

Recommended Strategy for Effecting Positive Public Perception of Sustainable Energy:

Application Component for KAM6

Tony E. Hansen

Walden University:

School of Public Policy and Administration

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Mentor: Richard Worch

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Application Abstract

The strategy for changing public perceptions via effective leadership is founded in the principles of power, public opinion, and effective leadership. Further, organizational efforts must understand the culture and common perceptions of issues, power, and leadership in order to effectively build a campaign (especially for a national campaign for sustainable energy). In the demonstration here, a local market can provide valuable information about how to proceed with building a national coalition for sustainable behaviors. The debates surrounding the energy initiatives (e.g. American Clean Energy Act of 2009) are founded in fundamental resistance to change. People get that the current system is weighted toward the energy companies (especially oil), but people are willing to tolerate business as usual. Meanwhile, we have supported dictatorships, seen rising costs, dwindling supply, aging technology, and other countries have built cutting edge technologies and engaged their populations in sustainable behaviors. The problem with doing nothing substantially different than we are doing today is highly risky considering inevitable depletion will dramatically reverse any sense of affluence.

The energy industry is multifaceted and has made money on the current policies and monopoly structure, and that power elite will resist changing the current profit formula. If we continue to allow public opinion to be swayed by the profit motivated arguments of the status quo, we will continue to have aging infrastructure, reduction of available resources, a missed opportunity, and severe reduced ability to pay for future changes. As well, we easily forget our own participation in the processes.

The proposal here is to build a campaign to make meaningful change and legislation instead of relying upon a belief that the private sector will find the cure to

what ails the system. Today, we are importing over 70% of the oil we use thanks to status quo perceptions (Hansen, 2009; DOE, 2009; Pickens, 2008). The imports contribute to our huge trade and federal budget deficits (due to the subsidies and government support for the consumption and market structure). Thus, the premise that the private sector will find a way is misguided at best. We need a new direction instead of ignoring the real issues or of ignoring the hard sacrifices required. Yet, there is a chance for us to profit in new ways that are mutually beneficial to the companies and the population if we move beyond consumption trends and blind feelings of affluence.

The saying, “kicking the can down the road” is appropriate, and the people that can make the change are you and me. One can not expect future generations to pick up the can (do the work) if that have only been examples of how to “kick the can more” (avoid the real issue). We know what needs to be done and we know the transition may not be easy. Yet, we can not continue to push the issues to future generations or we will lose a great opportunity to invest in a bountiful future.

When we push the burden towards future generations, we miss the opportunity to be inventive and innovative in this generation. At the same time, we hand our global competitors the crown of technological prowess. Today, we can calculate what the costs are and provide a plan for them. Today, we can creatively build technologies and processes that the rest of the world will need.

In the future, if we do not change our habits and perceptions today, those cost structures will not be flexible and the technology may no longer be ours to design. Further, procrastination and scarcity will force unpopular decisions against our economic security and our present affluence since foreign powers are competing for the same

dwindling supply. We will be forced into abrupt changes and drastic costs (more than the oil crises of 1970s or prices in 2008) regardless of our means to address them at the time.

The energy issues are not new today, but with leadership and collaborative effort, we can change social perceptions and public policy because we are running out of time to get sustainable energy and to reduce risky dependence upon foreign resources. Absent of alternatives when the oil supply depletes, the today's mobile economies will slow to a virtual crawl with slower transportation (along with a severe depression) (Hansen, 2009). Thus, we must persuade the public, gain power elite support, and foster sustainable behaviors within the community while persuading legislators to seek sustainable energy policy rather than focus upon exploiting the dwindling limited supplies.

We can not continue to ignore the facts unless we plan to fail, and we simply can not afford to miss this opportunity to do something great for our future. We have to change the cultural habits and consumption trends through a sustained effort that uses local people and local examples that people can relate. Then we can gain power elite support and persuade legislators to pass real sustainable energy policy that encourages innovation, encourages conservation, and secures our economic future as well as lifestyles. Individually, we can review our own habits and see what we can do to consume less and be more productive with what we have. For example, we can get energy audits for our homes, drive less aggressively, and unplug unused devices. The status quo, however, is a path to great failure, but we can plan now and change now to build technology and techniques that propel economic growth and sustainable energy.

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Application: Strategic Plans to Create Effective Change in Public Perceptions

The strategy for changing public perceptions via effective leadership and cultural understanding is founded in the principles of power, public opinion, and effective leadership. Further, organizational efforts must understand the culture and common perceptions of issues, power, and leadership in order to effectively build a campaign that addresses concerns (especially for a national campaign for sustainable energy). These are fundamental to planning for contingency and working across networks or sectors.

This application demonstration will review these principles as part of a proposed strategy for organizing and gaining public support for legislation that features sustainable energy policies. The primary needs of an effective campaign are to communicate a strategy, to educate the public, to work with local organizations to build coalitions, and to invoke persistent as well as diligent leadership (inside and outside of the organization). Thus, the plan for this strategic plan is to consider how a small local organization can move public policy through national political realms.

Even in a time of extreme competition or emergency, panic, belligerence, and impatience can destroy efforts to have an effective campaign that requires considerable thought and involvement by various sectors of the society. There is a quip that says that a stiff tree is easy to break while a drooping willow tree is able to survive the strongest storms. Similarly, one can not negotiate terms with other entities if one is not willing to negotiate or collaborate, but one can perpetuate another's goal. This can work to the community benefit where a true collaboration realizes how each other is working towards

mutual benefit. One can work to build a message through familiar channels in the network rather than through isolated and inert bureaucratic institutions.

Therefore, the effective leadership that seeks to change public policy must be willing to assist other in achieving their goals and their progress. Given the theories of power, public opinion, and leadership as well as an understanding of culture and the dynamics of collaborations, an organization will be able to build the effective strategy towards public policy change.

Thus, the program strategy here is to focus upon education, to work with local entities that have established networks, and to build effective leadership. By engaging activist networks, the campaign can test messages and suggestions to people that are already engaged in public discussions. Those active people will have other active associations that can help move the sustainable behavior messages as more endorse and accept the campaign. Thus the campaign will be able to reach other communities quicker. Through education by example, motivation behaviors, and mutual management training, the campaign will be able to move forward with sustainability energy practices, policies, and ethics that hope to change public policy as well as cultural materialism.

Education – building the Groundwork

If there is a power elite and mass media/society as described by Domhoff (2002) and Mills (1958), one has to consider the options of working against current mainstream opinions and powers. This will require organizers to build effective campaigns that have long term goals rather than short-term objectives with lapses in service. The effective leadership that works to enable others appears to be regarded as the more effective approach to building an effective campaign. Further, public opinion can be affected in

multiple ways, rather than just through elites and mass media. Effective leadership has to understand why someone would vote (or hold opinions) that are seemingly direct opposition to actual needs or risks (Frank, 2002; Lakoff, 2004; Dutcher et al, 2004).

Each of the authors in the Manza, Lomax-Cook & Page (2002) as well as Schorr (1997), Baker (2002), Wallner (2008), and Dutcher et al (2004) have realized that education is the primary tool and most effective tool for gaining public support. The objective then is not simply to educate people but to garner support and perhaps an active base from which pressure can be applied. If one were to target education to the most effective population, the ripple effect of education is an actively supporting population. Thus the strategy is to focus upon education in terms of the actual issues but also how people can use the information.

Given the skepticism of foreign information, mass media and federal government emphasized by Dutcher, Finley, Luloff & Johnson (2004), we have to target education towards recognizable local figures to bring the messages to their respective local areas. Thus, the proposal is to build a program that first educates the local activists and organization leaders in order for them to educate the population. This is intrinsically a collaborative effort since the attempt is to educate organizational leaders.

This program will not just teach about energy issues, but about effective leadership and efficient sustainable operations as a way of business and personal lifestyle (e.g. conservation techniques). This will hopefully yield the perspective of mutual growth among the leadership attendance in the program. From here and the information gained from the local program, the program can be expanded to other localities by

leveraging the networks of the leadership in attendance of the original program, and the program will evolve into a series of conferences.

The education will focus upon three specific areas:

- 1) Personal responsibilities and teaching by example
- 2) Motivating principles of energy conservation and strategic development of goals
- 3) Financial planning, profit and resource management

As Wilk (2002) and Baker (2002) point out, consumerism and consumption are patterns developed by a cultural behavior and expectation and that culture that perpetuates to teach that behavior to future generations. Further, we know from Dutcher et al (2004), Smith, Desvousges, Johnson, & Fisher (1990) and Johnson-Tew and Havitz (2002) that people have different perspectives of risk, of personal involvement in the issues, and of how information is presented. The frame of the issue is important to people's perception of the issue. Additionally, the presentation can not solely focus upon economics alone for success (McKenzie-Mohr & Smith, 2008), and therefore, we must motivate with an interest in economics but more broad interests to the individuals.

Fostering Social Change Locally – a Message Campaign

Cultural perception of policy and mutual needs define the framework for the current campaigns. The objective of the organizer is to frame the issue in particular terms even among like-minded people due to the mass society and mass media myths that have become mainstream beliefs. Essentially, the sustainable energy alternatives proposals must invoke parameters of environmental issues (since many energy issues involve environmental issues (Wilk, 2002)), economic scarcity, and personal responsibility

towards the issues. This reframing of issue requires knowledge of the audience and coordinated effort that recognizes effective progress among participants in the campaign. The theme of the social change (driving sustainable energy) campaign is that success grows when more people buy into the program or the message of the campaign.

Lakoff (2004) provides avenues for people to consider how to frame a message in public discourse. While his work is clearly partisan work, the relative nature of message framing is appropriate in the context of energy policy debate where several entities and elites have attempted to shape the debate or change the dynamics of the environment around the debate. By understanding how an issue is presented, leadership can reduce barriers and open audiences.

His belief is that simply arguing the current argument is defeating one's own point since one has fundamentally accepted the "frame" of the issue presented regardless of the strength of one's position. Instead, the objective is to reframe the issue into contexts that attract different emotions. The frame must avoid argumentative or logical traps of a particular frame to be persuasive in hostile audiences. Using images and words in specific and strategic manner can provoke a series of thought based upon a presumed understanding of an issue. An example, in terms of sustainable energy, is that opponents might argue that moving to renewable energy sources is more expensive. Yet that invokes a frame of current budgets and current technology without consideration of what is behind the costs and does not address the issue of scarcity. If we reject the frame and then reframe the issue what is left for children, the cost equation changes considerably since there is an inevitable dwindling supply that will affect price regardless of efforts to exploit more regions of the planet. As well, we can reframe the issue in terms that

current policy has made our energy supply more vulnerable to foreign influence that can jeopardize any cost containment efforts by the utilities. This also begs the cost of supporting foreign regimes to support our exploitation of resources.

Lakoff (2004) strongly recommends against negative language that perpetuates a blame game since such language only stirs conflict rather than resolves the issue. Thus the campaign has to teach organizers to use effective methods of communication that speak positively and affirms positivism in people rather than demoralizing, angering, or accusing since that invokes notions of self survival and retribution response by opposing sides. Such repudiation can be contrary to a hopeful campaign that seeks to gain popular support for necessary work and positive attitudes.

Fostering Social Change Locally – a Locally based National Campaign

McKenzie-Mohr & Smith (2008) write that an effective program has to understand constraints of the participants. This follows the suggestions from Schorr, (1997), Hansen, (2009), and Agranoff (2003) where recognition that people have other commitments and constraints in the form of resistant staff, time constraints, beliefs in barriers, as well as financial constraints (in addition to those requested by the campaign). Therefore, the campaign should attempt to resolve these potential resistance barriers through mutual benefits to the campaign and the participants. There will always be someone who is not willing to participate for any reason, but this process will resolve many initial barriers (excuses) that people may exhibit in response to the proposed campaign which will help to gain more participants.

For an effective campaign, deeds are definitive of the process more than words and consistency of effort, message, and organization is vital (McKenzie-Mohr & Smith,

2008). They suggest that campaigns are most successful with use of commitments to goals and cite a statistic of 3 of 4 programs using commitments are “successful” ventures. Therefore, the suggestion is to promote as much commitment in the campaign as possible. Through recognition of individual contributions, efforts, elite actions, organizational efforts, or neighborhood awards, commitment can be reinforced in a positive way towards the campaign needs. The program that recognizes elite action can help to persuade other elites to support the campaign. A program that focuses upon organizational leadership as the focus of training (as proposed here) can also recognize the networks involved with the effort behind the organization. Use of that recognition will further promotion of more commitments to the campaign (McKenzie-Mohr and Smith, 2008).

Commitments, by themselves, are meaningless without some intervention or meaningful action that measures or even symbolically requires something from the participant. McKenzie-Mohr and Smith (2008) recommend to get written commitments and to get participants to get others to commit. Gaining written commitments to goals can help people visualize the needs and responsibilities. As noted by Dutcher et al (2004), efforts by local people and neighbors will resonant more with others because of relatively of community rather than leveraging a distinctly unrelated influence that not acclimated to the community. Thus, using the local resources and leadership can be useful for gaining popular support within the community.

Like Lakoff, McKenzie-Mohr and Smith (2008) suggest using prompts and simple messages rather than long winded or complicate dialogue that can dilute the real risks and attention of participants as well as the community. In this respect, keeping

messages simple will help push the same message across networks and communities. More complicated messages will be refused due to lack of time and interest to pursue the meaning or worse the message may be so complicated that the receiver is actually insulted. This follows the work presented by Johnson Tew and Havitz (2002) that suggest the format and message contents can affect the risk perception by the individual.

Motivating Change and Knowing the Audience

Social norms will not change overnight even with some crisis (except for extreme events). As noted by Baker (2002), people will gravitate towards habits and behaviors that they enjoyed prior to the crisis. Using, the recognition of block and precinct leaders can positively affect attitudes and success of the program to show people how much better they are doing and how successful the efforts are.

Thus, motivation begins with persuasion and capturing the audience. The local person (organization leaders as campaign participants) can provide some credibility to the campaign and help to persuade people towards the goals. Capturing the attention of the audience may require astute facts that address specific and personal concerns of the participants such as loss of lifestyle and property value if the status quo continues unabated.

This is where Lakoff's arguments and McKenzie-Mohr and Smith agree most because capturing the audience attention requires that one knows the audience. The local organization leader has already investigated the needs and wants of the community or the audience where the campaign can also address those concerns in presentation of the issues, message, and the programs. For example, if people in Kansas City do not care

about an Iowa program, the campaign can build upon what people in Kansas City want and need that the program in Iowa was able to deliver. Arguing in that frame rather than simply suggesting the program, as a whole, worked in Iowa will gain more support in Kansas City. This makes the program and successes relative to the interest and needs of the community. This is an example of framing the message in terms of the local audience that helps to foster creativity and interest in the campaign.

McKenzie-Mohr and Smith agree with Lakoff to avoid fearful, exploitive, or threatening messages. These kinds of messages can have a negative impact upon the campaign and may cause people to do unpredictable actions in so-called name of the cause. Thus the poor action or judgment by people, acting on behalf of the so-called movement, will bring negative reaction and community view to the campaign. This requires a campaign commitment to a community good, respect for people, ethical conduct, transparency, and accountability.

Thus, the campaign may endeavor to follow the path of least resistance to the issue resolution, and the path of least resistance means to keep things simple as well and cordial to the various interests. Especially with a national program, messages should be tested against populations to better ensure that the received idea is the campaign-envisioned idea. The campaigns that emphasize potential loss (e.g. lifestyle, freedoms, or budget) may be more effective according to McKenzie-Mohr and Smith (2008).

Effective messages from the various sources here suggest promoting “win-win” scenarios that transcend political lines, communities, or activism (Schorr, 1997; Agranoff, 2002; McKenzie-Mohr and Smith, 2008; Lakoff, 2004). In terms of energy policy, the message must engage and reframe the opposing viewpoint into scarcity terms

as well as significant risk to luxuries and enjoyment of life. We know from the limited quantities (especially of petroleum) that scarcity is inevitable, and thus, sustainability argument must invoke a sense of urgency and commitment to changing habits in order to mitigate against an inevitable supply depletion.

As part of knowing your audience, one should understand the relative needs and interests of the generation and the differing viewpoints of economic classes (Morin, 2009; Doak, 2009). In the Des Moines Register, Doak (2009) comments that the generation gap of interests has to be considered with respect to arguments. The participation by a particular generation (specifically younger generations) in elections will impact whether legislation may move or not. As well, each individual electoral district will exhibit different levels of engagement from the different generations due to variance in efficacy, education, and affluence.

The level of message will have to work to engage the younger audience or community in terms of income inequality and financial concern that will go farther in message continuity than echoing concerns of socialism, marriage or so-called market freedom (Doak, 2009). To invoke the Baby Boomer generation's interest in religious activity, a message could align with John F Kennedy's (1961) address "that God's work here on Earth must truly be our own." Kennedy's message suggests faith alone will not solve the problems, reduce one's trash, or raise incomes, but the work must start from the individual. These examples are possible and critical to reframing the debate and to address the consumption culture issues as well as the individual efficacy (Wilk, 2002; Baker, 2002; Dutcher et al 2004).

The message will resonate from within the community when there is someone there willing to perpetuate the message. McKenzie-Mohr and Smith argue that people will ignore mass media in favor of the personal contact because of an intrinsic faith in one's neighbors and friends. Thus, we return to the importance of educating local leadership in terms of the sustainable issues so that they can provide the message to people.

Campaigns for Sustainable Energy must be Examples of sustainable Budgets

Campaigns and organizations require sound financial processes. There is nothing more detrimental to a campaign than inefficient fund raising and treasury management. This is a fact iterated by the nonprofit center at the University of Iowa that says "no funding, no program" (2009: 16) because funding is critical to the work and campaign. Thus, funding and grant solicitation require plans and knowledge of strong fiscal practice (Carnegie, 1889; Kaufmann, 2009 Foundation). As well, joint ventures with other sectors, organizations and entities will not want to be associated with poor financial structures as such a relation can impact their own efforts to gain funding or resources.

The large consideration with this part of this proposed collaboration is to teach each other how to be more efficient and cost-controlling rather than blind consumption and expansion (as a feature of sustainability). This will be a mutual benefit to soliciting assistance between organization leaders, and the knowledge will help to build a more productive community that as well fosters sustainable energy goals.

To view the organization mission in terms of financial capability will help to solidify positions with lenders, other organizations and philanthropy (Carnegie, 1889). The financial analysis of one's own organization may reveal where inefficiency exists

and where corrections need to be made in order to be a sustainable campaign. Thus, the campaign grant opportunities or joint ventures with other organizations have to build a strategy for those variables by performing a due diligence check. This is a mutual need for organizations (profit and non-profit) where the organization has to review these important parts.

- 1) how much money does the campaign need
- 2) where or how does the organization obtain the funds
- 3) responsibilities and requirements sought by the venture or grant
- 4) cost to implement supporting elements
- 5) benefit or problems from association(s)
- 6) division of labor

Teaching to ask the right questions here can help organizations to become sustainable in their participation in the campaign. We must consider the “need” in order to present any proposal to a grant or venture. This campaign will need to show with reasonable accuracy the amounts sought and as well were supplemental funds are planned. The budgeting and forecasting will be important because one does not want to ask for \$7000 when \$70,000 is needed. Otherwise objectives may be underfunded.

Responsibilities and requirements (Kauffman Foundation (2008) calls this “Funding Guidelines” or Ben and Jerry’s (2008) “Funding Priorities”). Our requests have to show that we have and are willing to maintain a vision that is in concert with these guidelines as well as prudence towards the needs and wants (University of Iowa, 2009). Furthermore, the campaign has to pay attention to what the Foundation will not fund and make sure specific requests are within the guidelines. Thus, any planned

financial incentive for promoting the sustainable goals has to seriously consider the source of the funds, ensure the budgeted funds are going to proper use and in compliance with regulations (Reed & Swain, 1997).

Part of this aspect then is to combine the education and financial objectives. A strategy for gaining funds and providing education at the same time is to hold regular “sustainable” fundraising dinners or “recyclable brown bag” lunches that have corresponding lectures about topics. The organizational leaders, as campaign participants, can meet during these dinners and network with each other to discuss how progress is moving. Additionally, dinners and thought provoking lectures will help people feel like they are getting value for their money and time as well as being intimately involved with the campaign, the mission and the goals. They can also see fellowship and community interest in the mission when attending these dinners as happens with many faith-based organizations that use large dinners and festivals as fundraisers.

Application Discussion

Given the basic elements of change, a campaign has to plan to make the most effective use of time and money. The proposal here is to build a program campaign that engages local organizational leaders as the core framework for obtaining the principle mission of gaining public support for sustainable energy policy. By engaging this population, we are building a collaborative network of activists that have experience with their own campaigns and public interests.

This will help to foster an active base from which future expansion can be modeled. The collaborations will help organizations to understand impacts and individual perceptions of energy consumption. The education will provide the

organizations, involved in the campaign, useful educational opportunities and networking opportunities about sustainable practices including models (e.g. conservation, reduction of costs through reduction of consumption).

The leadership of the campaign has to be a model of sustainable behaviors and effective change. The perception of the leadership must be founded in personal responsibility to the tasks, one's own consumption, and one's use of resources. From here, the campaign will leverage and build the collaborative network to utilize their corresponding strengths and capabilities in the campaign to become models for others. By recognizing community service and capability, there will be a mutual benefit of the campaign and the partner organizations to promote the educational and motivational opportunities sought by the campaign goals (sustainable energy and behavior support).

Using the techniques for motivation and recognition, we can build a network of volunteers throughout neighborhoods to wield neighborly influence to support conservation programs and sustainable behaviors. This will help to reduce potential resistance to information and ideas presented when local people are in front of the issues.

The coordinated efforts will build a message that is simple and easy to translate rather than requiring a specific type of intervention to occur.

The campaign will have to be mindful of manipulative efforts or unethical behaviors that may distort mission parameters and program objectives. The model will be grounded in expectations of ethical practice and accountability. Thus, the campaign will have to continuously survey for feedback and attitudes. If an effort appears to be malicious or appears as less than genuine intent, the campaign will have to take measures to minimize that affect before the affect becomes a major obstacle to the campaign.

Some of this will be avoided through the servant leadership style that gets people involved at the grassroots level where transparency will become synonymous with visibility and accessibility rather than being isolated in an office environment, as well as the campaign's continuous insistence upon ethics, accountability and responsible model leadership.

In addition, the part of the program that attempts to instruct NGOs about budgeting will shy away from direct financial advice and direct financial involvement in partner organizations transactions except for awards and minor financial incentives that reward the sustainable energy behavior models. This will avoid favoritism and provide a level of isolation for the processes with less intrusion in the financial affairs of participating organizations on the part of the campaign. The minimal involvement will help the campaign be clear of financial requirements or risky entanglements.

As well, the campaign will focus upon white listing of positive power elites instead maintaining a "blacklist" that may reinforce a sense of negativity within the campaign. The campaign will have to be conscious of the opposing viewpoints and will have to be prepared to counter arguments clearly, distinctly and relatively to the audience where the argument is presented. This will provide a needed sense of consistency and preparedness to meet the demands of the public through positive and hopeful outlook (McKenzie-Mohr & Smith, 2008). As well, opponents to sustainable energy have reasonable concerns that should be answered, but the questions should be addressed in the frame of sustainable and long-term objectives.

For example, the American Clean Energy Act of 2009 is listed with the proponents of the bill. These entities can provide options, funding, networks and labor to

use for projecting the campaign goals here into national markets once the initial program is running and appears successful in the local markets. Cost savings and individual connections to the campaign goals will drive more people to the campaign and garner the attention (as well as support) of more elites that may not have a current opinion, or may not be aware, of the issues. Correspondingly, the salience of the issue will rise where the public will begin to demand a more robust legislative policy for sustainable energy.

Focusing the message upon what people have today and what people may lose in the future will need to provide the relatable examples that will garner support even among more affluent people that may feel removed, ambivalent or isolated from the risks. Gaining middle class support and youth support will be crucial to keeping the campaign moving in the future. Thus, using Doak and Morin analysis will help design initial stages of the campaign. Otherwise, relying solely upon the current public opinion and power structure will bring the campaign possible delusions of what people want and need when those entities change. As well, by gaining support from these demographics, we can gain a wider population that is engaged in education, conservation and sustainable behaviors (as well as voting interests).

Application Conclusion

In the proposal here, a local market can provide valuable information about how to proceed with building a national coalition for sustainable behaviors. The debates surrounding the energy initiatives (e.g. American Clean Energy Act of 2009) are founded in fundamental resistance to change. Many people understand that the current system is weighted toward elites and the energy companies (especially oil), but people are willing to tolerate business as usual. Meanwhile, we have supported dictatorships, seen rising

costs, dwindling supply, aging technology, and other countries have built cutting edge technologies and engaged their populations in sustainable behaviors. The problem with doing nothing substantially different than we are doing today is highly risky considering inevitable depletion will dramatically reverse any sense of affluence.

The energy industry is multifaceted and has profited upon on the current policies and monopoly structure, and that part of the power elite will resist changing the current profit formula. If we continue to allow public opinion to be swayed by the profit motivated arguments of the status quo, we will continue to have aging infrastructure, reduction of available resources, a missed opportunity, and severe reduced ability to pay for future changes. As well, we easily forget our own participation in the processes.

The proposal here is to build a campaign to make meaningful change and legislation through individual attitudes and behaviors instead of relying upon a belief that the private sector will find the cure to what ails the system. Today, we are importing over 70% of the oil we use thanks to status quo perceptions (Hansen, 2009; DOE, 2009; Pickens, 2008). The imports contribute to our huge trade and federal budget deficits (due to the subsidies and government support for the consumption and market structure). Thus, the premise that the private sector will find a way is misguided at best. We need a new direction instead of ignoring the real issues or of ignoring the hard sacrifices required. There is a chance for us to profit in new ways that are mutually beneficial to the companies and the population if we move beyond consumption trends and blind feelings of affluence.

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to pick up the can (do the work) if there have only been examples of how to “kick the can more” (avoid the real issue). We know what needs to be done and we know the transition may not be easy. Yet, we can not continue to push the issues to future generations or we will lose a great opportunity to invest in a bountiful future.

When we push the burden towards future generations, we miss the opportunity to be inventive and innovative in this generation. At the same time, we hand our global competitors the crown of technological prowess. Today, we can calculate what the costs are and provide a plan for them. Today, we can creatively build technologies and processes that the rest of the world will need. Today we can foster sustainable behaviors and culture through active communities that will compel elites to support the effort.

In the future, if we do not change our habits and perceptions today, those cost structures will not be flexible and the technology may no longer be ours to design. Further, procrastination and scarcity will force unpopular decisions against our economic security and our present affluence since foreign powers are competing for the same dwindling supply. We will be forced into abrupt changes and drastic costs (far more than the oil crises of 1970s or prices in 2008) regardless of our means to address them at the time (Hansen, 2009a).

The energy issues are not new today, but with leadership, active public, and collaborative effort, we can change cultural perceptions and public policy. Time is running out to gain technological advances and profit from sustainable energy in addition to a need to reduce risky dependence upon foreign resources. Absent of alternatives when the oil supply depletes, the today’s mobile economies will slow to a virtual crawl with slower transportation (along with a severe depression) (Hansen, 2009). Thus, we

must persuade the public, gain power elite support, and foster sustainable behaviors within the community while persuading legislators to seek sustainable energy policy rather than focus upon exploiting the dwindling limited supplies.

We can not continue to ignore the facts unless we plan to fail, and we simply can not afford to miss this opportunity to do something great for our future. We have to change the cultural habits and consumption trends through a sustained effort that uses local people, active networks, and local examples that people can relate. Then we can gain power elite support and persuade legislators to pass real sustainable energy policy that encourages innovation, encourages conservation, and secures our economic future as well as lifestyles. Individually, we can review our own habits and see what we can do to consume less and be more productive with what we have (personally and in business). For example, we can get energy audits for our homes, drive less aggressively, and unplug unused devices. The status quo, however, is a path to great failure, but we can plan now and change now to build technology and techniques that propel economic growth and sustainable energy.

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