



For Tomorrow's Child: An Environmental Epiphany

John Lanier, Ray C. Anderson Foundation
Atlanta, Georgia

☀ Call to Action

To learn more about the Ray C. Anderson Foundation, visit:

www.raycandersonfoundation.org/nextgen/

☀ Values



- Philanthropy
- Commitment
- Innovation
- Environmentalism
- Sustainability

☀ Lessons Learned

It is important for older generations to pass their legacy on to the younger ones.

Are you facing a challenge? Educate yourself. Become an expert. Learn with passion, and then take action.

In business, it's important to explore innovative and novel ways of thinking in order to stay competitive and profitable. Successful businesspeople embrace challenges.

Introducing sustainable practices into a business can make the business more profitable, not less.

It took Ray C. Anderson, founder and CEO of Interface Inc., 60 years to have his environmental epiphany.

While reading *The Ecology of Commerce* by Paul Hawken, Anderson realized that this book basically convicted him of being a plunderer of the earth. This “spear to the chest moment” defined the remaining 17 years of Anderson’s life, as he worked desperately to drive the necessary innovations that would allow his company to take a pledge of sustainability and set the stage for a new way forward in the realm of sustainable business.

For the man who became known as “The Greenest CEO in America,” the work was never about establishing a personal legacy. He believed wholeheartedly that future generations must benefit from business leaders addressing and solving the environmental challenges of the day. “I’m doing this for the generation to come, for tomorrow’s child,” he said. And with his grandson John Lanier leading the way, his grandchildren are carrying on that legacy.

☀ Language Arts

What is “Sustainability in Manufacturing”? Choose one industry (it can be food, building materials, clothing, or something else). Create a presentation (at least 10 slides) in which you explain to your peers what Sustainability in Manufacturing means for the industry you chose.

What is the meaning of the poem “Tomorrow’s Child”? Write an explanation of the poem in which you analyze the images and symbols used and the effect these have on the reader. How is this poem relevant to John’s story?

Ray Anderson evokes the principle of nonviolence in his philosophy of “Do no harm.” Write a 5-paragraph opinion essay in which you defend this philosophy as beneficial not only for

the planet, but also for workers, customers, and businesses in general.

STEM Activities

During Ray Anderson's tenure as the founder and chairman of Interface, the company was able to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 82 percent. Compare the carbon emissions of Interface and three other flooring and carpeting companies. Describe the differences and what some of the contributing factors for each company are.

Research the approximate cost of a sustainable house including the costs of water use, waste, greenhouse gas emissions, and any other factors that are important to you. Make a plan for building your own home using [Interface](#)¹ materials, and an alternate plan using materials from other sustainably focused housing brands. Compare the ecofootprint and the sustainability value for both homes.

- Eco-friendly housing materials you could use include:
 - [Renewed Materials Inc](#)²
 - [Liveroof](#)³
 - [Icestone](#)⁴
 - [Kirei](#)⁵

Electric power in the United States is primarily generated through the combustion of fossil fuels. In this [module](#)⁶, students will explore electricity generation and use, and the resulting greenhouse gas emissions.

Solar panels generate the most electricity when the incoming light is perpendicular to the panel. A solar tracker rotates the panel along one or two axes so that it is always facing the sun directly, which can add up to 25 percent more energy than a fixed panel. In this [engineering activity](#)⁷, students will use the Arduino kit to combine sensors and logic to build a solar tracker.

Sustainability Innovations

In addition to the shift toward more sustainable materials in companies such as Interface, people have become more cognizant of the CO2 emissions that can result from having a large home. [Tiny Homes](#)⁸ have been found to produce only approximately 2,000 pounds of CO2 emissions, compared to the 28,000 of CO2 emissions that an average home in America (2,598 square feet) produces.

[Drawdown Georgia](#)⁹ was founded in October 2020 with the target of creating a low carbon and more diverse future. This nonprofit has identified 20 high impact solutions that target five main sectors: transportation, electricity, food and agriculture, land sinks, and energy.

When addressing carbon neutrality, it is important to address all sectors of the economy: however, the transportation sector has become one of the major focuses of 2021. In January 2021, President Joe Biden announced that he plans to replace the entire government fleet with electric vehicles. Here are some of the companies that are helping to lead this shift:

- [EVgo](#)¹⁰ is the nation's largest electric vehicle fast-charging network, with over 800 fast-charging stations.
- [Wallbox's](#)¹¹ quasar is the world's first bidirectional charger for home use: it allows you to charge and discharge your vehicle so that it can assist in powering your home.
- [Ocean Power Technologies](#)¹² is a pioneer in transforming wave-energy technology into electricity.

Sustainability Career Pathways

Green Business Manager. As John’s grandfather, Ray Anderson, demonstrated, when sustainability is prioritized, business can be a force for good. Today there are sustainability-focused MBA programs--like [Presidio’s Sustainable MBA program¹³](#) and [many others¹⁴](#). Plus, many MBA programs offer sustainability-focused courses, in order to provide a strong training in sustainable and responsible business. And as more businesses put sustainability first, or even incorporate as [B \(Benefit\) Corporations¹⁵](#), opportunities for sustainability-trained business leaders will surely grow.

Foundation Officer: As director of the Ray Anderson Foundation, John has leveraged resources to help make Georgia and the world a more sustainable place. There are more than [119,000 foundations¹⁶](#) in the United States, and they distribute funding to millions of organizations working toward social change. Many of these rely on program officers to vet organizations, and to engage with, and mentor them. These [jobs¹⁷](#) offer an important career path, and lever for social change.

Carbon Mitigation Specialist. Collectively humanity will need to create a carbon-restorative economy by 2050 (which means actually pulling more CO2 out of the air than we are putting in) if we are to slow down and reverse the adverse effects of climate change. That’ll mean a whole new sector of carbon mitigation will crop up in the years to come through afforestation and forest management, effective landscaping, restorative agriculture, energy efficiency, renewables, even painting roofs white to reflect sunlight into space. (These are all sectors that will be offering an abundance of jobs themselves). As [Drawdown Georgia¹⁸](#) demonstrates, to be most effective, these actions will need to be coordinated. Perhaps that’s a job for you? One group, [The Carbon Trust¹⁹](#), demonstrates the integrated approach that specialists can provide.

- 1 <https://www.interface.com/US/en-US/homepage?r=1>
- 2 <http://www.renewedmaterials.com/>
- 3 <https://liveroof.com/>
- 4 <https://icestoneusa.com/>
- 5 <https://www.kireiusa.com/>
- 6 <https://www.clarkson.edu/stem/project-based-climate-modules/power-profiler>
- 7 <https://create.arduino.cc/projecthub/igorF2/solar-charged-battery-powered-arduino-uno-645d89>
- 8 <https://www.aiaa.org/articles/141631-sustainable-and-small-the-tiny-house-moveme:36>
- 9 <https://www.drawdownga.org/beyond-carbon/environment/>
- 10 <https://www.evgo.com/>
- 11 https://wallbox.com/en_us
- 12 <https://oceanpowertechnologies.com/>
- 13 <https://www.presidio.edu/academics/mba-in-sustainability/>
- 14 <https://www.bestcollegereviews.org/top/masters-degrees-sustainability/>
- 15 <https://benefitcorp.net/>
- 16 <https://www.issuelab.org/resources/36381/36381.pdf>
- 17 <https://www.foundationlist.org/top-10-employment-websites-for-finding-foundation-jobs/>
- 18 <https://www.drawdownga.org/>
- 19 <https://www.carbontrust.com/who-we-are/our-mission>

