

CASE STUDY

How a Small but Mighty 3M Team Worked with Lux on Sustainability

Introduction

Sustainability can be a large, intimidating subject, and it can be difficult for individuals to feel like they are making an impact. A pair of 3M employees decided to make use of 3M's unique 15% time culture to tackle this issue. 3M's 15% time encourages employees to set aside a portion of their work time to proactively cultivate and pursue innovative ideas that excite them while also benefiting the company — and has led to inventions like the firm's iconic Post-it® Notes.

Using their 15% time to think about how to contribute to sustainability, two 3Mers started the "Happy Polar Bears" (HPB) team - an internal name that well represents the big, burly passion of each member. The idea of the group was simple: Take the overwhelming issue of sustainability and break it down into smaller parts to enable employees to work on the parts of sustainability they understand — and make an impact. Over the past two years, the HPB team has expanded to over 50 global members working on translating high-level corporate goals into transactional, productive actions, gaining executive sponsorship along the way.

Inspire, Illuminate, Ignite

How does the HPB team learn of new sustainability trends, increase knowledge on certain topics, and find new innovations that may spark their own ideas? In these moments, Lux Research is a key resource.

"Several members of the HPB team are members of Lux and utilize Lux information, circulating articles among the group to help spark ideas," says Brett Sitter, Product Development Specialist at 3M and HPB team member. "For example, Lux pointed out in one piece that



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Brett Sitter

Product Development Specialist and HPB Team Member



'non-obvious technologies will make an impact' on sustainability. This instantly sparked discussion within the HPB around how artificial intelligence could help us think about sustainability in a different way. The insights we glean from Lux can help us influence our customers' and suppliers' actions toward sustainability. As a science-based company, data are key to driving action. It is important for us to continue to use data and information from companies like Lux to make progress towards our goals."

Using insight from Lux's research and drawing on conversations with Lux experts, the HPB team can dive deep into relevant sustainability topics to inspire, illuminate, and ignite new initiatives.

Business Value and Sustainability Impact

To date, the HPB team has kicked off over 20 projects across the globe, including:

- A division-wide educational series informing employees on how they can help build a sustainable culture from the bottom up and innovate for the future. The feedback was so overwhelmingly positive that a second session is underway.
- Machine learning to analyze sustainability impacts, ultimately changing how 3M's divisions analyze market trends.
- A new patent-pending carbon business model — An innovative approach to capture the value of carbon, which enables the possibility of more carbon-avoiding materials to enter the market.
- A carbon footprint analysis of a business division — another 3M first — has enabled footprint data to be utilized in many different aspects, such as quickly assessing product footprints and highlighting unit operations that have the greatest opportunity for improvement.

A goal of the HPB team is to create a culture shift: Making sustainability a part of everyone's job and allowing everyone to have the opportunity to contribute to sustainability in a personal way. The HPB team agrees that sustainability is a collective effort, not a solo one, as the best 3M innovations come from collaboration. By creating a sense of community, the HPB team drives collective change, showing how businesses can further sustainable, high-level corporate goals and individual initiatives, once the tools and information to act on them all come together.



About Lux

Our mission is to advise leaders about commercially viable science and technology to enable sustainable innovation. We deliver research and advisory services to inspire, illuminate, and ignite innovative thinking that reshapes and grows businesses. Using quality data derived from primary research, fact-based analysis, and opinions that challenge traditional thinking, our experts focus on finding truly disruptive innovations that are also realistic and make good business sense.

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