

Eco-My-Flat Summary Report

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1. Background

In 2007-2008 three summer scholarship students, Lily Duval, Erin Martin and Josie Howitt, created a student competition they called 'eco-my-flat', a word play on the TV show 'Pimp-My-Ride'. The aim of the competition was to 'encourage student flats to make their flats more eco-friendly and to raise awareness of sustainability related issues amongst the wider student community' (Anthony Field, 'Eco-My-Flat Final Report', 2008). The competition involved initial and final flat audits, four workshops, and regular blogs from the competitors. The workshops were skilfully handled by environmental educator Paul de Spa, and the blogs reflected genuine sustainable living changes in the participating flats. The competition concluded after six weeks with an award ceremony at a central Christchurch bar where the winners received prizes, including a trip away to the Caitlins.

Thirty-four flats signed up to the competition. The final report from the competition's two coordinators, Mathew Whiting and Anthony Field,

The changes that were introduced, therefore, were: first, to make the competition a component of a larger, year long sustainable living programme; second, to extend the competition period out to two terms instead of one (i.e. to three months);, and third, to create a space in the second semester for on-going support and development in a non-competitive, empowering setting. Regarding the community building aspect, participants were strongly urged to do some kind of community project. We also put even more effort into the prizes, which included package holidays to Kaikoura and Geraldine for winning flats, along with free giveaways for every workshop valued at over \$100 in total.

These changes did not result in an increased participation rate. Twenty-six flats signed up to the competition, but many of these did not end up participating. About twenty flats participated to varying extents with eleven being clear contenders at the end of the competition. We suspect that the longer duration (and increased potential therefore for clashes with assignments) was the prime reason for this. However, we believe that the longer duration produced much better results for those who made it through to the end.

2. Evaluation Methods

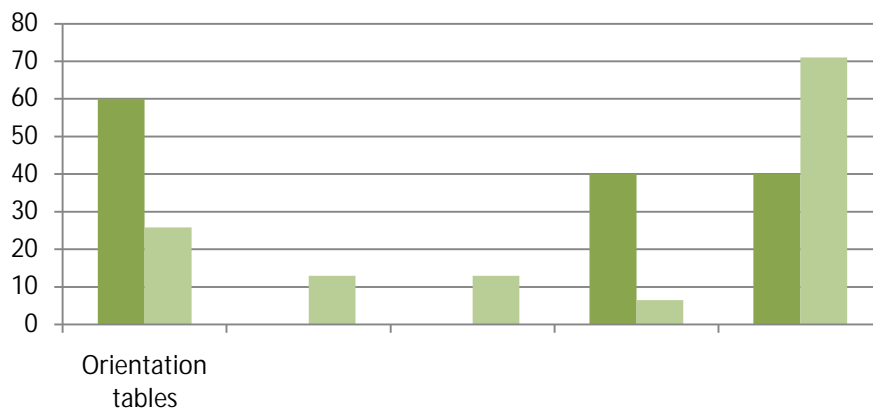
Different evaluation methods have been used for each of the three years the competition has been held.

2.1 Flat Audits

In terms of how the Sustainability Office uses its resources for attracting flats to the competition, it was particularly important for us to find out how they found out about it. Considerable resources went into creating a stand for Orientation, a table at Clubs Days, as well as professionally designed posters and flyers (in 2010), and writing articles for the student magazine *Canta* and the Orientation magazine. We noted that in 2009, 60% of the participants who completed surveys found out about eco-my-flat at Orientation, while in 2010 we were surprised to see that over 70% found out about the competition through their friends.

This result leaves us wondering about how those friends found out about the competition, but we suspect that some of them had participated in an earlier year and we know that several of them had become involved with the Sustainability Office over the summer via the sustainability scholarship programme. This result has led us to put more effort into social media (Facebook) and focussing on supporting the 'eco-my-flat community' with social events. We did find that at Orientation in 2010 numbers of students coming through were less than in previous years due to the advent of on-line enrolments, which certainly had an effect.

How did you find out about the competition?



3.2 Competition Mechanics: Duration, Workshops and Audits

In 2008 the competition organisers reported that they felt the one-term duration was too short. In 2009 over 80% of respondents told us that the duration of the competition (one month) was too short and they wanted it to run for longer. In 2010 we ran it for two terms (three months) and tripled the number of workshops we ran. As a result, 76.7% of respondents felt the competition length was now correct.

How did you find the competition length?

Did you find the workshop information useful?

At the beginning of the competition each flat was audited. This was an opportunity to collect some data about sustainable practices, which was then used in the final judging assessment, but it was also an opportunity for one-on-one, in situ discussion about sustainable living. This was an essential

What were your overall impressions?

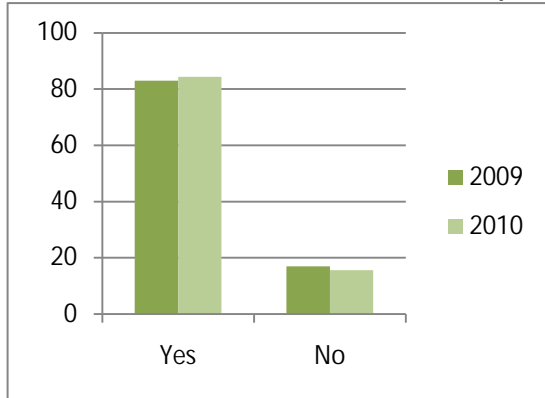
The results of the flat audits and what the students wrote in their blogs are the best way to determine the extent of the changes they made as a result of their participation. For each of the first three years it is clear from both these sources that changes did occur and, in 2010 we were able to gauge to a better extent what the on-going effects were.

A small selection of these blogs helps show the sorts of things the flatters worked on:

“Power showers have been instigated. Each shower must be the length of 1 song. No extended rock ballads (or Enya)” (Avonhead Eco-Warriors, 2008)

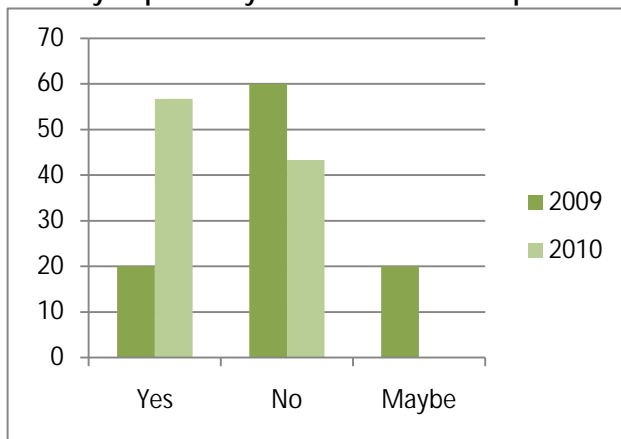
“Have finally got the last one of our ‘special projects’ on the move (will reveal the others soon). Have started manufacturing our own bio-fuel with

More discussion with others as result of participating?



To really make this point, however, we asked participants if they would be prepared to share what they had learned with other students in a workshop setting. We noted a considerable jump between 2009 and 2010 from 20% saying yes in 2009 to 56.7% in 2010. Again, this is attributed to the longer duration of the competition and the sense of community that developed amongst the participants. This gave more opportunity for research, reflection, experimentation and discussion.

Would you present your ideas in workshops?



In both 2009 and 2010 100% of those surveyed said they would recommend eco-my-flat to their friends if it was to run again, which is both a strong vote of confidence and very useful given the high proportion of participants who heard about the competition through their friends. It is important to remember, however, that those surveyed were primarily people who continued with the competition through to its completion. There is still a need a) to increase the numbers of participants and b) to retain more of the initial sign-ups than we managed in 2010.

Recommendations

Length of the competition:

- Maintain the two-term structure of the competition

Audits:

- Maintain the current audit sheets
- Review the reporting mechanism. Currently it is difficult to clearly analyse behaviour changes either from individual or aggregated flats

Workshops:

- Ensure that the workshops are more practical and hands-on
- Run eight rather than nine workshops, so that they finish earlier and don't clash with end-of-semester assessments
- Maintain the one-hour timeframe, but review the topics.

Blog:

- Maintain the blog as an essential component of the competition
- Review blog hosting and processes. Students would like more control of how and when their blogs are posted, and the organisers need the ability to modify posts as required

Community-building:

- Flats wanted more organised inter-flat events and opportunities. Consider mid-competition get-together
- Reconsider venue for Earth Night/ Prize-giving. Somewhere smaller

Promotion/Marketing:

- Distribute posters through UCSA and ensure that Phantom won't cover them over
- Make more mention of free give-aways at workshops
- Make more use of social media (Facebook) to promote the competition
- Review position of stall at Orientation if possible – more visible space
- Hold 'sustainability community' events during Orientation Week, perhaps as part of the whole programme, and use these to actively (rather than passively) promote eco-my-flat
- Distribute the eco-my-flats through relevant cafes

Retention of flats:

- Ensure that at the first workshop we collect email addresses of all attendees
- If flats appear to have dropped out, contact them by phone

Monitoring:

- Refer to the Social Foci recommendations in