



Power Down Fridays:

How NTC Is Redefining Sustainability Through Culture, Not Just Compliance

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Executive Summary

As the world races through the energy transition to adopt scalable, people-centered climate solutions, one organization has taken a bold and transparent approach: **Power Down Fridays**, a sustainable workplace initiative launched by The National Theatre for Children (NTC).

What started in 2023 as a seasonal experiment in energy reduction and employee well-being benefit quickly produced dramatic results—a **56% reduction in summer energy consumption over two years**, with no negative impact on productivity or morale. It was a clear, measurable win.

But in 2025, something unexpected happened: **no additional energy reduction** was recorded—despite the same internal practices and the same enthusiastic participation from staff.

Rather than seeing this as failure, NTC recognized it as a **turning point**.

Through deeper analysis, we discovered that the issue wasn't internal fatigue or inconsistency—it was a **breakdown in communication with external users of our facilities**, including vendors and renters who were not brought into our power-down protocols.



The Lesson: Walking the Talk Isn't Enough—We Have to Talk the Walk

This white paper tells the full story:

- How Power Down Fridays delivered double-digit energy savings in its first two years
- How cultural buy-in and behavior change drove unexpected success
- And how Year 3 revealed a critical insight: **sustainability requires alignment not just internally, but with every stakeholder connected to your operations**

NTC's experience is more than a case study in energy savings—it's a candid, evolving blueprint for how **values-driven leadership** can create measurable impact, even when the path forward isn't linear.

If your organization is committed to meaningful climate action, this is your roadmap for turning good intentions into lasting, adaptable practice.

The Origin: Linking Climate Action to Employee Well-being

In June 2023, NTC's CEO Margaret Eames and President Patrick Rowan set out to give staff a summer of "purposeful restoration." They introduced Power Down Fridays—a 10-week initiative that combined:

- Half-day Fridays (no PTO required)
- Remote work Friday mornings
- Full technology and building power-down by noon
- Tracking energy usage via kWh meters

The idea wasn't just about energy savings—it was about aligning internal practice with NTC's external mission. As an implementor of energy efficiency education and behavior change programs, the question became unavoidable:

"Do we practice what we preach?"

NTC leadership understood that energy consumption concern does not always translate into action—not because people don't care, but because they often **lack structure, support, or incentives**. By tying environmental responsibility to **work-life balance**, NTC attempted to make sustainability not just accessible, but appealing.

Year One Results (2023): A Cultural Win with Measurable Impact

By August 2023, the program had produced remarkable results:

- **29.72% reduction in kWh usage** compared to the previous summer
- **Increased morale** across departments
- **Zero loss in productivity**
- **Avoided emissions** from reduced commuting and unplugged home offices (though not fully quantifiable)

Perhaps most important, the cultural shift was palpable. Staff began to see **the direct connection between their personal actions and environmental outcomes**, reinforcing key behavior change principles that NTC teaches in its own EE programs.

Year Two Results (2024): Proof of Concept and Behavioral Momentum

In summer 2024, NTC kept the same structure—but wanted to test if the results could hold. They didn't just hold—they improved:

- **34.5% decrease in kWh usage compared to 2023**
- **56% cumulative reduction from 2022 compared to 2024**
- Continued high levels of staff engagement and enthusiasm

The difference? **Behavioral reinforcement**. Staff who had participated in Year One became champions of the process, encouraging others, building routines, and celebrating progress.

"We hyped up our colleagues to beat last year's results," said Eddie Eames, Director of Client Success. "It became part of who we are."

Additional improvements included:

- Upgrades to **energy-efficient equipment** (monitors, servers)
- More refined **power-down checklists**
- Stronger alignment between operations and climate education values



Connecting the Dots: Behavior, Policy, and Planetary Impact

NTC's Power Down Fridays program aligns with a growing body of global research advocating for shorter work weeks as a climate solution. Studies show:

- A 10% reduction in work hours correlates with an 8.6% drop in carbon footprint (Schor et al., 2012)
- Fossil fuel usage drops by nearly 10% on weekends in the U.S. (U.S. Energy Information Administration)
- Trials in Iceland, the UK, Spain, and New Zealand have shown similar positive impacts on energy savings, employee well-being, and carbon reductions

As **Juliet Schor**, economist and lead researcher for the 4-Day Work Week Global movement, explains:

"Although climate benefits are the most challenging to measure, we have a lot of research showing that over time, as countries reduce hours of work, their carbon emissions fall."

NTC's program embodies this principle at a micro level. It proves that **structured time off, done thoughtfully, can lead to macro-scale results.**



What Makes Power Down Fridays Work

1. It's Not a Sacrifice

Unlike many climate actions framed around “doing without,” Power Down Fridays gave employees more of what they want—**time**. This flips the narrative: sustainability becomes a **benefit**, not a burden.

2. It's Measurable

NTC didn't just guess—it measured outcomes. Metered kWh readings before, during, and after the initiative provided hard data to support the anecdotal success.

3. It's Behavior-First

By focusing on **habit-building**, **peer influence**, and **social norming**, the program tapped into the same psychology that drives its climate education efforts.

4. It's Scalable

Any organization—nonprofit, corporate, or governmental—can adapt this model. It doesn't require massive investments, just leadership buy-in, cultural alignment, and intentional planning.

From Internal Policy to Global Possibility

NTC's journey underscores a vital truth: organizational culture can be a powerful lever for climate action.

Most climate policies focus on technology or regulation, but the human element—how people work, live, and make choices—is often overlooked. Power Down Fridays shows how even a modest shift in the workweek structure can ripple outward:

- Reducing commuting-related emissions
- Changing energy consumption patterns
- Creating champions of change within organizations
- Strengthening team morale and retention
- Aligning internal actions with public-facing values

As NTC's President Patrick Rowan noted, “Energy is consumed by people—and people make decisions. If we can change the decision-making culture, we can help to change the world.”

Year 3 (2025): A Wake-Up Call, Not a Step Back

In the summer of 2025, NTC continued the Power Down Fridays tradition with the same commitment, the same practices, and the same cultural enthusiasm that drove success in Years 1 and 2. Yet, when the energy data came in, we were surprised—and admittedly disappointed—to find **no measurable reduction in kWh usage compared to 2024.**

At first, we questioned whether behavior change had plateaued. But a closer audit of building usage revealed the real issue: **our facilities were increasingly rented out to vendors and community partners during weekends and off-hours**, and we had **not extended our sustainability expectations to them.**

Our Ah-Ha Moment! Walking the Talk Isn't Enough—We Have to Talk the Walk

NTC has always taken pride in aligning its values with its operations. And Year 3 taught us that alignment must extend beyond the walls of our own team. In our growing partnerships and facility-sharing model with three production studios in our home office in Minneapolis, we hadn't fully communicated the importance of our Power Down principles—or the specific actions that support them.

What we learned:

- **Sustainability doesn't scale automatically.** As an organization grows, expands, or diversifies its activity, energy-saving practices must be **recommunicated and institutionalized.**
- **External vendors, contractors, and partners need onboarding** into sustainability expectations—not just access to our space.
- **Measurement without context** can be misleading. If we hadn't done the deeper analysis, we might have assumed staff behavior had regressed, when in fact it remained strong.

In short, behavioral consistency isn't enough; expectation setting and external alignment are equally critical.



Conclusion: Sustainability Requires Leadership at Every Level

NTC's Power Down Fridays began as an internal behavior change initiative—but our experience in Year 3 revealed something more powerful:

True sustainability requires leadership beyond your internal team.

It's not enough to talk the talk behind closed doors. Organizations must **proclaim their values, codify their expectations, and extend their vision outward** in the open—to vendors, partners, clients, and community stakeholders.

A More Complex, More Complete Model of Change

NTC's journey—from early success, to overperformance, to unexpected stagnation—mirrors the broader arc of climate action. Initial wins can come quickly with energy and commitment, but for systems to truly change, it requires ongoing communication, accountability, and adaptive leadership.

The lesson for others is clear:

Your organization's sustainability doesn't end at your internal culture—it begins there.



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