



Building a Sustainable Business Ecosystem

Elliot Hoffman, REV Sustainability
California

☀ Call to Action

To get your business involved in the Sustainability Circles Program, check out REV Sustainability at www.revsustainability.com

☀ Values

- Sustainability
- Cooperation
- Leadership
- Environmentalism

☀ Lessons Learned

Community, cooperation, and kindness are the real riches we should all strive for.

Being environmentally friendly helps the Earth, but it will also help us all transition into a better economic future.

Be an example: if you want large-scale change, you have to start by changing your own behavior.

Cooperation Equals Power.

That was the message Elliot saw scrawled on the wall of the electric power plant he saw each day on his way to school, when he was growing up in the Amalgamated housing cooperative in the Bronx. “Being a cooperative human being is just built into my DNA,” he says. “So when I went into business, I did it with sustainability and social responsibility in mind.” He cofounded his company, Just Desserts, with his wife in 1974, and led it into a sustainable future, establishing himself as one of the pioneers of the sustainable business movement at a time when few were thinking within this framework.

In 2013, he founded REV, an enterprise that helps small and midsize companies transition to a more just and sustainable way of operating. “We want to destroy the myth that sustainability is a cost. If I can show companies that they can do good for the environment and keep money in their pockets through the process, we can have them picking up the slack they should have picked up decades ago, on a large scale.”

☀ Language Arts

In your opinion, what does the motto “Cooperation Equals Power” mean? Write an essay in which you explain how you would use this philosophy to fight for sustainability and conservation.

Choose a business you are interested in (for example, clothing manufacturing, or food). Imagine you can create an environmentally conscious company to operate in the business of your choice. Write a [Mission Statement](#)¹ for your imaginary company that focuses not only on what you will produce, but how you will use sustainable business practices to improve the industry as a whole, increase profits, and enhance the quality of your own products.

What is the [REV²](#) program? Create a combination of TikTok videos (no less than four) and SnapChat posts (no less than three) in which you explain what the REV program is; how it has benefited businesses at the local level; and how it could benefit businesses at a global scale.

STEM Activities

By adopting sustainable practices in his business, Elliot didn't just reduce the negative impact on the environment; he also saved money! Calculate the average amount of water, electricity, or waste your household uses, and their associated costs. Then research sustainable alternatives (techniques or technology) to conserve or reduce this amount. How much money would your household save over a period of time if you were to adopt these alternatives? Graph your findings.

Think of a type of business or service you'd be interested in starting (clothing, restaurant, health store, spa, etc.). How would you design your business or service so that it could help improve environmental problems in the community? Consider all of the aspects of your products or services, including the costs, the impacts on the environment, and the people in the community. Then, present your design in the form of advertisements to the class. [Activity guide³](#).

Fossil fuels are a key component in powering businesses. Burning fossil fuels for energy, however, produces a number of pollutants, including carbon dioxide (CO₂). Calculate the carbon footprint of a business, and learn how it directly or indirectly produces CO₂. Then, find out how that business could decrease their carbon footprint. If possible, select a local business and present your findings to them. Be sure to present it in a positive way!

Sustainability Innovations

One of Elliot's greatest success stories includes the work of REV Sustainability. [Rev Sustainability⁴](#) focuses on integrating sustainability and behavior changes within a company to see positive business impact. Review one of the four stories featured as a part of REV's success.

Some traditional businesses have struggled to evolve into using more sustainable practices while others have flourished in the transition. It is important to have the requisite individuals consulting businesses and engaging in sustainable transformation. [Green Biz⁵](#) has developed a professional certificate program that addresses consulting/leading businesses in sustainable transformation. Could this certification help you be a part of positive change for the future?

In addition to the work of REV, there are many organizations and companies in California that are focused on improving the transition to sustainability. [Environmental Innovations⁶](#) is a certified B-Corp that provides innovative sustainability solutions to government, individuals, businesses, and education.

The transition to a more sustainable future often requires collaboration from everyone, as Elliot proved with The Garden Project. [Transformative Climate Communities⁷](#) is an important government-funded project that highlights community-led transformation in Californian communities that are most affected by pollution.

Sustainability Career Pathways

Green Business Manager. Business can be a force for good, as Elliot's story reveals. Today there are sustainability-focused MBA programs, like [Presidio's Sustainable MBA program⁸](#) and [many others⁹](#). Many MBA programs offer sustainability-focused courses, in

order to provide their students with a strong training in sustainable and responsible business. And as more businesses put sustainability first, or even incorporate as [B \(Benefit\) Corporations¹⁰](#), the opportunities for sustainability-trained business leaders will surely grow.

Corporate Sustainability Officer. Companies too often prioritize growth, even at the expense of the environment—and therefore, their own and society’s long-term well-being as well. Corporate cultures are slow to change, but change has started. Many companies now hire consultants like Elliot or even host sustainability officers within the company to help drive change from within. This is an opportunity to improve the environmental effects of the world’s most influential entities. Want to learn how? [Read here¹¹](#) or this [personal account here¹²](#).

Prison Sustainability Educator. Did you know nearly [2.3 million people¹³](#) are incarcerated in the United States? Too few of them have educational or rehabilitation opportunities. Compare that to prisons like [Bastoy high-security prison in Norway¹⁴](#), an island prison where prisoners farm, do forestry, and live in dorms instead of cells. Fortunately, there are programs like the [Sustainability in Prisons project¹⁵](#) that are providing prisoners with cutting-edge skills and helping them become future green leaders in their communities. Prison education is an important career path, to help break this unjust prison cycle. Want to learn more? Read [this article¹⁶](#) and this [essay¹⁷](#).

-
- 1 <https://www.thebalancesmb.com/how-to-write-a-mission-statement-2948001>
 - 2 <http://www.revsustainability.com/>
 - 3 https://www.teachengineering.org/activities/view/wst_environmental_lesson01_activity1
 - 4 <https://revsustainability.com/success-stories/>
 - 5 <https://www.wholeworks-lst.com/greenbiz>
 - 6 <https://environmentalin.com/>
 - 7 <https://sgc.ca.gov/programs/tcc/>
 - 8 <https://www.presidio.edu/academics/mba-in-sustainability/>
 - 9 <https://www.bestcollegereviews.org/top/masters-degrees-sustainability/>
 - 10 <https://benefitcorp.net/>
 - 11 <https://www.careerexplorer.com/careers/sustainability-officer/>
 - 12 <https://impakter.com/choosing-the-harder-path-the-journey-towards-a-job-in-corporate-sustainability/>
 - 13 <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/reports/pie2020.html>
 - 14 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bast%C3%B8y_Prison
 - 15 <http://sustainabilityinprisons.org/>
 - 16 http://earthed.info/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/SOW17_chap19_sustainability-ed-prisons.pdf
 - 17 <https://teach.com/blog/teaching-in-prison-system/>

