials contained in the kit are of high quality, ideologically the process for raising awareness is grounded in a power relationship which tends to 'blame the victims' and instigates 'action' at the personal level through cohesive top down strategies that are based on economic grounds rather than ethical responsibilities. And as Rev. Jesse L. Jackson states:

The environment will not be saved by corporations whose mandate is to maximise profit, nor by bureaucracies whose mandate is to manage people. The new enlightenment requires that people be empowered to change the way institutions act (taken from the preface to *Call for Action* edited by Brad Erickson, 1990).

In summary, the videos contained in *Managing to Be Green* have some valuable case studies of companies who have been able to make a profit from being environmentally responsible and some hints on what to look for when performing an environmental audit. Unfortunately, the kit guidelines have been constructed with little opportunity for staff or

workers to work either collectively or collaboratively with management to develop policies even though they are the targeted change agents. Kathleen Ralston's book included in the kit (but referred to only once) outlines a far more egalitarian view of green management and encourages the formation of 'sustainable work action groups' (SWAGS) that work collaboratively with all levels of management. My advice would be to use the videos as vehicles to gain interest in green management, skim the handouts, read Kathleen's book and form a SWAG.