

Planning and organising an environmental dialogue

Valør & Tinge A/S
Illustrated by Gitte Helle



**Danish Agency for
Trade and Industry**
Ministry of Trade
and Industry

Danish Environmental Protection Agency
Danish Ministry of Environment



Gitte Helle, born 1959

EDUCATION

- 1986 Graduated from the School of Arts and Crafts, Kolding
- 1987 School of Pictorial Art, Copenhagen
- 1992-1997 Courses at the Art High School, Holbæk

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS

- 1986 Brandts Klædefabrik, Odense
Århus Kunstbygning
Rundetårn
The Museum at Koldinghus, Kolding
- 1991 and 93 The Artists' Summer Exhibition, Tistrup
- 1991- Own Jewellery Gallery, Container Juvelen
- 1993 Galleri Eewal, Leuwarden, the Netherlands
- 1994-1996 Louisiana, Humlebæk
- 1994 The Artists' Easter Exhibition, Århus
The Art Society, Gammel Strand
- 1995 Galleri Molotow, Berlin, Germany
Galleri Stau, Hamburg, Germany
Galleri Deco, Ålborg
- 1996-1998 The Museum of Modern Art, Arken
North Jutland's Art Museum, Ålborg
- 1996 Utzons Hus, Herning
- 1997 Trapholt Art Museum, Kolding
Galleri Metallum, Stockholm
- 1998 Frederikshavn Art Museum
- 1998 Museum of Contemporary Art, Roskilde

INTERNET

www.containerjuvelen.dk



What the container concealed

Scrap has always fascinated Gitte Helle, who creates jewels out of the things other people throw away.

PIONEERING WORK FOR BROOCHES

The basis for Gitte Helle's droll, decorative sculptures is pictorial art, which she also works with in her own right. The idea is to open people's eyes to the beauty and originality of things that have been wrecked and scrapped. Since 1991, Gitte Helle has had her own gallery, Container Juvelen, where she makes and sells her unique, signed creations – particularly brooches and lamps – and scrap angels for Christmas. She makes them from plastic animals, cans, old typewriter keys, antique nails, keyholes and beer caps from the nearest street corner. "The brooch is greatly undervalued," says Gitte Helle. "That is a shame because it is a wonderful piece of jewellery. A necklace or a pair of earrings can only be used in one way, but a brooch is flexible. It is much more interesting because it is a sculpture in mini-format. A picture that can be moved around on one's body." At first, it was mostly 80-year-old women who bought Gitte Helle's brooches, but that did not deter her. "I have a forte there and was so sure about what I was making that I just kept on."

A PIGLET IN A BEER CAP

Today, Container Juvelen's customers are typically 50-year-old, well educated women. Gitte Helle says, "One has to have achieved a level of maturity in one's life to appear with a suckling pig in a beer cap. It is breaking new ground to wear something like that because you yourself like it – and not care a fig about what anyone else thinks." Gitte Helle wants to give a gentle shake to the mass psychosis that makes people want to have and wear what everyone else has and is wearing. "When people pay 500 kroner for a mass produced necklace of poor quality, it is not the necklace they are buying, but certainty that they look like everyone else, that they have good taste."

RECYCLED AGAIN AND AGAIN

Container Juvelen can quite literally be used as a jewel box. Gitte Helle has invented a subscription scheme in which subscribers can exchange brooches or lamps as often as they like for one year. The idea occurred to her because she herself used to go round the shop before going to a party to find just the right piece of jewellery to go with that red dress. And she thinks that others should have the same possibility. In a use-and-throw-away time, that idea is incredibly simple and liberating.

"I LIKE THINGS THAT CAN BE USED FOR SOMETHING. PURE SCULPTURES HAVE NEVER APPEALED TO ME."



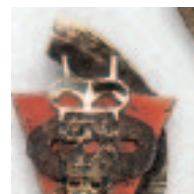
Planning and organising an environmental dialogue

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1 Planning and organising an environmental dialogue



If you work for a small or medium-sized enterprise and are responsible for the environmental aspects of its activities you probably find yourself having to take care of more and more communication tasks – answering neighbours, preparing environmental accounts or procuring environmental information for your company’s sales representatives and purchasing department to use in their daily work.

This manual will help you to systematise your communication work, specify objectives and prepare a simple, clear plan for your company’s environmental dialogue with customers, suppliers and other stakeholders. Planning the environmental dialogue has many advantages.

You can:

- allocate your resources to the most important stakeholders
- choose messages that are in your company’s interests
- get the messages out at the right time
- choose the most effective means of communication
- use your company’s time and money economically and to best effect
- share the work between several people
- evaluate and continuously improve the work.

If your company wants to introduce environmental management in accordance with the EMAS Regulation or the ISO 14001 Standard you will have to prepare guidelines for the company’s

external environmental dialogue. The guidelines must ensure that your company decides how the dialogue with external stakeholders is to be handled, including how the company is to handle and answer external enquiries. This manual will also help you meet the EMAS and ISO requirements.

The manual provides advice on solving the problems you come across when you are planning the dialogue. Chapters 1-3 explain how to evaluate the company’s situation and specify realistic objectives for the dialogue. Chapters 4-6 focus on the planning and management of the dialogue. Chapter 7 deals with evaluation. You will achieve the best results by working on the tasks in this order. The manual does not deal with the internal dialogue on a company’s environmental work; another manual does that, it is called: Environmental dialogue with colleagues.

The manual is based on the assumption that you possess knowledge and experience of working with environmental issues but lack expertise in communication. Each chapter is built up around a schedule for use in carrying out the work dealt with in the chapter. To show you what the finished result looks like, an example is given of a schedule completed by an environmentally active company. The rest of each chapter consists of a few hints to help you complete the schedule yourself.

2 With whom does the company wish to have an environmental dialogue?

When planning your company's environmental dialogue, you should start by prioritising the stakeholders with whom the company needs to have a dialogue. Remember that the company's stakeholders are not only the groups you want to reach. They include all groups that have an interest in the company's environmental performance and therefore expect to be informed and heard.

If the environmental dialogue is to produce results, you must in the nature of things use most resources on the stakeholders that are important to the company. Without prioritisation you risk spending too much of your time on servicing groups that are not strategically important, e.g. students, consultants or environmental managers or similar from other companies.

With a precise and balanced prioritisation, you can ensure that most of the dialogue is with stakeholders that are of value to the company and that you do

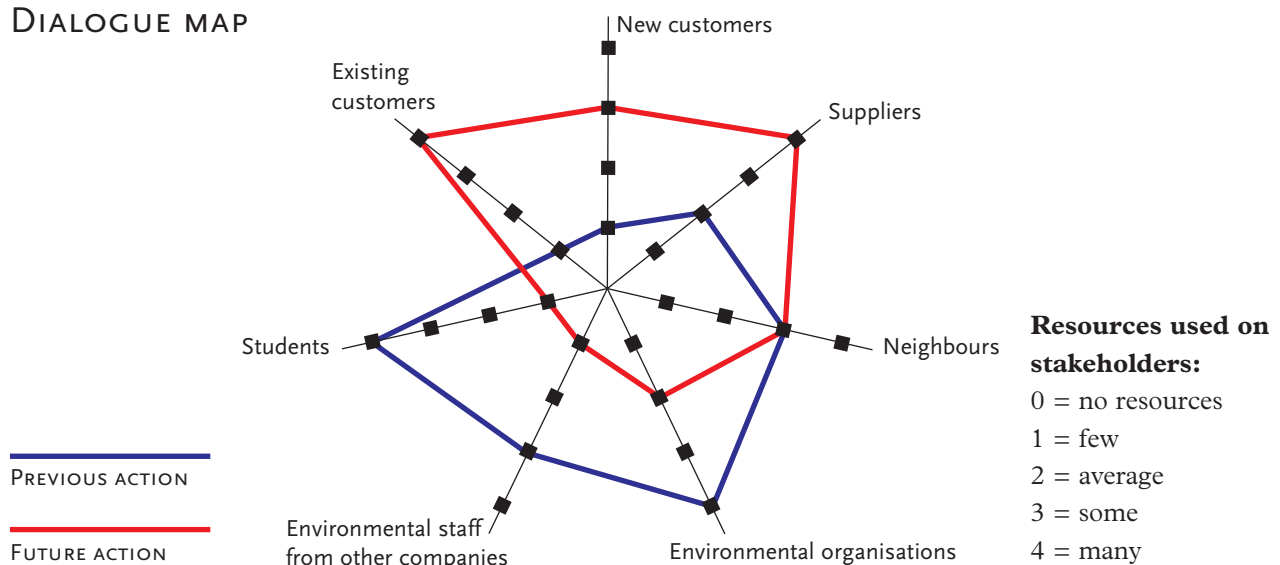
not forget to allocate time and resources to others that are interested in the environmental impacts of the company and its products.

A dialogue map like the one shown on this page will help you prioritise your work with the various groups. The company in the example has previously communicated mainly with students, environmental organisations, etc., but now intends to concentrate on customers, suppliers and neighbours.

The dialogue map is your basis for a discussion with the management about the types of stakeholders on which the company has previously concentrated and the types on which it is going to concentrate in future.

Hints 2.1 and 2.2 explain how to identify the stakeholders and mark them as axes on the map. Hint 2.3 explains how to specify the action to be taken with each stakeholder.

DIALOGUE MAP



2.1 IDENTIFY THE MOST IMPORTANT STAKEHOLDERS

You can use your business goals to help identify the stakeholders most needed by the company for an environmental dialogue. These stakeholders must then be included in the dialogue map. Enter each of the principal stakeholders as one of the axes on the map.

You identify the principal stakeholders by assessing the role played by the environment in fulfilling your company's objectives for cooperation with the stakeholder in question.

If the objectives have been written down, you will probably find them in:

- accounts and budgets
- sales and marketing plans
- instructions to sales representatives and the purchasing department
- environmental policy and environmental action plans.

Although the management works on the basis of specific objectives, these may not have been written down. Try to get the people in charge of the various areas to describe the objectives.

Begin with the sales manager or similar. The company's plans for marketing and sales are factors determining many of the environmental questions that need to be discussed with other stakeholders – for example, suppliers, authorities and lenders.

The company's principal stakeholders listen to others and are easily influenced. The groups that influence them do not

necessarily play a major role in the day-to-day operation of the company, but the company has to have an ongoing dialogue with them because they influence other, more important stakeholders. You must therefore take account of these groups in your prioritisation and include them in the dialogue map.

For example, customers pay more attention to your environmental aspects when an environmental organisation has raised a debate in the media about environmental problems in your industry, and complaints from neighbours about your emissions can result in a reaction from the regulatory authorities.

2.2 TAKE THE OTHER STAKEHOLDERS INTO ACCOUNT

Besides identifying the company's principal stakeholders and those that influence them you should find out whether there are others that take an interest in the company's environmental aspects. That will enable you to prevent problems that might arise if someone thinks that they have not received enough information about the company's environmental aspects. By means of the axes on the map you can enter other stakeholders that have contacted the company or shown interest in other ways.

Check what enquiries the company has received concerning environmental matters and find out what they were about. With an environmental management system based on ISO 14001 or EMAS, the company must have guidelines that ensure that external enquiries are dealt with and answered.



If your company does not have guidelines for handling external enquiries, you can instead make a note of the enquiries you are asked to deal with. Enquiries of that kind can also land on the management's desk, so ask your managing director what enquiries the company has received concerning environmental matters.

Besides those making direct enquiries, others may be interested in the industry's environmental aspects and perhaps also in your company. You can find out who is interested in environmental problems in your industry through the company's trade organisations and the public debate in the media. The debate takes place in three types of media. You can follow it in:

- National and international trade journals
- nationwide media
- local media.

If your company's management is willing to spend money on it, it is a good idea to use a media agency to supply you with all press mention of environmental aspects in your industry.

2.3 SPECIFY THE EFFORTS FOR EACH STAKEHOLDER

When you have entered the stakeholders in the form of axes on the dialogue map, you can prioritise the ones with which you wish to have an environmental dialogue.

On the axes' scale from zero to four, mark the resources the company has used on the stakeholders in question up to the present time. By connecting the points, you will get a picture of the company's previous action. Then enter in the same way your proposals for future prioritisation of the company's resources in the dialogue with the various stakeholders. As you will see from the example on page 9, the centre of the map is zero, and the level of action rises as the lines radiate out.

You can supplement the dialogue map with a description of the stakeholders. This will make it easier for the management to understand your prioritisation, and with detailed knowledge, it is easier to specify realistic objectives for the dialogue and choose the means that best suit the stakeholders' interests, needs and knowledge.



3 What topics should be included in the dialogue?

Once you and the management have decided which stakeholders the company is going to concentrate on, you must identify their wishes and decide on your proposals to them. With this knowledge you can specify objectives and choose the best way of achieving them. You cannot specify realistic objectives if you do not know whether both parties wish to discuss the same subjects or how much distance there is between the stakeholders' wishes and your possibility of fulfilling them.

Prepare a schedule with three columns, one for the stakeholders' wishes, one for the company's possibilities and one for proposals. In the example shown, the company has included customers, suppliers and neighbours. Start by inserting the stakeholders' wishes. Hints 3.1 and 3.2 tell you how to identify their wishes. Then note down the possibilities and proposals you want to present to the stakeholders. Hint 3.3 tells you how to determine the company's possibilities.

Stakeholders	Stakeholder's wishes	Our possibilities	Our proposals to the stakeholder
Existing customers	The customer wants products with the Swan eco-label.	We can change the products to meet the criteria for the Swan eco-label. That will take one year and cost around DKK 1 million.	(We cannot inform the customer before the next board meeting, when it will be decided whether we are going to invest in eco-labelling.)
Selected customers		We have built a system that enables us to take back packaging from our products from customers. There is a charge for this.	We propose a trial period in which they test the advantages and disadvantages of the return scheme.
Suppliers of key products	The supplier proposes cooperation on less environmentally harmful products.	Our attitude to the supplier's proposal depends on our customers' needs.	We ask the supplier to wait until we have had meetings with our customers.
All suppliers that meet our environmental requirements		We can tell them how our environmental management system works.	We invite the suppliers to discuss how they can comply with our environmental policy.
Neighbours	Neighbours will not accept noise at night from delivery of goods to our premises.	We can reorganise our transport system in such a way that we only receive goods during the day. This will take about six months.	We ask our neighbours to be patient with us for the six months it will take to reorganise our transport system.

3.1 GAIN AN IDEA OF THE STAKEHOLDERS' WISHES

If you do not know exactly what the stakeholders want, you risk spending time and money on communication activities that do not meet their expectations and that are therefore doomed to failure. Once you know their wishes you must determine how far there is between you and whether there is a realistic chance of arriving at a common understanding.

You can map the stakeholders' wishes within four areas. In each area, you can note what they want from your company environmentally:

- Products. The products' environmental impact throughout their life cycle (from raw materials to disposal) and how far the company can influence the products' environmental characteristics
- Activities. The company's environmental impact through use of resources, emissions and similar and its ability to control the impact
- Environmental policy. The company's environmental policy and action areas
- Dialogue. The ways in which the stakeholders wish to receive environmental information and discuss environmental issues with the company.



3.2 USE THE DAILY CONTACT

The daily contact between the company and its stakeholders is the best way of gaining an idea of the stakeholders' wishes. If you provide your sales representatives, purchasing department and others with a checklist, they can find out during their daily work the environmental wishes of their business partners.

Your customers' interest in the company's environmental aspects is an important factor when you are deciding on the content of the environmental dialogue. Your sales representatives can tell you which customers are interested in environmental matters and the kind of questions they ask. When you talk to your sales representatives you must make sure you have the same perception of environment. Otherwise, you risk not getting relevant questions from the customers because the sales representatives do not think that they are about environmental matters – for example, use and disposal of products.

The suppliers' interest in environmental matters is another area you should investigate. Through their supplies they influence the company's environmental performance. It is the purchasing department that is in daily contact with the suppliers. Ask the department what environmental questions the suppliers want to discuss. Perhaps one supplier wants to sell less environmentally harmful products, while another has a proposal for reducing packaging.





3.3 DESCRIBE YOUR PROPOSALS

Before drawing up the company's proposals you should obtain documentation on the company's possibility of meeting the stakeholders' wishes. On the basis of the documentation, note beside each of the stakeholders' wishes whether it is financially and technically possible to meet it.

The documentation can be internal data for the activities and the products' environmental impacts. However, it can also be studies carried out by others of the environmental aspects during the life cycle of the products. As environmental manager you will already have access to a lot of this information. If the stakeholders want to discuss matters that the company has not yet mapped, you must weigh the resources you will need to obtain the information against the importance of the question to the stakeholder and the stakeholder's importance to the company.

When you have a picture of the possibilities you must consider whether there are proposals that the company might be interested in bringing into the dialogue, but that the stakeholder in question has not actually asked for. Find out why the stakeholder has not expressed an interest in the matter himself. If it is because the stakeholder is not aware of the problem or does not know the company's possibilities, the solution could be more information and dialogue. In that case, you can add to the schedule the proposals the company can make.



4 How to specify objectives for the environmental dialogue

It is difficult for a company to judge whether it is spending time and money usefully if it has not specified objectives for the environmental dialogue. Despite this, many companies fail to set out what they intend to achieve with the dialogue on environmental matters, going instead straight on to choosing the means of communication. The short cut quickly becomes a long detour, as it is difficult to choose the right means without objectives.

Dialogue objectives are a short description of the main environmental messages from your company that selected stakeholders are to receive within a precise period of time. If you specify dialogue objectives you can judge later whether the dialogue has fulfilled them or not. You do that by finding out if the stakeholder in question has received and accepted the message within the allocated time. Realistic dialogue objectives make it easier for you to choose the right



Stakeholders	Stakeholder's wishes	Our proposals to the stakeholder	Expected results	Dialogue objectives
Existing customers	The customer wants products from us that carry the Swan eco-label.	(We cannot inform the customer before the next board meeting).	(None before the board has reached a decision.	(None)
Selected customers		We suggest a trial period in which they can test the advantages and disadvantages of a return scheme for packaging.	Acceptance of a trial period by three customers before July 1.	We must inform these customers between March 1 and July 1 about the advantages of the return scheme, the trial period and the price.
Suppliers of key products	The supplier proposes cooperation on less environmentally harmful products.	We ask the supplier to wait until we have held meetings with our customers.	We expect the supplier to repeat the offer.	We must inform the supplier about the meetings with our customers before November 1.
All suppliers that meet our environmental requirements		We invite the suppliers to discuss with us how they can comply with our environmental policy.	A meeting with the 5 principal suppliers before December 1.	We must inform our suppliers before September 1 about our environmental policy and invite them to a meeting to discuss how they can comply with it.
Neighbours	Neighbours will not accept noise at night from delivery of goods to our premises.	We ask our neighbours to be patient with us for the six months it will take to reorganise our transport system.	No complaints about noise after March 1.	We must inform our neighbours before March 1 that we are reorganising our transport system but that this may take up to six months.



tool for the dialogue. Some means suit short messages, while others are good for providing large quantities of environmental information.

You can use the schedule when setting objectives for the environmental dialogue. You begin with the information on the stakeholders' wishes and the company's proposals from the schedule in the previous chapter. Hint 4.1 will help you decide what results the dialogue can help you achieve. Enter the expected results in the schedule. Then, using hints 4.2 and 4.3, you can write the objectives in the last column.

4.1 JUDGE WHEN DIALOGUE IS THE SOLUTION

The environmental dialogue must help to produce the results that are the whole purpose of the company's cooperation with the different stakeholders. The following are examples of the results a company may wish to achieve:

- retain selected customers
- increased turnover distributed on different customer groups
- purchasing more less environmentally harmful products and services
- developing less environmentally harmful products and services
- reducing the number of environmental complaints from neighbours and environmental groups
- environmental permits and the like from regulatory authorities.

Dialogue and information are not always the right solution. There is often a greater need for technical improvements, product development and training of employees than for external dialogue. For example, customers may say that they are interested in buying less environmentally harmful products, but if the

company's environmental performance is poorer than that of its competitors, information will not be enough. And if the management wants fewer neighbours complaining about environmental problems, the company must reduce the emissions that are the cause of the complaints.

In other cases, dialogue may prove to be the right solution, but the means used by the company have not been the right ones, so the desired results are not achieved. Here, the solution is still dialogue, but using other means.

4.2 DRAW UP THE DIALOGUE OBJECTIVES AS MESSAGES

You must draw up one or more dialogue objectives for the results you think the environmental dialogue will help to achieve. The dialogue objectives are a description of the most important messages that specific stakeholders must receive and accept during the dialogue, that is, **when** the messages must be received and **when** you expect the stakeholders to begin taking the action proposed in the messages.

The dialogue objectives must be formulated so precisely that they can be measured. You can then later find out whether the message has been received, understood and accepted by the stakeholders within the time you have specified. Formulate your dialogue objectives carefully and precisely. Each of them must be formulated in not more than three sentences.

The dialogue objective's messages can be both environmental information to the stakeholders and proposals, which the company would like the stakeholders to follow. The proposals may vary greatly.



Some examples are given below:

- urging the customers to continue buying the company's products because the company has reduced its environmental impact
- asking the customers to tell the company about their needs in the environmental area
- informing suppliers about the environmental requirements the company makes concerning the materials, products and services it purchases from them
- activities planned by the company to reduce environmental problems.

Use your knowledge concerning stakeholders' wishes when formulating your dialogue objectives. The stakeholders will naturally be most interested in proposals that fully or partially meet their wishes. They will therefore be ready to respond to messages that describe how proposals meet their wishes. Therefore, the more precisely you know the stakeholders' wishes, the more precise you can make your objectives. That makes it more likely that you will achieve them.



4.3 SPECIFY WHEN THE DIALOGUE

OBJECTIVES MUST BE FULFILLED

When deciding when the objectives must be fulfilled, you must take account of the stakeholders' situation and needs. The objectives are likely to be achieved more quickly if the stakeholder in question himself thinks that he needs the company's proposal than if he does not.

Some types of dialogue objectives cannot be achieved unless other dialogue objectives are achieved first. For example, it may be difficult for the customers to decide on a proposal from you if you have not provided them with sufficient information in good time. Foresee the process and ensure that the objectives are fulfilled in the right order. Remember that an exchange of information usually precedes decisions on cooperation.

You must also ensure that the objectives for one stakeholder are adapted to those for other stakeholders. For example, it is the environmental dialogue with the company's customers that determines the time and sequence of the dialogue with suppliers and others. It is therefore a good idea to ensure in advance that the suppliers can guarantee necessary supplies before the company starts marketing new, environmentally correct solutions to the customers.

The last thing you must take into account when preparing a schedule for the dialogue objectives is other communication competing for the same recipients' attention. The competition can be direct, as at fairs, for example, where there are many other stands, or in a newspaper, where an article or advertisement from the company must fight for attention. You must also take account of low attention on the part of the recipient during busy periods, holidays and similar.

5 How to choose your means of communication

Once you have decided with whom the company must enter into an environmental dialogue and the objectives, you can choose the means. You can choose between four groups of means, all of which are suitable for environmental dialogue. They are: distribution of environmental information; personal environmental dialogue; offer of environmental information; and collection of environmental information. Each group consists of a number of means that are presented below in the form of lists.



The best way of achieving the most effective dialogue is to combine means from all four groups. You will find a more detailed description of the various means in “Katalog over midler til miljø-dialog” (Catalogue of Means for Environmental Dialogue), which is issued in the same series as this manual.

You have to consider two factors when choosing means:

- How actively will the company and the stakeholder enter into the dialogue? If you have prepared a dialogue map and described the stakeholders, you will know the level of activity.
- What forms of communication do the company's dialogue objectives suggest: communication of environmental information, discussions concerning environmental issues, greater knowledge of each other, or supply of information so that the stakeholders can choose for themselves?

As you will see from the example on this page, you must use the dialogue objectives you have formulated when choosing the means. Beside each objective that you transfer to the schedule note the means that are suitable for achieving it. If you use the lists of means in 5.1. 5.2, 5.3 and 5.4, you will avoid overlooking relevant ones.

Stakeholders	Dialogue objectives	Communication means
Selected customers	We must inform these customers between March 1 and July 1 about the advantages of our packaging return scheme and about a trial period and the price.	Direct mail Personal dialogue
Suppliers of key products	We must inform these suppliers before November 1 about our meetings with the customers.	Telephone calls
Suppliers that meet our environmental requirements	We must inform these suppliers before September 1 about our environmental policy and invite them to a meeting to discuss how they can live up to it.	Direct mail Environmental report. Fair Meetings
Neighbours	We must inform our neighbours before March 1 that we are changing our transport system but that this may take up to six months.	Article in local newspaper Folder

5.1 DISTRIBUTE YOUR ENVIRONMENTAL INFORMATION

If your company is more active in the dialogue than the stakeholders, you need to present a variety of environmental information so that the company's information, attitudes and proposals appear clearly and precisely. You can choose from among the following communication means, all of which are suitable for distributing environmental information:

- advertisements
- daily papers
- direct mail
- packaging
- labels
- trade journals
- folders and brochures
- local newspapers
- magazines
- manual for joint marketing
- instructions for eco-friendly use
- environmental management certificates
- eco-labels
- environmental information in the financial accounts
- environmental report
- environmental product declaration
- newsletters
- personal letters
- point-of-sale material
- postcards
- press conference
- radio
- TV
- TV advertisements
- video

Since the competition for the recipients' attention is immense, the company must make its message interesting and convincing. There is always a risk of the recipients not reading the information they receive from the company, and even if

they do read it, it is not certain that they will interpret it as you would like them to. You will therefore probably have to combine written and electronic environmental communication with other means that make it possible for the stakeholders to express their views.

When you choose written and electronic environmental communication you must consider whether it is enough to use means of communication prepared by the company itself – e.g. letters and printed matter – or whether the information should also go out through the press.

If you decide to use the press, you must weigh up the advantages and disadvantages. One advantage is that the information appears more credible and reaches many recipients at one and the same time. One of the disadvantages is that you cannot be certain that the press mentions the company's environmental aspects in the way you want them mentioned. If you want to communicate about environment through the press, you will find some good advice in another of the manuals in this series: “Miljødialog gennem pressen” (Environmental dialogue through the press).

5.2 USE PERSONAL ENVIRONMENTAL DIALOGUE TO DISCUSS PROPOSALS

If the dialogue objective is a proposal for them to act in a specific way you will often need to talk to the stakeholders. Personal contact is normally necessary if you are to agree. There are two reasons for this: talking to people is the best way of getting speedy and detailed answers to questions, and most people prefer to enter into agreements face to face or on the phone.





Compared with other means, personal dialogue is the most binding form of communication because both parties have already decided to spend time on each other – and almost always with specific results in mind.

You can choose between the following forms of personal dialogue to discuss environmental issues:

- fairs
- visits to the company
- meetings.

If you choose personal dialogue as your means, you should be aware that that makes demands on the colleagues who are going to conduct the dialogue. You must therefore ensure that they receive regular training in relevant environmental matters.

You will also have to combine the personal dialogue with different forms of written and electronic environmental communication to prepare meetings and arrangements.

5.3 MAKE THE COMPANY'S ENVIRONMENTAL INFORMATION ACCESSIBLE

If the stakeholders are active and interested in receiving information about the company's environmental work, you can make environmental information available on a website for them to select when needed. With information technology you can store and present large quantities of information about your environmental aspects.

If you choose to use a website, you must make certain that you have the necessary resources to update the information.

Environmental information on a website is suitable for anyone who wants to find it, but that is rarely enough. People have to know that the information is available before they seek it for themselves.

Besides the website you can make your environmental information available to the stakeholders by means of:

- intranet and extranet for selected stakeholders
- the company's switchboard
- a hotline for environmental questions.

5.4 GATHER INFORMATION ABOUT THE STAKEHOLDERS

A thorough knowledge of each other's wishes and possibilities in the environmental area is an important part of the dialogue. Gathering information about stakeholders before and during the dialogue with them will improve your possibility of planning your environmental work for the benefit of both parties. Regular updating of the information about the stakeholders' needs is necessary because knowledge and attitudes change rapidly in the environment area.

You gather information to find out the stakeholders' attitude to different proposals and in what areas the company must improve its environmental performance and service in order to meet the stakeholders' wishes and requirements.

If you need to know more about the company's stakeholders you can choose between the following methods to obtain the information:

- questionnaire-based survey
- group interviews
- individual interviews

6 How to prepare a plan for the dialogue

A plan for the environmental dialogue will help you in your daily work. The purpose of the plan is to systematise the dialogue in such a way that:

- the environmental dialogue is not forgotten in the hurly-burly of the business day
- it is the purpose of the dialogue that determines which means you use and not vice versa
- the different means do not counteract each other

- you gain a clear picture of activities and resources.

The plan must cover a limited period – usually one financial year at a time – and the activities you intend to carry out in that period. The plan should be integrated into the company's sales and marketing plans and its environmental action plans.



Stakeholders	Dialogue objective	Means	Preparation	Hours	Outlay in DKK	Responsible person
Selected customers	We must inform these customers between March 1 and Juli 1 about the advantages of a return scheme for our packaging and about a trial period and the price.	Direct mail	February 1-	16	2,000	SM
		Personal talks	March 1	12	1,000	SM
			February 1- March 1			
Suppliers of key products	We must inform these suppliers before November 1 about our meetings with the customers.	Telephone call	None			PM
All suppliers that meet our environmental requirements	We must inform these suppliers before September 1 about our environmental policy and invite them to a meeting to discuss how they can live up to it.	Direct mail	May 15- June 1	8		PM
		Environmental report	January 1 –June 1	300	150,000 (o.b.)	EM
		Fair	August 1- September 1	40		PM
		Meetings	June 1-Sep- tember 1			PM
Neighbours	We must inform our neighbours before March 1 that we are changing our transport system, but that this may take up to six months.	Article in local newspaper	February 1	8	30,000	EM
		Folder	February 15	24		EM
			January 1- February 15			
Total				428	183,000	

Abbreviations:

o.b. = other budget

SM = sales manager

EM = environmental manager

PM = purchasing manager

As shown in the example, you transfer the stakeholders, dialogue objectives and communication means from the previous schedules to the first columns. Hints 6.1, 6.2 and 6.3 describe how to fill in the last columns, which deal with preparation, budgeting and the distribution of responsibilities.

6.1 ALLOCATE TIME FOR PREPARATION

Almost all the means you can use in the dialogue require some form of preparation. If you plan to make a folder or an environmental report, you must allow time for collecting data, preparing copy, layout, approvals and printing. That is a process that can easily take from four to six months.

The same amount of time is needed to build up and update environmental information for the Internet. Press mention also implies preparation, although it does not take as long. You have to find the necessary information, identify the right journalists, agree a meeting and read the article thoroughly. Personal dialogue also requires preparation in the form of internal meetings and training of the employees who are going to meet the stakeholders.

Your dialogue objectives tell you when the tool is to be used for the first time and the time it will take. If you add the preparation time to the start-up time, you will know when the work must begin. You enter the time when preparation must start and the time when the tool is to be used for the first time in your plan.

6.2 MATCH THE PLAN TO YOUR RESOURCES

Use the budget correctly and prioritise the work from the start so that you do not waste money on the wrong stakeholders.

It is important to budget when preparing your dialogue plan. Basically, you have a number of dialogue objectives spread over the different stakeholders. It will probably take more resources in the form of time and money than you have available to achieve the objectives. You should therefore start by preparing a budget for each of the means. By adding the sub-budgets together you can see whether you are exceeding the total budget or not.





If the means you plan to use in the dialogue cost more than you have available for them, it is time to stop and think. Either you must reduce the level of ambition for the various means or you must discuss with the management whether it is realistic to fulfil all dialogue objectives for the given budget. The conclusion can be either to reduce the dialogue objectives for the period or to increase the budget. It is better to spend time and money on some few dialogue objectives than on too many if you know in advance that there are insufficient resources to communicate them all properly.

6.3 DISTRIBUTE THE WORK

The last piece of information in the plan is who is responsible for the chosen means. It is important to have a person who feels responsible for the means of communication in question. Otherwise you risk not being ready on time, limping quality and budget overrun. The responsibility for the individual means should lie with the person who is most interested in the dialogue objective being achieved.

It is advantageous to have guidelines for the company's work on the plan. The guidelines ensure that you are always working on the basis of an updated and approved dialogue plan. The guidelines must set out:

- who is to take the initiative for revision of the plan
- who is to help revise the plan
- how the revision is to be done
- who, if anyone, is to approve the plan
- the deadline for completion of the plan.

7 How to set others to work

If you are fortunate enough to have an information officer in the company or you can draw on external communication experts, your task is to set them to work on designing the means in the right way.

As the person responsible for the company's environmental dialogue, you are a bridge builder between the company's objectives and the people designing the means. If you solve this task properly, you will save yourself a lot of grief over means that do not live up to your expectations and will avoid wasting time and money.

It is a good idea to write a short brief to the people who are going to design the means of communication. Stating your wishes in writing is good preparation for

the subsequent dialogue with the communication experts. Depending on the nature of the task, you can also supply the experts with draft copy or background material describing and documenting the company's way of solving the various environmental tasks.

A written brief from you to the communication experts should always include the dialogue objectives, a description of the recipients and the time horizon. You thereby provide them with precise guidelines to observe when they are designing the means of communication. The example given below is a brief for a folder to neighbours about reducing noise, but you can use the same guidelines for all means of communication. Hints 7.1, 7.2 and 7.3 explain how.



Means of communication	Folder – short, e.g. folded A4
Dialogue objective	We must inform our neighbours before March 1 that we are changing our transport system, but that this may take up to six months.
Other means with which the means of communication is to be combined	Article in local newspaper
Description of the main recipients	The recipients are all neighbours within a radius of 600 metres, i.e. approx. 500 households. That means all kinds of people, but the folder must be addressed particularly to the people who are most dissatisfied about the noise and have complained to authorities and the local press. The folder must be written so that everyone, including those without technical knowledge, can understand it.
Secondary recipients	Authorities and the local newspaper
Time horizon	Must be received from the printers February 15 and sent out February 17.

7.1 FIND THE RIGHT EXPERTS

The people who are to design the various means of communication must be good at writing and at communicating in pictures. Depending on the nature of the means, you

may also need experts within layout, photography, film and similar.

It is not enough for the experts to have the necessary paper qualifications. The reci-

ipients of the company's messages are bombarded every day with a large quantity of information, much of which is designed extremely professionally and powerfully. It is thus important for the people designing the communication to be able to compete with the information noise and penetrate to the recipients.

You must get hold of people who are good at finding new ways of communicating simple, clear, credible and, most of all, interesting messages. If you do not have such people among your colleagues, you should use external experts that you trust to solve the task.

Using external experts has both advantages and disadvantages. On the plus side, they can look at the communication problem with fresh eyes and see new possibilities because they are not, as company people sometimes are, thinking in grooves. On the minus side, the company's environmental aspects can be so complex that it is difficult for outsiders to decide what is important and what is not. You can judge different experts by getting examples of the environmental communication they have produced. Ask for communication of the type you want designed. If the form and content meet your expectations, you can arrange a meeting at which you can see whether the chemistry is right.

7.2 USE THE DIALOGUE OBJECTIVE AS THE GOVERNING IDEA

The core of the design is the dialogue objective. It is your job to formulate the dialogue objective that the communication experts are to communicate. This distribution of roles means a big responsibility for you. If the message is not precise enough, even the most creative communicators will not be able to develop it into valuable communication. Do not put the communication experts to work until you have

taken a critical look at whether the message is sufficiently precise to have the desired effect. If it is not, you must go back to the beginning and formulate it again.

Stick to the dialogue objective and return to it in your discussions with the experts. If they do not understand your message you will never get a solution that meets your expectations.

7.3 DISCUSS THE DESIGN WITH YOUR EXPERTS

The people who are going to design the means do not see the company's objective in the same way as you do. It is therefore necessary to discuss the design with them. In particular, you must ensure that they get precisely the information they need about the stakeholders to communicate your message to them, and the discussion will give them a clear impression of the stakeholders' attitude to the chosen question.

The dialogue between you and your experts is a balancing act. On the one hand, you must stick to your objective and make demands. On the other, you must not hold so strictly to the written brief that you limit their scope.

You may find the following helpful hints useful in your dialogue with the experts:

- Use your draft written brief as the agenda for meetings
- Listen and be open to ideas you had not thought of yourself
- Do not impose a fixed framework for the forms, e.g. formats and choice of pictures. Otherwise you risk contributing to stereotypes and losing the creative verve that is the driving force behind good communication and that is able to break down the stakeholders' defences.



8 How to evaluate the environmental dialogue

When evaluating the environmental dialogue you should follow the sequence below for each stakeholder:

- Check that the means have been used as planned
- Check that the dialogue objectives have been achieved
- Judge whether the dialogue has contributed to environmental and business results.

You must have dialogue objectives in order to be able to evaluate the dialogue. When you have evaluated it, you must decide on two things: Should the objectives be adjusted to bring them more in line with the actual conditions? Is it necessary to adjust the means the company is using or to use other means?



If the evaluation is to be used by others than you yourself, you should present it as concisely as possible – for example, in a schedule as shown in the example below. Here, it is the environmental dialogue with customers that is being evaluated. You must use the schedule to compare the dialogue objectives with the results and for your evaluation of the relationship. Hint 8.1 explains how to check whether the means have been used as planned; hint 8.2 focuses on whether the objectives have been achieved, and hint 8.3 is about evaluating whether the environmental dialogue has helped to produce the desired results.

Stakeholders	Selected customers
Planned means	Direct mail Personal dialogue
Means used	Direct mail has been used. Personal dialogue has not been used.
Dialogue objective	We must inform the customers between March 1 and July 1 about the advantages of a return scheme for our packaging and about a trial period and the price.
Achieved	Partially
Results	Two customers are favourably disposed to the proposal but want a little time to think about it.
Evaluation of the dialogue's contribution to the results	The customers are willing to sort the packaging separately but will not pay us to come and collect it. In other words, the customers have understood our message, so what is needed is no longer dialogue but us dropping the planned charge.

8.1 CHECK THAT THE MEANS ARE USED AS PLANNED

Begin your evaluation by checking how the means have been used. If you do not have a clear picture of the activities that have actually taken place, you cannot judge whether the dialogue has been satisfactory or not, nor can you check whether the results – or the lack of same – are due to the company's efforts or other factors.

You can check the use of means by answering the following questions:

- Have all the means been used as planned?
- Have they been used the planned number of times?
- Have they been used at the planned times?
- Have they been addressed to the stakeholders that they are intended for?
- Have they been used in the communication with others?
- Has the plan been changed during the process?
- What was the reason for any departures from the plan?

Besides the people who are responsible for the different means you can use other sources to determine whether the means have been used as planned:

- booked costs for communication means, e.g. for printed matter, participation in fairs and holding large meetings
- letters sent concerning environmental matters
- press cuttings and recordings of TV and radio programmes
- calendars and reports showing the number of meetings and calls by sales representatives while environmental matters have been on the agenda.

8.2 CHECK THAT THE DIALOGUE OBJECTIVES HAVE BEEN ACHIEVED

When you know which means have been used you can go on to checking their effect on the stakeholders – in other words, checking that the dialogue objectives have been achieved. The only way of checking that the messages have been received and accepted in accordance with the dialogue objectives is by asking the stakeholders, either in connection with the daily cooperation with them or by means of interviews, round-table discussions or similar.





You can check that the dialogue objectives have been achieved by obtaining answers to the following questions:

- What messages do the stakeholders think they have received from the company?
- To what extent do they correspond to the dialogue objectives?
- How do the stakeholders interpret the company's messages?
- Are there other interpretations than those you expected?
- Have the stakeholders found the company's environmental messages sufficiently interesting?
- Has the design of the means caught the attention and interest of the stakeholders?
- What forms of action has the company's messages inspired the stakeholders to take?
- What are the stakeholders' attitudes to the company's messages?

8.3 ASSESS THE DIALOGUE'S

CONTRIBUTION TO THE RESULTS

The last part of your evaluation should be an assessment of how the environmental dialogue has contributed to the environmental and business results produced by the cooperation with the stakeholders.

You must decide how the dialogue should be organised in future, i.e. how the stakeholders should be prioritised, whether the objectives need adjusting and what means the company should use.

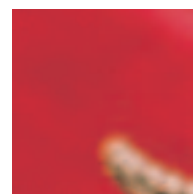
You cannot assess the environmental dialogue's contribution until you know what has actually emerged from the cooperation. You will find out by answering the following questions:

- What results have been achieved with the stakeholder in question?
- Has the stakeholder taken the action the company wanted it to take?
- Are the results better or poorer than expected?
- If there are deviations, what is the reason for them?
- Have other factors than the dialogue played a role – for example, greater or lesser public interest in the environmental issues dealt with in the dialogue?

If the results are as expected and the dialogue objectives have been achieved you should check whether the dialogue has affected the results as much as you originally expected or whether there have been other factors that have had a positive effect on the results. Such factors could be that the public debate has favoured your views or that customers and suppliers have become more open to your arguments. If these or other factors have helped to create good results, it is important to take account of them when you are planning the future environmental dialogue.

Even though the dialogue objectives have been achieved, you may find that the results are poorer than expected. That may be because you expected too much of the dialogue's possibility of contributing to the results in question. However, there can also be other factors – for example, unexpected initiatives by competitors or other players have made the work more difficult for your company.

If the expected results have not appeared you can choose either to reduce your ambitions or to strengthen your communication activities. If you choose the latter course, you may find it useful to run through the planning steps described in the preceding chapters.



9 Six other manuals on environmental dialogue

Planning and Organising Environmental Dialogue is one of a series of seven manuals that are intended to help small and medium-sized enterprises to use their environmental results in their dialogue with customers, suppliers, employees and other stakeholders.

In small and medium-sized enterprises, responsibility for the company's environmental communication usually ends up with the environmental manager, who has the environmental knowledge but fewer skills within communication, particularly when it is a case of communicating technical material so that laymen can understand it and relate to it. The manuals are intended to help you – the person responsible for both the environmental aspects of your company's activities and the company's environmental communication.

The manuals and the catalogue cost DKK 50 each, incl.VAT.

If you buy all seven, the price is DKK 300, incl.VAT.

*You can buy the manuals and the catalogue at
Miljøbutikken, Information og Bøger, Læderstræde 1-3,
DK-1201 Copenhagen K, Denmark*

Tel. +45 33 95 40 00



“Design of written environmental communication”

explains how a small or medium-sized enterprise can make written environmental communication relevant and readable for the recipient. The manual also contains advice on illustrations, websites, articles, environmental reports and product information.



“Environmental dialogue through the press”

helps small or medium-sized enterprises achieve better cooperation with journalists on environmental matters. The manual describes the press’s rules of play and explains to companies how to select their stories, gain the confidence of journalists, prepare for bad press mention and evaluate the results of the company’s press work.



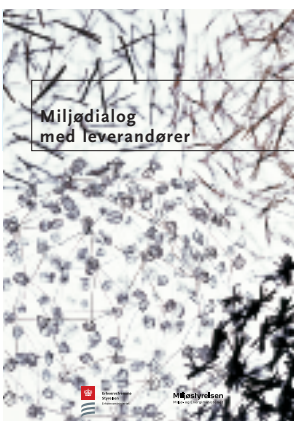
“Environmental dialogue with colleagues”

explains how the environmental manager and the organisation in a small or medium-sized enterprise handle the internal environmental dialogue with employees and the management. The manual describes how to plan and organise the internal dialogue before, during and after an environmental project.



“Environmental dialogue with customers”

explains how the environmental manager, in cooperation with the marketing people and sales representatives in a small or medium-sized enterprise, can improve the dialogue with customers on environmental matters and environmental management. The manual provides advice on selecting relevant customers, investigating their needs, building up credible environmental arguments and conducting the dialogue.



“Environmental dialogue with suppliers”

describes how to build and maintain a system for handling suppliers and developing a dialogue with them. The manual explains how to prioritise suppliers, set topics for the environmental dialogue, and assess and approve suppliers.



“Catalogue of means for environmental dialogue”

describes 34 means of communication suitable for small and medium-sized enterprises' communication of environmental messages. The means are presented in four groups: distribution of environmental information; supply of environmental information; personal communication; and gathering information about the stakeholders.

EPILOGUE

In order to ensure that the manuals on environmental dialogue meet the needs and requirements of small and medium-sized enterprises concerning usefulness, several evaluation meetings have been held at which the manuals' content, form and directions were discussed. We would like to thank the following trade organisations and companies that have participated in these workshops:

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