ISCN Webinar: Sustainability Engagement Through Gaming

On January 25, 2017, Eric Hedaa presented discussed Sustainability Engagement Through Gaming with the ISCN Secretariat’s Communications Manager, Holly Moynahan, moderating the webinar. Through feedback over the years, the ISCN has noticed that communications around sustainability can be challenging and this webinar was a way to show another approach - A gaming approach for innovative communication and engagement.

We were delighted to have over a dozen members join, and for those ISCN members that were unable to attend, we have provided summative notes below. The webinar may be accessed here: https://youtu.be/HMQwcfCztfQ

- In 2009, Eric was trying to increase engagement at Nike. Nike had a culture that was more competitive and financially driven. Few employees were willing to dedicate their time to learn more about sustainability.
- Similar to academia, Eric found it hard to effectively communicate the value of sustainability.
- After watching Ted Talks and reading Total Engagement, it became clear to Eric that games were a very effective tool for teaching complex content.
- August 2011 was a pivotal moment in Eric’s life. He was considering quitting his job and took a month off to go camping by himself. It was during this trip he realized he wanted to help the world understand sustainability. He realized he was in a great position to do that at Nike if he could demonstrate the importance of sustainability to their brand.
- Nike 2021 was then built, a four hour competitive business simulation. 150 leaders were divided into teams. The “news events” featured in the game was meant to simulate real-life scenarios that could impact Nike.
- Nike 2021 was very well received and even "stole the show" from other departments’ activities.
- As a result, non-sustainability experts were having discussions designed for them in the game. Executives were stating “I get it now”. Realizing this was a turning point for Eric – he no longer desired to return to traditional communications.
- Great transformational games cause mindset shifts and create “pull”, meaning people who play the game want to share it with others. All marketing for the game was done by word of mouth because participants enjoyed it so much that they told others about it.
- Nike conducted a survey of 2021 players and over 90% had positive feedback related to how important it was to Nike.
- 73% said a year later they had taken an action at their job to prepare Nike for sustainability challenges.
- The SIX game is a four hour business simulation of 12 person teams competing against each other. The goal was industry collaboration – participants had to get up out of their seats and agree on suite of situations that would be ideal to overcome sustainability challenges. You win the game by collaborating effectively. SIX was very successful in helping people understand supply chain dynamics better – many were interested in introducing it to their organization.
- Wasted was a game that focuses on waste in the value chain. It was a shorter 1 hour session. Jenga sets were used to represent the value chain and colored blocks represented types of waste.
• Game designing is an art and science. The process is complex and can take 3-6 months. The social aspect of the game is very powerful when robust discussions happen around tables and you’re engaged with your peers. Event-based games are very powerful compared to digital games (which can also be very expensive). Continuous improvement is critical to the success of the game. It’s also important to have a premium design that looks professional.
• There is a need to bridge a gap - sometimes games have negative connotation in education due to technology that’s perceived as distracting. Companies/academia that continues to use traditional communication are at a competitive disadvantage and should consider introducing gaming as an educational tool.

For more information on this webinar, please contact the ISCN Secretariat or Eric Hedaa:
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About Eric Hedaa:

Eric Hedaa is passionate about driving business results through the artful application of communications, game design, and engaging experiences. He designs and executes strategies that increase awareness and understanding and most critically, initiate mindset shifts and activate key stakeholders in support of business objectives. Eric is driven by delivering measurable results against organizational priorities.

Eric has a proven track record of creating innovative solutions, gaining leadership buy-in, managing teams, and delivering outstanding return on investment. He’s received multiple awards from the United States Coast Guard, the Port of Portland, and Nike.

Prior to founding Industrial Game & Design, Eric spent nine years working with Nike’s innovation, sustainability, and product teams to design, develop, and deliver transformational business simulations and games like NIKE INC 2021, System Innovation Experiment, and Factory Lean Simulation. The games and sims activated senior leaders and supply chain partners to address short- and long-term business challenges and resulted in measurable improvements in sustainability and performance.