

## **RSI Leadership Exchange Oct. 2, 2012 in Toronto, Canada**

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Welcome to the fourth of our Rethink Sustainability Initiatives newsletters highlighting the RSI Leadership Exchange that took place October 2nd, 2012 in Toronto, Canada.

In this edition, we feature Dianne Dillon-Ridgley, a Board Director at Interface, and a globally recognized environment and sustainability advocate and expert, with a thirty-year record of accomplishment, advising Presidents of countries, corporations and the United Nations. From the moment Dianne stepped onto the stage, she ignited the room with her magnetism, inspirational keynote speech and vision for positive change.



# Sustainability in Action



## Inspiring positive change driven by sustainability

Dianne Dillon-Ridgley, Board of Directors, Interface, Inc.



Our ancestors knew that if you didn't know what an orange sky in the morning meant, you were in trouble.

### "Re-member the World"

What I really wanted to call this speech was "Re-membering the World". At some point, we have to consciously "member" it. That is what we are doing, in real time, "membering the future". We must however do it with humility, not hubris.

### What are we trying to solve?

What are we trying to solve? What is the actual problem? We need a broad spectrum of talent, and a multiplicity of ideas to address these questions. If everyone was a physics major at MIT then a Harvard MBA, while we might all be wonderful brilliant people, our conceptual framework would still be too narrow.

Sustainability has become a placeholder word, it should not be a proxy for "green". If anything, it's a proxy for "risk".

How do we reframe "sustainability" to engage companies and institutions? Sustainability SHOULD be seen as good sound management for companies. Yet it is much more than that.

We need to ask different questions. We have a tendency to look for THE ANSWER, there often is no single right answer. There are decisions to be made, and those decisions have consequences. We need to build in

enough flexibility without such a high political penalty that we can walk away from poor or no longer effective choices, thus allowing for more experimentation.

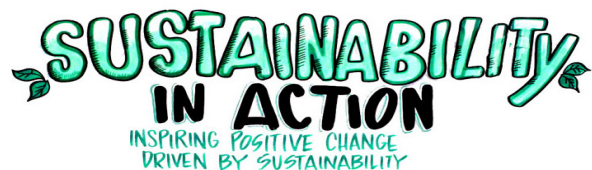
### Transparency is key

We have a tendency to try to make problems smaller; but sometimes we need to blow them up and make them bigger. How do we make that mental shift and practice more innovation?

Interface's first CSR - as distinct from environmental - report was in 1997. The legal team was nervous, saying 'you can't do that'-a tri-fold of 'take/make/waste'. Ray Anderson said "That's what we're going to do. We're going to tell the truth. Transparency is the key. If we tell the truth, others will tell our story."

### The best way to cross the water

We must rethink product design. Western history and western society are amazing. Consider the things we have done and the world we have built, especially indoor plumbing! But since 1969, when we first saw the image of our beautiful BLUE planet, the earth, from the moon our perspective has changed.... We need to work with these different frontiers.





# Sustainability in Action

Continued



Yasmin spoke about building bridges and crossing the water. Our engineering schools are great at producing people who know how to literally build bridges. The building part of the equation- we've got it! Sometimes though we need to step back and answer the question of how to get across the river. There may be instances where a canoe or boat is all that is needed yet we keep building bridges.....

## Accelerate the path to sustainability

We must rethink our world. Consider indigenous dance where the dancers fall into gravity – they don't work against it--working with nature and learning from it. We need to remake our world as one where justice and equity matter and everyone has value and the opportunity to provide input. By re-membering, re-setting and re-framing our world we will accelerate the path to sustainability.

The future beckons, this must be done. Its brilliance is shining and is a reflection of the youth in waiting. New language is actually old. We have the cultural and infrastructure knowledge. What we need now is the WILL.

It's not a green economy; it's a new economy. We've been clumsy at talking across government, social and corporate lines. Civil society has forced itself into arenas and rooms where it did not seem to belong. We all

belong, and we all belong everywhere. All issues are for all of us. The readjustment is required of those who have been in power, in towers--of ivory or penthouse suites. And this readjustment will be beneficial for all too.

## Undivide and reunite

It's time to get out of the silos, undivided, and reunite ourselves. This does not mean that we should lose our areas of expertise. It means integrating them, not losing them. Embracing new ways of doing things that un-divide and re-unite us to proactively create positive change for our planet, our people and our economy. We can do that. We must.

## What we do today matters

Maya Angelou said, "One isn't necessarily born with courage, but one is born with potential. Without courage, we cannot practice any other virtue with consistency. We can't be kind, truthful, merciful, generous, or honest."

Be brave enough to ask the questions, the simple, silly and hard questions. Encourage others to speak truth and to be brave. Because this moment and what we do today matters. What we do today determines if we can have success in the future and a vibrant world for our children, our grandchildren and future generations.



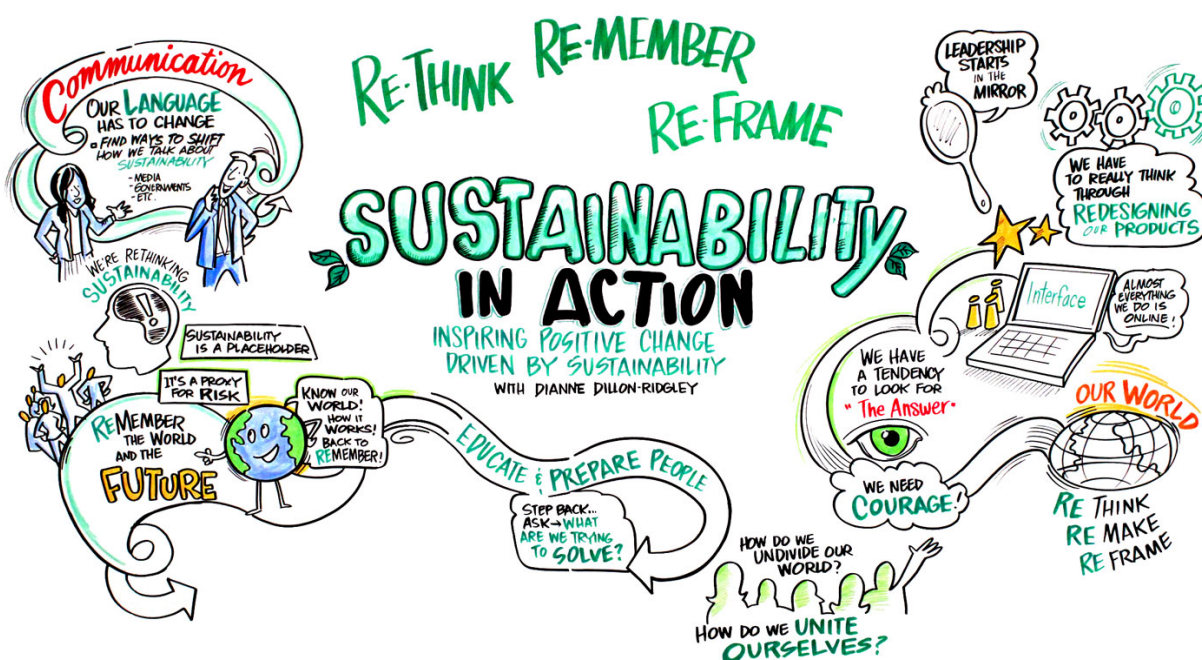
# Key Insights

## Summary



- Sustainability has become a placeholder word, not a proxy for “green”. If anything, it’s a proxy for “risk”
- We need to allow for more experimentation
- We will accelerate the path to sustainability by remembering, resetting and reframing our world
- It’s time to get out of the silos, undivided, and reunite ourselves
- Transparency is the key, you tell the truth and let others tell the story

What we do today determines if we can have success in the future and a vibrant world for our children, our grandchildren and future generations.



# Rethink SUSTAINABILITY

A HUB FOR SENIOR LEADERS

## Looking ahead...

In the fifth newsletter, we will revisit the dynamic and interactive Fishbowl Conversation where participants candidly discussed key game changers for accelerating the sustainability journey in business and society.

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