Fan Engagement for Sustainability: Lessons from Collegiate Sports

Dave Newport, Director,
CU Environmental Center
The fastest ten minutes in sports sustainability!

- Who are we?
- What is fan engagement for sustainability?
- How does it work?
- Lessons from Past Campaigns
- Focus on In-Home Activation
- Leveraging Brand Identification
- Does this work?
- Adjustments for Future Campaigns
What does it take to be a champion?

Zero Waste Athletics
- Nation's first NCAA Division 1 zero waste athletics program: Ralphies Green StampeDe (2008)

Zero Carbon Athletics
- Emissions reduced through conservation and remainder offset by Ute methane recovery

Zero Net-electricity Football Facility
- Nation's first zero net-electricity football practice facility, 850 kw PV array

Zero Pesticide Campus
- First synthetic fertilizer and pesticide-free campus in the Rocky Mountains

LEED Platinum Buildings
- New hockey rink, basketball & football facilities, research labs, residence halls, and dining halls

Sierra Club #1 Green Campus
- First AAU campus to earn top national ranking

STARS Gold Campus
- First US campus to earn overall Gold rating for campus sustainability

Be creative. Be groundbreaking. Be a champion.

Be Boulder. In SUSTAINABILITY

University of Colorado Boulder
What is fan engagement for sustainability?

Fan engagement for sustainability: A sports brand capitalizing on brand affinity and loyalty to influence their fans to implement personal sustainability practices in their own lives, homes, and workplace.

- Recycling, composting, zero waste
- Upcycling
- Energy conservation
- Renewable energy
- Sustainable food
- Sustainable transportation
- Green construction
- Water efficiency, conservation, and restoration
- Lifestyles (LOHAS, eco-tourism, music, etc)
- Logo apparel
How does it work?

1. Sports brand **models** sustainability in its operations.
2. Sports brand **engages and educates** fans about sustainability efforts.
3. Sports brand **asks** fans to enhance personal sustainability behaviors in order to “be part of the team.”
4. Sports brand **prompts** fans’ sustainability behaviors by collecting/rewarding tracking-data or other prompts or affirmations.
5. Sports brand **partners** with local organizations (e.g. city, county, schools) that have allied interests and outreach to **leverage** the messaging, prompts and incentives. This then **norms** sustainability behaviors as part of ‘fandom’ and sense of community.
Lessons from Past Campaigns
Fans can see recycling, not the other stuff
Tell your story
What does it take to be a champion?

Zero Carbon.
CU has covered the roofs of Coors Event Center and the basketball practice facility--and buys wind energy for other campus buildings--as one of many steps we are taking towards carbon neutrality campus wide. Be a Buff; tap into renewable energy for your home.

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www.ralphies.colorado.edu
What does it take to be a champion?

Sustainable food. CU uses only high-quality food ingredients and serves a large selection of organic, natural, and local products to all students and athletes because you are what you eat. Be a Buff; look for local, organic or natural food options when you shop for home.

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Zero Pesticides.
CU knows healthy grasses result from healthy soil—and students’ health is most important. So CU does not use toxic chemical pesticides on any turf—campus wide. Be a Buff; check out healthy garden and lawn options for your home.

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Lessons learned

- Make the activation consistent with campus mission
  - Must be legit—and launched from the top
  - Consistent with and committed to campus goals
  - Leverages town-gown partnerships
  - Integrates with campus communications
  - Uses “green front porch” to tout all campus sustainability aspects
- Activations enhance campus mission & goals
  - UM Green Chemistry Challenge
  - CU “Bring Your Bottle Back to Life” and “Pac12 Change the Course” campaigns
Focus on In-Home Activation
Teach desired behaviors in-game
Give fans the tools to take home
Make it fun and incentivize!

RUN WITH RALPHIE’S GREEN STAMPEDE AND WIN!
PRIZE: CU BOULDER SWEATSHIRT GATE 5
Ralphie's Green Stampede

Timeline

About

The Buffs are zero waste in the stadium—and Buff fans can help out the team by recycling and composting at home, work, and play!

http://www.cubuffs.com/green

Conserve energy at home, work and play

Win Tickets vs. Utah!
Prompt to sustain in-home changes

- Email intros & follow-ups
- Public commitments on website
- Ongoing fan reporting to win prizes, earn points towards discounts, giveaways, etc.
- Partnering with community sustainability efforts normalizes new behaviors in peer group, leverages community efforts, increases repetition.
Leveraging Brand Identification
Redefining “environmental impact”

With 40 years of student-led campus conservation efforts—from the nation’s oldest environmental center to the first collegiate recycling program, wind energy purchase, and zero-waste effort at a BCS football stadium—it’s only natural that CU-Boulder was named the #1 green campus by Sierra magazine.

This is how CU Buffs live green.

What kind of Buff will You be?

Colorado
University of Colorado at Boulder

www.colorado.edu
Ask them to be good Buff fans at home
Does this work?
CU Fans’ At Home Behaviors

Home Environmental Behaviors Changed after Sustainable Saturdays

Fans that indicated behaviors *increased* based on Sustainable Saturdays*:

- 8% increased Recycling
- 4% increased Composting

*Note. The surveys was administered one week after promotion*
Three Quarters of all fans felt that CU was a leader in Athletic environmental efforts and that helped with enhancement of University and Athletic Department profile.
Impact of Efforts on Fans' Fandom

Over 70% stated that environmental efforts relate positively to their fandom of CU athletics.
Impact of efforts on fans’ tendencies to...

- Purchase Tickets: 34%*
- Undertake Env. Activities at Games: 73%*
- Undertake Env. Activities at Home: 56%*

*Note. Percent of respondents that are at least somewhat likely
Adjustments for Future Campaigns
Adjustments for future campaigns

- **In-home.** Extend all activations from just game days to 365 days. Create ongoing dialogue with fans via social media, text, and new activations.

- **Content.** Make it personal, innovative, transparent, and full of purpose. 89% of Millennials have switched to a brand they perceived to have a purpose that aligns with theirs.

- **Legitimacy.** Alumni love students—but they respond more to respected campus and community leaders. Activate from the top; outreach with students.

- **Leverage.** Use sports sustainability platform to expand campus development, research, recruiting and community impact goals. Engage stakeholders and sponsors with the array of campus assets. It takes a campus...
Planned new activations

“Bring your bottle back to life”
- Connects plastic bottle and aluminum can recycling to recycled content logo wear and re-useable bottles.
- Provides incentives for fan participation
Planned new activations

“Pac-12 Change the Course”

- Fans text-pledge their conservation commitment
- Pledges key restoration projects that increase water flows to the Colorado River and other Western rivers

Text your pledge!
Restore water for the West!
Leveraged engagement

The Nation’s Leader in Campus and Sports Sustainability, Research, and Industry Partnerships

**Research** CU is the nation’s top ranked environmental & geosciences research campus with expertise from engineering to business. A single point of contact quickly matches corporate inquiries with campus expertise.

**Sports** CU is the nation’s top ranked NCAA Division 1 sports sustainability program. Sustainability brands are harnessing this leadership to influence fans’ in-game and in-home sustainability behaviors.

**Campus** CU is the home of the nation’s first campus sustainability program. Millennials engagement, recruiting, and sustainability branding opportunities are featured.
What kind of **Buff** will you be?

RALPHIE'S
GREEN STAMPEDE
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