

A Path to Sustainable Success

2025 Student Case Study Competition Topic

Background: Clark's Market is an independent grocery retailer with 11 storefronts across the Rocky Mountain region. Clark's Market prides itself on providing fresh, quality products to its customers and supporting the community. Recently, the leadership team has expressed interest in minimizing the company's environmental footprint and is eager to improve sustainability metrics to reflect their commitment to both community and environmental responsibility.

Objectives: Clark's Market has identified two key areas to focus on for enhancing sustainability:

1. Implementing a program across all stores to reduce food waste. The company needs a system that is easy to maintain, complies with local regulations, and could possibly partner with local farms or composting facilities.
2. Optimizing product merchandising to emphasize sustainable and eco-friendly choices. This could include prioritizing local, organic, or fair-trade items and reducing reliance on single-use plastics.

Clark's knows that increased sustainability isn't just good for the environment but will create operational efficiencies as well. They want to clearly understand the operational impacts of their sustainability changes to create the business case for sustainability. This understanding will help team members better understand how initial investment costs will balance out in the long term.

Clark's Market also wants to develop a marketing plan that will effectively communicate these sustainability initiatives to both their employees and customers, aiming to increase engagement, brand loyalty, and awareness of the environmental impact of their choices.

Questions and points to address in solution presentations:

1. Clearly define the business case that these sustainable initiatives will create for Clark's Market. What return on investment can be expected, and when?
2. What are the most important factors to consider when starting a food waste minimization effort, and what are the key metrics to track throughout implementation to measure effectiveness?
3. How can Clark's Market optimize product assortment, placement and signage to educate customers on sustainable choices without overwhelming or confusing them?
4. What key messages and marketing channels should Clark's Market prioritize in their marketing plan to effectively communicate their sustainability initiatives to both customers and employees?
5. What partnerships formed across the grocery industry and supply chain would help small and middle-sized independent grocers make a meaningful impact on sustainability metrics?