Sustainable Business Practices:
Prioritizing People and Planet for Profit

Honors College Senior Thesis
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by
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Abstract

Historically, the sole purpose of business was to make money and thereby contribute to society by generating economic growth. Due to shifting consumer demands and a wider view on the role of business in society, this purpose is simply not enough anymore. Consumer mindsets have drastically changed within the past few decades as more and more consumers are aware of the negative effects resulting from the traditional role of business. This heightened awareness has led to a demand for Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) at the forefront of consumer priorities. Businesses must adapt in order to stay afloat in the competitive sea of countless competitors, and a key element of CSR that they can adopt into their practices to increase brand equity and competitive advantage is sustainability. Sustainability and adopting the Triple Bottom Line into business practices is one of the most effective ways companies can increase profits. By undergoing a sustainability audit and assessing the company’s opportunities to engage in sustainable efforts that support people, planet, and profit, businesses can stay competitive and alive in this new age of consumer priorities. Through a sustainability audit for a local Laramie business, this audit works to exemplify how practices that benefit environmental and social sustainability can lead to profit. Businesses that successfully adopt practices surrounding reducing waste, energy usage, and emission outputs, as well as work toward benefitting its communities, can see higher profits as well as a heightened competitive advantage.
Introduction

At its most basic level, the goal of business is to profit. By making profits, businesses contribute to the growing global economy, provide jobs for people, and utilize innovation to make the average life easier. However, profit-seeking is where many business’ purpose begins and ends. Throughout daily operations, businesses employ, create, market, distribute, make money, and then call it a day. While this may have been sufficient in the past, this way of business simply is not enough anymore. Consumer mindsets and values have shifted, and to stay afloat in the competitive sea of companies, business mindsets and values must change as well. Within the past decade, countless studies have demonstrated that consumers prefer companies who prioritize corporate responsibility, and they reward these companies with their money. These studies have found that 86% of consumers believe that companies should stand for societal issues (The Cause Marketing Forum, 2020) and as much as 64% of consumers are willing to switch or abandon brands based on its stand on societal issues (Edelman Earned Brand, 2018).

It is no surprise that businesses have arguably become some of the most influential powers in the world. Think of the average consumer—many align themselves with a handful of brands and consider them a part of who they are. Brands with extremely loyal consumers who are involved with the brand far beyond its product line are a part of a “brand community” (Peckover, 2020). Jeep enthusiasts, for instance, believe that Jeeps are not only something they drive but also a lifestyle they participate in. These consumers that identify with the Jeep brand image consider themselves to be adventurous, thrill-seeking, and exciting. Jeep’s loyal consumer base is an incredible example of a brand community because they engage with the brand outside of the product line regularly. Jeep consumers have even gone as far as to create the “Jeep Wave,” or when one Jeep driver sees another out on the road and they wave at each other, as they are connected in a “Jeep kinship” (Boyle, 2020). With this tie to consumers’ identities, businesses and brands have the power and platform to enact change. Consider Microsoft. Microsoft is one of the largest companies in the world and is also known for being one of the most socially responsible. They advocate for human and social rights, take stands against slavery and human trafficking, support various nonprofits from all over the world, and even match their employees’ donations and volunteer hours (Microsoft, 2020). Both Jeep and Microsoft are examples of how incredibly influential businesses are—they have the power to set customer priorities, influence consumption habits, and make positive changes that consumers connect with.

These changes in consumer mindsets and needs have presented businesses with a choice: to ignore them and sink or adapt to swim in the competitive waters. How has your business adjusted to the changing perceptions and needs of consumers? Product pitching, market research, and frilly advertising will not be able to pull your business out of a hole if you choose to ignore consumers. Thankfully, if you have not been adjusting to these changes, the solution is fairly simple. A permanent and long-term solution to solving this issue starts with listening. What is it consumers are asking for? Brands that are taking stands for bigger issues beyond business while also catering to consumer identities are winning the dollars and loyalty of consumers. By adopting a single word into your business strategy, your business can become a competitive and favorable brand among millions of consumers. That word? Sustainability.
The “S-Word”

Before jumping into how sustainability can be beneficial, it is crucial to understand what exactly it means. Sustainability can be broken down into three categories: economic (money), social (people), and environment (planet). In its simplest terms, sustainability is a balancing act of these three categories, as they are all equally important. Much like a three-legged stool, if one leg is shorter than the other, the stool is unbalanced and therefore breaks. If systems are unbalanced, they too are broken. Sustainability plays a major role in business because businesses, as mentioned above, are powerful forces that play into each of these categories. Business affects the economy quite obviously, but it also affects social issues, like diversity inclusion in the workforce, and the natural environment, such as the usage of natural resources. Because businesses affect these areas of sustainability, it’s important to make sure they are the ones sustaining them, as well. While businesses may have been able to ignore the social and environmental aspects of sustainability in the past, the new emphasis on the role of business in society means ignoring these categories is no longer a viable option.

Sustainability can be daunting; it is a word often loaded with complex emotions and more often than not, common misconceptions. One of the most popular misconceptions is that sustainability is expensive and there is no economic benefit for a business that adopts sustainable measures. However, this perception is wrong. If done correctly, sustainability may not cost your business anything and can end up saving you money. Sustainability can best be understood as an investment. Much like how one might invest their money in the stock market for potential future profits, sustainability is an investment in methods that can generate profits in the future.

The Triple Bottom Line

A term that’s often thrown around when talking about sustainable business practices is “The Triple Bottom Line.” This term was coined by John Elkington in the 1990s and sought to combine the concern of bottom line, which revolves around making a profit, with two other “bottom lines”: social and environmental (The Economist, 2009). While sustainability is concerned with a lot of different entities, the Triple Bottom Line relates specifically to sustainability in business. Much like how sustainability encompasses economic, social, and environment, the Triple Bottom Line focuses on the categories of people, planet, and profit as it relates to businesses specifically.

By adopting the Triple Bottom Line of people, planet, and profit in your business model, you are making efforts towards ensuring your business decisions are benefitting each of these areas. For example, if your business is a restaurant and at the end of every night you are throwing out copious amounts of food, this decision is not necessarily sustainable. How can this decision be altered to benefit people, planet, and profit? Perhaps we can benefit people by donating various food items to a soup kitchen or homeless shelter. This turns what was otherwise waste into a social benefit. What can’t be donated can perhaps be composted, thereby benefiting the environment by saving food waste from going to the landfill. Profit is inherently benefited in two different ways by making these decisions. First, your company can sell the compost to farmers or local gardeners, generating profit off of your business’ waste. Secondly, because your business is practicing corporate responsibility, this improves your image among consumers and community,
who may now be more inclined to support your business. This may even make consumers and
the community prefer your business over your direct competitors, giving you what is called a
competitive advantage. The food that was going to be wasted anyway can now be used to your
company’s advantage. While this example is hypothetical, this is the kind of thinking and
ingenuity that supports sustainability in businesses. Not only can you derive profits from
sustainable alternatives, but you can also achieve a competitive advantage and develop brand
equity among consumers.

The Sustainability Audit

Narratives only go so far to prove a point, so in order to exemplify how implementing the
Triple Bottom Line of people and planet can increase profit and competitive edge, the following
is a sustainability audit for The Crowbar & Grill, a small business restaurant in Laramie,
Wyoming. The audit assesses The Crowbar’s current sustainability standing in regard to social
and environmental sustainability. Then from the current assessment, profit-oriented suggestions
are made to exemplify how prioritizing sustainability generates revenue.
GREEN PLANET CONSULTING

SUSTAINABILITY AUDIT

THE CROWBAR & GRILL
INTRODUCTION

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**WHAT IS SUSTAINABILITY?**

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was going to be wasted anyway can now be used to your company’s advantage. While this example is hypothetical, this is the kind of thinking and ingenuity that supports sustainability in businesses. Not only can you derive profits from sustainable alternatives, but you can also achieve a competitive advantage and develop brand equity among consumers.

**THE SUSTAINABILITY AUDIT**

Narratives only go so far to prove a point, so in order to exemplify how implementing the Triple Bottom Line of people and planet can increase profit and competitive edge, the following is a sustainability audit for The Crowbar & Grill, a small business restaurant in Laramie, Wyoming. The audit assesses The Crowbar’s current sustainability standing in regard to social and environmental sustainability. Then from the current assessment, profit-oriented suggestions are made to exemplify how prioritizing sustainability generates revenue.
This sustainability audit assesses The Crowbar & Grill’s current standing in regard to social and environmental sustainability. From the current assessment, profit-oriented suggestions were made. These suggestions include changes in operation, supply chain, waste management and various other systems to help The Crowbar best meet the needs of people and the planet while maximizing their profits.
SUSTAINABILITY
AUDIT OVERVIEW

ENVIRONMENTAL

- WASTE
- ELECTRIC
- PRODUCT SOURCING
- EMPLOYEES

SOCIAL

- PHILANTHROPY
- DIRECT BUSINESS IMPACT
THE CROWBAR & GRILL: CURRENT ASSESSMENT

The Crowbar & Grill is a restaurant in the Laramie, Wyoming, downtown area. The restaurant serves a variety of food and drinks, from burgers and pizzas to beer and craft cocktails. From a sustainability standpoint, The Crowbar & Grill sits comfortably with a few sustainability measures already in place. The following discusses an assessment of the current sustainability measures at The Crowbar & Grill. This assessment provides a foundation for future suggestions The Crowbar & Grill can implement to improve its standing with the Triple Bottom Line of people, planet, and profit.

ENVIRONMENTAL

WASTE

The Crowbar & Grill already has a few practices in place to make efforts towards reducing the amount of waste it produces. Starting with water waste, The Crowbar & Grill currently uses a chemical dishwasher (low-temp). Chemical dishwashers are not only energy-efficient, as they require fewer amps of electricity to operate, but also utilize chemicals to clean instead of water (KaTom, 2019). This reduces the amount of water the restaurant uses, lessening their water consumption and water waste as well as saving them money by decreasing their water bill.

Food waste is another area the Crowbar actively works to eliminate. By ordering ingredients the restaurant cross-utilizes throughout dishes, the Crowbar not only cuts down on food waste, but when buying its ingredients in bulk, it saves the restaurant more money in the long run.

When looking at landfill wastes, the Crowbar currently practices a handful of actions that divert waste from the landfill. The biggest diversion comes from recycling cardboard. This is a small action that can, in turn, save other resources. Recycling one ton of cardboard saves approximately 46 gallons of oil, 17 trees, and 7,000 gallons of water (Cardboard Balers, 2017). Recycling cardboard also uses 25% less energy than it takes to manufacture new boxes (Recycle Across America, 2020). In addition to cardboard recycling, Crowbar also eliminates plastic waste by using reusable utensils for in-house dining. These utensils are collected after use and cleaned in the chemical dishwasher, thereby saving water, plastic from the landfill, and money from buying plastic utensils.
ELECTRIC

Since The Crowbar & Grill is in Laramie's Downtown district, Rocky Mountain Power supplies electricity to the restaurant. Because of the positioning of the restaurant and the available space, power supplied onsite, such as solar or wind power, is not a viable option. Additionally, the HVAC system in the restaurant is fairly new, as it was installed within the past 8 years, and should be supplying healthy, clean air in the restaurant, as well as running efficiently, keeping unnecessary costs down.

PRODUCT SOURCING

The Crowbar & Grill prides itself on purchasing local meats from The Butcher Block, a butcher just under three miles from the store. In addition to meat, beer is also purchased from locally-based distributors, such as Smith Beverages (Laramie), Cheyenne Beverage, and Teton Distributors (Cheyenne). Both of these measures not only help in eliminating carbon emissions related to the transportation of products but also support the local economy. Purchasing locally crafted beers from breweries such as Snake River Brewery (Jackson, WY) and New Belgium (Fort Collins, CO) will further decrease emissions as they travel a smaller distance than other beers to reach distributors.

EMPLOYEES

Employees at the Crowbar & Grill typically commute to work by car but some, on occasion, bike. The restaurant has three bike racks out front for employee usage but if there isn't space, the Crowbar allows employees to store their bikes in the basement of the restaurant. With Laramie being a smaller town (pop. approx. 30,000), emissions from transportation are not a large concern but it is something worth factoring in. These measures provide employees with the option to come to work while reducing their own carbon footprint.

SOCIAL

PHILANTHROPY

The Crowbar & Grill already has a history of charitable giving, supporting both the Laramie SAFE Project and Laramie Foster Closet. In addition to supporting the two local nonprofits, the Crowbar provides gift cards and in-kind donations to a variety of organizations in town.
ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY: WASTE

In this section, the production and disposal of waste is analyzed from a sustainability standpoint. An analysis was conducted based off the following questions:

WATER
- Are the sinks in the bathrooms and kitchen automatic?
  - Are there hot/cold controls?
- Are the toilets...
  - dual flush?
  - low-flow?
- How are the dishes cleaned?

FOOD
- What is typically done with...
  - leftovers?
  - expired product?
- Is there a compost system?

OTHER WASTES
- What is typically done with empty glass bottles (wine, beer, hard alcohol, etc.)?
- What is typically done with plastics 1-2?
- What is typically done with plastics 3-7?
- Are napkins reusable?
  - If no, what is done with old napkins?
- Is silverware reusable or disposable?
- What do you provide for carry out/to-go containers?
  - Are they made from recycled material? Plastic? Styrofoam? Biodegradable?
ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY: WASTE

WATER WASTE

According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the largest source of water consumption in restaurants—at just over 50%—comes from water usage in the kitchen and dishwashing (EPA, 2019). The Crowbar’s kitchen and dishwasher’s water usage is likely to be less than this statistic considering it uses a low-temp dishwasher, also known as a chemical dishwasher. Low-temp dishwashers are not only more energy efficient because they require fewer amps to operate in comparison to high-temp dishwashers, but they also utilize less water, as they rely on chemicals instead of water to sanitize dishes (KaTom Restaurant Supply, 2019). In this regard, The Crowbar is already making efforts towards water consumption reduction.

Meanwhile, the second-largest source of water usage in restaurants comes from restrooms, utilizing just over 30% of the overall water consumption of the facility (EPA, 2019). The Crowbar has two public restrooms, each with a standard, single-flush toilet, and hot and cold tap sink. While these appliances are functional, The Crowbar may consequently be wasting water while pouring money down the drains. Dual-flush toilets and automatic sinks are a great way to navigate this problem. Dual-flush toilets are similar to single-flush toilets but offer two flushing options—one that uses less water (for liquid waste) and one that uses more water (solid waste). The dual-flush capabilities of the toilet allow for less water waste and a smaller utility bill. Depending on the age of the model, a standard toilet will use anywhere from 5 to 1.6 gallons of water per flush (GPF) while a dual-flush toilet uses as little as 0.8 GPF (Alba, 2019). With this information, we can calculate the average annual amount of water and cost savings:

**Annual cost of single flush toilet:**

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Gallons per flush (GPF)} & = 1.6 \\
\text{Average flushes per day (estimate)} & = 250 \\
\text{Days of operation—no Mondays/Holidays} & = 303 \\
\text{Price of 1 Gallon of Laramie Sewage water} & = 4.60/1000
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\text{\textbf{X}} \quad \text{\textbf{X}} \quad \text{\textbf{X}} = 557.52
\]

Water usage breakdown for restaurants. Graphic from Environmental Protection Agency
Annual cost of a dual flush toilet:

\[
\begin{array}{cccc}
1 & \times & 250 & \times \\
\text{Gallons} & \text{Average} & \text{Days of} & \text{Price of 1} \\
\text{per flush} & \text{flushes per} & \text{operation-} & \text{Gallon of} \\
\text{(GPF)} & \text{day (estimate)} & \text{no} & \text{Laramie} \\
\text{} & \text{} & \text{Mondays/} & \text{Sewage} \\
\text{} & \text{} & \text{Holidays} & \text{water} \\
\end{array}
\]

\[= \$348.45\]

Annual water savings:

\[
\$557.52 - \$348.45 = \$209.07, \text{ per toilet}
\]

\[(2)\times 209.07 = \$418.14\]

These values will fluctuate depending on actual values of daily flushes, average GPF of the dual toilets, and cost of toilets/installation but these are the types of savings The Crowbar can expect to see. With this adjustment, in only 2.4 years, The Crowbar will be saving money from its bathroom.

Automatic sinks are another consideration when working toward a reduction in water usage. In public spaces, it’s hard to ensure that sinks are turned off properly. Sinks left on to drip, leak, and run will waste water and money. Leaving a sink to drip can result in a water loss of one liter per day or 104 gallons a year. With automatic sinks, motion sensors detect hand movement and turn off and on independently, eliminating the risk of having customers leaving the sink on.

In the case of The Crowbar, if both bathroom sinks were left on for an average of three drips per minute over a year, this would result in an annual loss of 208 gallons of water. In Laramie, the going rate for metered water to a commercial building is $3.97 per 1000 gallons, resulting in an annual loss of $0.82. Water conservation is a major concern in Laramie, as the city is a part of the high desert mountain region in Wyoming. Water is a scarce and important resource in this area, so while $0.82 is a relatively small financial loss, water conservation is an extremely crucial consideration (Dr. Krszjzaniek, personal communication, May 6, 2020).
 FOOD WASTE

Feeding America, a national nonprofit dedicated to providing meals to hungry Americans, reports that 72 billion pounds of food is wasted every year despite 37 million people in the country struggling to find their next meal (FeedingAmerica.org, 2020). While hunger is a large national problem, there are even people within the Laramie community that are struggling with hunger. At the University of Wyoming, 37% of students report that they are food insecure, or do not know where their next meal is coming from (Branding Iron, 2019). While The Crowbar cannot solve this problem singlehandedly, they can help combat it while also preventing some of their food from reaching the landfill.

Several organizations in the Laramie community provide meals and food items to those who find food hard to come by. One avenue to explore is bringing leftover food or unused produce to the Laramie Soup Kitchen. The Laramie Soup Kitchen is dedicated to providing free, nutritious meals to those who are food insecure in the Laramie community (Laramie Soup Kitchen: History, 2020). Their policy on accepting premade food requires the food was “prepared in a commercial/licensed kitchen, it was not served on a buffet line and it was prepared and stored in accordance with all health and safety standards,” which The Crowbar should qualify for (Laramie Soup Kitchen: Food..., 2020, para. 3).

In terms of profit for the business itself, these acts qualify as in-kind donations that can be written off at the end of the tax season with proper documentation (receipts from the nonprofit). In addition to direct profit, The Crowbar has the opportunity to build their corporate social responsibility (CSR). Clutch, a digital marketing firm, found in a 2019 survey that 68% of respondents felt that social corporate responsibility and giving back to the local community are among the most important attributes of a company (Cox, 2019). With Laramie being such a tightknit and involved community, through these types of charitable acts, the restaurant will build rapport around having a strong charitable and community presence, driving more support and traffic to The Crowbar & Grill.

In terms of expired produce and vegetable scraps, The Crowbar has previously partnered with the University of Wyoming's ACRES to dispose of compostable material for free, but the current COVID-19 pandemic has changed this. When ACRES resumes collecting these compostable items, The Crowbar could also resume this practice.
OTHER WASTES
RECYCLABLES

As for other solid wastes, The Crowbar currently recycles corrugated cardboard. This is a great first step towards becoming more sustainable. With this, there is an opportunity to become even more sustainable through the recycling and diversion of other solid wastes.

For The Crowbar to obtain a 96-gallon recycling cart for plastics, aluminum, and other approved recycling products, it would cost $4.48 for the cart and additional mosquito spraying fee for $4.89. Pick up for these items is once every other week, so it is likely The Crowbar would surpass the capacity of this cart. In that case, the local landfill offers a recycling service in which The Crowbar can bring up to 170 pounds of recyclables for $5 (JR Slingerland, Laramie Solid Waste Manager, personal communication, May 1, 2020). A variation of these suggestions can be implemented as well, such as buying a cart and taking items to the landfill as space in the cart runs out. Something else to consider is that these systems could be shared with neighboring businesses, in which costs and responsibility of taking items to the landfill can be shared.

Some of the concerns The Crowbar had was not having space for a recycling bin behind the bar area or the time to sort through recyclables. One possible solution for this is taking the trashcan behind the bar and making a divider down the center with a piece of cardboard. Two trash bags will line each side—one for trash and one for approved recyclables. Then the liners can be changed as needed throughout the day and there is no need for sorting after the fact (make sure to unbag the recyclables when disposing of them, as they cannot be accepted by the recycling plant in a bag). To ensure all items end up in the proper receptacles, posters can be made to place on the outside of the can with graphics of common products used in the restaurant and which side they go in (e.g. common recyclables from The Crowbar might include beer cans, plastic from a specific cheese container, etc.).

Example recycling poster featuring “common” waste products for receptacles
In addition to this practice, finding alternatives for products that do not come in recyclable packaging, or switching to items that do not come in packaging at all (package-free), is a way to decrease dependency on packaging while alleviating recyclable and landfill waste significantly. The City of Laramie is unique in its recycling capabilities as items that are generally recyclable, like glass, are not Laramie and must be taken to bigger cities, such as Fort Collins, to be properly disposed of. The city has also made many.

changes in terms of which plastics are recyclable. Currently, the City of Laramie only accepts #1 and #2 plastics, while #3–#7 plastics are no longer recyclable in Laramie. For these reasons, switching to recyclable packaging or products that do not come in packaging is important. For example, switching from a bottled beer to a canned beer is switching from a nonrecyclable item (glass) to a recyclable one (aluminum). Another example of swapping packaging would be finding a product that comes in a nonrecyclable plastic, such as a #5 plastic, and finding a similar product that comes in a recyclable plastic or even package-free.

Finally, buying items in bulk can also alleviate the amount of waste The Crowbar produces. For example, purchasing more beers in kegs reduces the number of aluminum cans that have to be recycled or glass bottles that have to be thrown away. Some kegs are even reusable and can be sent back and forth from the distributor eliminating waste completely.

CARRY OUT OR TO-GO CONTAINERS

The Crowbar currently uses compostable containers and Styrofoam when compostable containers are not available through the supply chain. This is a great foundation for sustainable efforts but much like turning off sinks, consumers are unreliable and making sure compostable containers are disposed of properly is a guessing game. One thing for The Crowbar to consider is incentivizing consumers to bring their own food storage containers from home to package leftovers. Roy Kroeger, a registered environmental health specialist for the Cheyenne-Laramie County Health Department said the department would allow customers to bring their own containers for leftovers but the choice would be left to The Crowbar to enact this type of policy (R. Kroeger, personal communication, May 4, 2020). By allowing customers to bring their own containers, The
Crowbar could phase out disposable containers altogether, eliminating the cost of these items.

Another option would be implementing a system similar to what the Washakie Dining Center on the University of Wyoming campus does. The dining hall issues reusable green to-go containers to students to take food home with them, then students return the container to the dining hall. The Crowbar could consider investing in similar containers for customers to use for a returnable deposit (if they don't return it, The Crowbar charges a fee to cover the cost of the lost container). However, this avenue can be quite expensive upfront, as much as $4.17 per container on top of having to be cleaned in-house upon the return of the container. Regarding conduct surrounding cleaning and sanitation of reusable containers, The Federal Food Code of 2017 states that the container must be provided by the restaurant to the consumer as well as cleaned and sanitized by the restaurant (Federal Food Code, 2017).

The Crowbar may find that storing these containers, upkeep/cleaning of containers, and collection might be too out of reach, so with that in mind, the most cost-effective option for The Crowbar would be to allow customers to bring their own Tupperware or to-go containers to transport their leftovers home with them. There is an opportunity to make this an incentivized program, perhaps giving customers a certain percent or dollar amount off their final bill to encourage customers to bring their own to-go containers.

Note: The current COVID-19 pandemic might push this suggestion to the backburner, but it is something to consider when it is safe to bring personal food containers to businesses again.

NAPKINS

Moving on to napkins, The Crowbar currently uses disposable paper napkins. Paper napkins generate a lot of waste, as the average American will use as many as 2,200 napkins a year (Mindset Eco, 2020). These used napkins will typically make their way to the landfill as they cannot be recycled and, more often than not, cannot be composted. One large factor that contributes to napkins not being suitable for composting is that napkins soiled with grease especially cannot be composted as grease eliminates oxygen in the compost, which is crucial component in the composting process (Mindset Eco, 2020). Most commercially available napkins are sourced from trees, which require water to grow.
With that being said, reusable napkins are a possible alternative, however, it is important to consider the napkin’s material, as some have smaller eco-footprints than others. Reusable napkins are often made from cotton, a crop that requires a great amount of water to produce. The plant will use as much as 20,000 liters (5283 gallons) to yield one kilogram of cotton, which is roughly how much cotton is needed to make a single t-shirt (WWF, 2020). Linen napkins, on the other hand, come from a highly eco-friendly crop called flax, and requires far less water than cotton to produce (Mindset Eco, 2020). Another aspect to consider with reusable napkins is the upkeep and cleaning of the napkins. Reusable napkins would require the restaurant to buy an in-house washer and dryer or hire a service to pick up and clean the napkins, such as Alsco, a linen and uniform rental service in Laramie.

Alsco charges $0.075 per white napkin and $0.08 per colored napkin. These napkins are made from a 65/35 cotton polyester blend, so while they are made from cotton, they are made from less cotton than traditional, 100% cotton napkins. The price of the napkins includes a laundering service and Alsco would pick up the napkins from The Crowbar once a week. If The Crowbar currently uses Alsco for other services, such as apron and towel rentals, this will simply be an additional service and the napkins will be picked up at the same time as the other linens. When it comes to washing the napkins, Alsco washes 1,200 pounds of linen at a time using a chemical washing machine that uses a gallon of water per pound of linen (Galen Corrigan, personal communication, Laramie Alsco representative, May 13, 2020). Compared to paper napkins that use 7 gallons of water per 100 napkins, these cloth napkins will use approximately 100 gallons of water per 100 napkins. While the water usage is higher, reusable napkins prevent trees from being utilized to make napkins and napkin waste.

There are pros and cons to both napkin options as reusable napkins are often made from cotton, which requires a lot of water not only to grow the plant, but to wash the napkins after each use. Disposable paper napkins, on the other hand, require water to grow trees and are disposed of at the end of each use, which contributes to more landfill waste. In terms of cost and profit, the average consumer will use an average of 3 napkins during a meal, which costs approximately $0.03 per napkin (Milliken, 2013). A cloth napkin costs $0.075 per napkin, so in the case of eating pizza or burgers which involve a lot of greases, cloth napkins would be the most cost-effective route as The Crowbar would spend more on paper napkins (3 paper napkins, $0.09 per customer) than you would with a cloth napkin (1 cloth napkin, $0.075 - $0.08 per customer).
If disposable napkins are better for The Crowbar, purchasing recycled napkins is a way to lower water impact. Much like cardboard recycling, it takes less energy to recycle paper. Recycling uses 31% less energy than it takes to make paper from new, raw material. Buying recycled napkins also reduces the amount of water it takes to produce new paper, as well (Mindset Eco, 2020). So, if paper napkins are a more feasible option, recycled material is definitely the way to go.
ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY: ELECTRIC

In this section, the usage and conservation of electricity is analyzed from a sustainability standpoint. An analysis was conducted based off the following questions:

**LIGHT BULBS:**
- What kinds of light bulbs are in the light fixtures?
- Are lights on motion sensors in rooms that do not get regular use, such as bathrooms, closets, etc.?

**ELECTRICITY:**
- Who supplies electricity to the store?
- Does the business purchase green energy offsets for its electricity consumption?
- Which appliances run off of electricity?
  - Are the appliances high efficiency? ENERGY STAR? New or old?

**GAS:**
- Which appliances run off of gas?

**AIR CONDITIONING/HEATING:**
- Is there air conditioning?
  - How efficient?
- What is the heat source for the building?
  - Electric? Gas? Other?
- What type?
  - Baseboard? Forced air? Radiant? Other?
Light bulbs are an easy investment that can save a lot of money. ENERGY STAR certified bulbs, like all ENERGY STAR certified appliances and products, follow a strict set of efficiency guidelines made by the US Environmental Protection Agency. Switching to more energy-efficient light bulbs reduces the amount of energy the light bulbs are drawing, lowering the energy bill, and minimizing the restaurant’s carbon emissions (Energy Efficient..., 2020). Without knowing more specifics on the Crowbar & Grill's lighting situation, it’s difficult to give exact numbers of energy savings, however, this model should give an idea of just how much money can be saved by switching out light bulbs:

By replacing **10 standard light bulbs** with **10 directional ENERGY STAR light bulbs** and leaving them on for an **average of 9.5 hours a day** would result in **86% electricity savings**, amounting to an **annual energy savings of $188 and $733 throughout the light bulbs’ lifetime***.

*This is based on the ENERGY STAR Light Bulb saving calculator

These types of light bulbs can range from **$2-4 apiece** (buying in bulk will lessen the cost). With that in mind:

$3 (average estimated price of bulb) x 10 light bulbs = $30

$188 – 30 = $158 (first year estimated savings)**

$733 – 30 = $703 (estimated total savings over light bulbs’ lifetime)***

**Since these bulbs will last for years, the initial cost of the bulbs will only apply to the first year

***This model will change depending on the number of bulbs replaced and the actual price of bulbs. This is model is an estimate for 10 directional 9.0 W LED bulbs replacing 65 W bulbs.

The Crowbar’s energy savings is estimated to be higher as it’s likely there are more than 10 light bulbs to replace. In addition to replacing light bulbs, another way to save energy and lessen the utility bill would be to rely on natural light as much as possible. In the front entryway, windows allow natural light to come in, so the Crowbar might consider leaving off the lights in the entryway until they are needed.
Due to the way energy is made and distributed, it's almost impossible to know exactly what the fuel source was that produced the energy coming into an establishment. Unless the Crowbar was hooked up to its own solar array or other renewable energy sources, it would be nearly impossible to make sure all of the energy the building consumes is 100% renewable energy. However, there is a way to navigate this through Renewable Energy Credits or RECs. Essentially these credits work to fund renewable energy and are created on the funder’s behalf (Renewable energy..., 2020). So, while the building may not be using renewable energy itself, the Crowbar would be providing funding for this type of clean energy to be made by purchasing said credits.

ELECTRICITY

Rocky Mountain Power supplies energy for all of Downtown Laramie, and fortunately, they have a program in place where RECs can be purchased directly through their Blue Sky program. The Crowbar can participate in this program in one of two ways: budget a dollar amount (as little as $1.95 per month) or choose a percentage of its monthly kWh (kilowatt-hour) usage to fund renewable energy projects. The cost of purchasing RECs is added to the monthly electric bill (Blue Sky..., 2020).

While there isn’t a way to earn direct profits off of funding renewable energy, this is a great practice for the Crowbar to demonstrate their values by “putting their money where their mouth is.” Upon signing up for the Blue Sky program through the Rocky Mountain Power website, the Crowbar is eligible to receive window clings and posters advertising their support of renewable energy. As mentioned before, consumers want to support businesses that practice CSR and make efforts to contribute to their environment and community outside of making profits. As an action, this is a fairly inexpensive way to demonstrate that practice.
GAS

In the cooking world, there is an argument for both sides when it comes to whether cooking food with gas or electric appliances is better. From an environmental standpoint, there really is no preferred fuel source, or at least in the eyes of ENERGY STAR. Both gas and electric appliances can be considered energy-efficient, it just depends on how efficiently the appliance uses that particular fuel source.

The Crowbar currently utilizes two gas appliances: the flat top grill and cooking range. The rest of the appliances are electric. Without knowing the specific type of appliances the Crowbar has, it is difficult to formulate a suggestion. However, there is a complete list of ENERGY STAR certified commercial appliances here. Over the years, as appliances fail, the Crowbar should consider replacing these appliances with energy-efficient ones that will cut costs on the electricity bill and carbon emissions.

AC/HEAT

As mentioned in The Crowbar’s current assessment, the HVAC system is fairly new and has been replaced within the past eight years. This means the system should still be running efficiently and supplying the restaurant with clean air.
ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY: PRODUCT SOURCING

In this section, product and material sourcing are analyzed from a sustainability standpoint. An analysis was conducted based off the following questions:

FOOD SOURCING:
- Where does the restaurant get majority of its:
  - Meat?
  - Dairy products?
  - Produce?
  - Liquor?
ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY: PRODUCT SOURCING

MEAT, DAIRY, AND PRODUCE

The Crowbar receives its meat from the Butcher Block in Laramie, Wyoming, as mentioned in the current assessment. This is a local option that cuts down on emissions and supports the local economy. As for dairy and produce, these items are either purchased through various suppliers such as Shamrock, US Foods, or local grocery stores. Delivery for these items comes as many as three times a week to eliminate the amount of product the restaurant holds at a time and to limit food waste. More deliveries mean a higher carbon footprint but eliminating food waste is also an important sustainability consideration. The most logical situation, in this case, would be to continue efforts to reduce food waste.

WINE, BEER, LIQUOR

Wine and liquor are required to come from the Wyoming Liquor Division, so there isn’t much to suggest in terms of sustainability. However, beer comes from multiple local distributors including Smith Beverages (Laramie), Cheyenne Beverage, and Teton Distributors (Cheyenne). This reduces the Crowbars carbon emissions while supporting the local economy. Purchasing beer from more “local” breweries (think Snake River in Jackson or even the breweries in Fort Collins) is another great way to lessen carbon emissions, as beers from these breweries will travel less far to reach The Crowbar.
In this section, the policies and systems regarding employees and staff are analyzed from a sustainability standpoint. An analysis was conducted based off the following questions:

**TRANSPORT:**
- How do employees typically come to work? Bike? Walk? Drive?
  - Are there spaces designated for employees’ bikes?
- Are there incentives for employees to walk, bike or carpool?
Employees at the Crowbar & Grill typically come to work by car, but some do occasionally bike. The restaurant has three bike racks out front for both customer and employee usage. In the event there isn’t space, the Crowbar allows employees to store their bikes in the basement of the restaurant. Providing these resources and options to employees makes biking to work convenient, which is one of the biggest influences on employee behavior. Ultimately, though, employees are the ones choosing how to get to work. Incentivizing employees to make a greener choice when commuting to work is a way in which The Crowbar can begin to create a corporate culture of sustainability. Small incentives, such as offering to donate a dollar to a local charity or giving employees an extra 10 cents on their paycheck every time they ride their bike/walk to work is a small way to incentivize employees into making sustainable commuting choices. This can also be adapted on a larger scale by offering an additional monthly bonus for those who continually choose greener commuting methods. Incentivizing sustainability gives employees the feeling that the restaurant cares about sustainability in their corporate culture and makes them feel involved in making change.

With Laramie being a smaller town, emissions from transportation are not a large concern but it is something worth factoring in. These measures provide employees with the option to come to work while reducing their own carbon footprint and making a difference in their community.
SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY: PHIANTHROPY

In this section, the business' philanthropies and charitable giving efforts are analyzed from a sustainability standpoint. An analysis was conducted based off the following questions:

PHILANTHROPY AND SOCIAL GIVING:

- Does the business support any:
  - social causes or charities?
  - local organizations?
- Does the business host any fund raisers for social causes/charities/organizations?
PHILANTHROPY

The Crowbar already has many philanthropic efforts in place, including supporting various local nonprofits, as mentioned in the current assessment. Supporting nonprofits and other charitable organizations is a phenomenal way to engage with the community and support social sustainability. Social sustainability is one of the largest ways to participate in CSR and demonstrate to consumers the business is making efforts to do more for society than maximize profits.

By genuinely supporting other causes, consumers will form a positive brand image of The Crowbar and may become more loyal to the business. This can be especially true in tight-knit communities, such as Laramie. A Nielsen study found that 43% of consumers are more likely to buy products from companies that are known for their commitment to their community, and of that percentage, 53% of consumers are willing to pay more for those goods (Nielsen, 2015). The Crowbar's philanthropic efforts could be taken a step further by donating a portion of each sale to a local charity. Even by slightly raising the prices of menu items, the majority of consumers are still willing to purchase them knowing that by doing so, they're contributing to social causes in their community. This is a practice The Crowbar is familiar with, as they have done this before. The success of times this practice was in place could act as an indicator of whether taking this charitable approach would be successful if implemented permanently.

EMPLOYEE INCENTIVES AND SOCIAL GOOD

As mentioned in the employee section of the audit, incentivizing employees to ride their bikes or walk to work by offering to donate a dollar to charity is a small way to make employees feel like their employer cares about sustainability. Project ROI, a study that researched how sustainability and corporate responsibility affect businesses’ competitive advantage and financial gains, found that well-structured CSR programs can increase employee engagement and productivity by 7.5% and 13% respectively. Not only that but CSR programs improve employee retention, decreasing employee turnover rate by 50% and can even increase profits by 20% (Project ROI, 2015). Employees, much like consumers, want to support businesses with established sustainability efforts.
In this section, the business' direct impact on local communities is analyzed from a sustainability standpoint. An analysis was conducted based off the following question:

**DIRECT BUSINESS IMPACT:**

- Does the business donate leftover foods to local food banks/soup kitchens?
SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY:
DIRECT BUSINESS IMPACT

DIRECT BUSINESS IMPACT

Direct business impact looks at how the Crowbar impacts its community through its own products and services. This category highlights some of the opportunities previously mentioned throughout the audit where the Crowbar has an opportunity to make a direct business impact.

- **Supporting local food banks**
  Donating unused produce and leftovers to local nonprofits will not only work to combat food insecurity in the Laramie community but decrease food waste in the Crowbar’s kitchen (See the Waste: Food section for more information).
In conclusion, The Crowbar & Grill already follows some sustainable practices that in turn save them from various expenses. The restaurant has great strengths in social engagement, supporting its community and local organizations regularly. There are a few sustainable measures in place, as well, that work to decrease the restaurant's negative impact on the environment. These actions can be built upon to further increase sustainability in these areas. By implementing a few or all of the suggestions made in the audit, The Crowbar & Grill can continue to become more socially and environmentally sustainable while maximizing profits and increasing its competitive edge among other restaurants in the area.
Conclusion

Sustainability is a daunting word that involves many misconceptions, especially in profit-oriented systems. Many businesses feel that practicing sustainability often hurts their bottom line, but this is a major fallacy. As discussed, and then demonstrated, sustainability is, in fact, profitable. Sustainability can save businesses thousands and thousands of dollars every year by merely investing in better, more efficient systems and reducing waste. Not only are sustainable initiatives beneficial in terms of profits from adoption, but with the current competitive market and changing consumer priorities, it is imperative to stay alive in the marketplace. Changing internal business practices to better meet the needs of people and the planet will not only result in profits but will benefit the business by creating healthier relationships with consumers, promoting loyalty and brand equity in the future.
References


