WHAT IT’S ABOUT:

The Repair Café International Foundation is a non-profit organization promoting a global movement of community-led repair workshops to address consumption and waste, and build meaningful relationships. It started in Amsterdam and spread quickly across The Netherlands, then Europe, and is now operating in 29 countries including the United States, Ghana, Brazil, and Singapore.

The Repair Café Foundation offers a toolkit and support services to community groups and volunteers, providing a model that is scaling quickly given it is easy to adopt as well as adapt to local contexts, and taps multiple values including sustainability, community resilience, and revitalizing old fix-it skills.

PRINCIPLES IN ACTION

STAKEHOLDER-FOCUSED

Cafés are grounded in local contexts - volunteers lead the effort and the program is free to participate in. At the same time, relying on volunteers can be challenging. Municipalities offering fix-it workshops can borrow from the model yet work with city staff to organize and promote events.

BETTER LIVING

Repair Cafés are based on the concept that everyday people can organize and host fix-it workshops to address waste and consumption and build a strong community by connecting with others that care about these issues and want to do something in response. The rapid expansion of the program around the globe is a clear indication of the effectiveness of taking an aspirational and empowering hands-on approach.
FOSTERING AND COMMUNICATING SUSTAINABLE LIFESTYLES: PRINCIPLES AND EMERGING PRACTICES

**IMPACT**

The Repair Café measures the number of workshops held per year and the items fixed that did not go into the landfill. It estimates the carbon emissions avoided as a result. The organization shares this information in its annual report and online, and communicates with the Repair Café community of volunteers and workshop participants about the growing impact.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Workshops</th>
<th>Objects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>63,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>650</td>
<td>144,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>940</td>
<td>200,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

400,000 kilograms of CO2 saved (source)

**SYSTEMIC**

The Repair Café model connects the challenges of consumer culture with people’s relationships to their own stuff and provides a clear pathway for how community members can work together to reclaim the lost art of tinkering, restoring value to otherwise useless objects and providing a direct alternative to throwing things away and replacing them.

**DYNAMIC LIFE CHANGES**

The Repair Cafés engage fixers of all ages, including providing an opportunity for those who are retired to lend their skills in repair.

**DIVERSITY**

Repair workshops are popular with a wide range of community members, including those wanting to save money, reclaim skills, make new connections, and find alternatives to consumption. They attract people of all ethnicities, ages, genders, and income levels. Volunteers who donate their repair skills feel valued in what otherwise feels like a society that in addition to stuff throws people away too. Stories of participants are effectively captured in upbeat and often emotional videos and blogs, e.g., this video from Repair Café Pasadena or this one from Repair Café Chile.

**COLLECTIVE ACTION**

Tackling waste and consumption as a community is at the heart of the Repair Café model. Video and blog storytelling highlight the benefits of the workshops in action and provide inspiring examples for others to follow. A sense of community is fostered through social media including extensive Facebook networks. The FixItSelfie campaign encouraged collective political action by asking participants to upload images of items they have fixed and attach it to a petition to the EU demanding action is taken to cut waste.
As referenced under the impact principle, The Repair Café Foundation measures workshops held, items repaired, and carbon emissions avoided. Foundation staff provide support to local communities who purchase the toolkit. As a result, they are in constant dialogue regarding effectiveness of the program and ways to evolve it.

COMMUNICATIONS TAKEAWAYS

Connecting with Audiences: Inspire Local Leaders to Act

Most people care about sustainability yet tend to disengage if a clear and meaningful pathway to addressing the challenge is lacking. Peer-based outreach programs help overcome this barrier by having trusted messengers directly illustrate changes that can be made and how to make them. Tap community based organizations and local volunteers to be part of designing and promoting programs.

Framing: Repair Communities, Not Just Stuff

Look for opportunities to frame fix-it programs as vehicles for repairing communities, not just unusable items. For example, the messaging for the Repair Café ties together people’s desire not to get rid of things that should be repairable with an interest in not throwing away people with the skills to fix them.

Strategy: Scale Efforts by Providing a Flexible Framework

Providing tools and training to advance adoption of peer-based programs is critical, as well as leaving room for tailoring to local context. The Repair Café toolkit makes it easy to launch and sustain an effort by providing organizations and community volunteers with the resources needed to plan, host, capture, and evaluate the outcomes of fix-it workshops yet local organizers design and promote the workshops.

Tactics: Selfies Can Play a Role: See Yourself as a Change Agent

Seeing is believing so sustainable lifestyle campaigns such as the Repair Café’s FixItSelfie initiative can gain relevance and exposure by encouraging the sharing of images of solutions in action via Instagram, Facebook, and other social media platforms.

MORE INFORMATION

https://www.theguardian.com/sustainable-business/design-repair-empowering-consumers-fix-future
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XKMZ1wx1c2s
http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/earthrise/2013/07/20137281181568146.html