THE OROECO SUSTAINABILITY RATINGS PLATFORM

Making corporate sustainability information into a public good

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Acknowledgements

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Executive Summary

Purpose and Background

Oroeco, a website and application-based service that allows users to track the climate impacts of their everyday decisions, recently launched a beta version of a new, interactive social platform that features sustainability ratings of individual publicly-traded companies. The Dow Sustainability Fellows team worked with Oroeco to develop a go-to-market strategy and improve the beta version of the platform. The goal of the platform is to promote sustainable corporate practices and to unlock more informed decision-making by mobilizing the interests of a range of stakeholders, including consumers, investors, and experts (including scholars and non-governmental organizations).

Methodology

To help achieve this goal, the team interviewed experts and users, created a "first-time user walk-through" for the platform, developed an online landing page for experts to learn more about the platform, and tackled a number of technical issues to make the platform easier to access. The team also identified sustainability experts to target for involvement and outlined a communication strategy to encourage their participation.

Results & Recommendations

To improve the platform, the team conducted user experience surveying and research to collect a range of attitudes and reactions to the platform. This research yielded two key high-level insights: (1) users thought that the overall idea for the platform was compelling, and (2) users were confused about how to use and navigate the platform. In

response to these findings, the team created a "first-time user walk-through," which orients new users to the site and demonstrates, step-by-step, how to contribute comments. In addition, we identified several technical fixes to improve the usability of the platform and recommended an efficient way to embed individual brand information on each company's page on the platform. But this brand information had to be created—with more than 6,000 companies featured on the platform and little publicly-available brand and subsidiary information, we created an original database for Oroeco by crowdsourcing information using Amazon's Mechanical Turk as well as designing and executing a web crawler program to automate the task. These enhancements to the user experience were instrumental to our other objective of developing a go-to-market strategy to get expert users to populate the platform with original and compelling content.

As the basis of our go-to-market strategy, we identified nonprofit and NGO employees as the best initial target of outreach efforts to build up an expert user base. Employees at certain organizations, especially watchdog or industry-specific organizations, potentially carry a wealth of knowledge to contribute to the platform and are also motivated in harnessing the platform as a means of amplifying their voice. Consultation with our faculty advisor, Jim Price, suggested that the best way to grow a user base was twofold: (1) start with a small group of users and (2) leverage referrals to grow from there. To further narrow our focus, we analyzed industries represented on the Oroeco platform and identified two target industries to direct early user activity toward: electronics and paper/forest products, two areas that attract substantial NGO involvement globally. Finally, we crafted a value proposition to engage with experts. Based on expert interviews, we generated emails to send to potential target users.

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1. Background and Introduction

1.1 History of Oroeco

Oroeco is a small, San Francisco-based company that was started by Ian Monroe, a lecturer in the School of Earth Sciences at Stanford University. Through a website platform and a mobile application, Oroeco offers an information management service that allows users to track the carbon footprint of their personal transportation, consumption, and/or investment decisions. Users can see which decisions have bigger impacts than others, and they can compare their performance relative to their peers, earning points and prizes along the way. The platform makes it fun and easy to track the climate impacts of routine daily decisions. It currently has several thousand active users.

While working on Oroeco, Monroe discovered that one of the biggest impacts on people's carbon footprints is their financial investments (e.g. 401ks, index fund investments, etc.), among those who have them. In other words, people's investments in financial products were driving a disproportionate share of their total carbon emissions. With this in mind, Monroe decided to start an investment company that would help consumers invest in financial products with lower carbon emissions. This company, Etho Capital, manages an exchange-traded fund that focuses its investments in companies with strong sustainability records. Etho Capital's investment strategy is premised on the idea that efficient, sustainable, and forward-looking companies make the best investments. While simple in principle, this idea presents a fundamental challenge: how can the companies be identified? Environmental, social, and governance (ESG) data abound, but how can we *really* gauge a company's sustainability performance? And could we help to

influence companies to improve their sustainability performance along the way? These questions were at the genesis of the Oroeco Company Sustainability Ratings Platform.

1.2 Overview of the Platform

The Oroeco Company Sustainability Ratings Platform is an online, web-based platform that features sustainability ratings for more than 5,000 companies in an easy-to-use, Yelp-like format. This new platform is built so that existing users of the Oroeco social platform have access to it, although it has not yet been marketed to existing users or linked to from the existing platform, since it has been in the development phase.

Users can search for specific companies, or they can browse the platform by searching according to industry or sector. Each company profile displays its summary scores in several sustainability categories that have been created by Oreoco. But the core of the platform is the comment and voting component: users can contribute comments about the sustainability performance of individual companies and can "upvote" or "down-vote" companies depending on the users' own perspectives.

1.3 Platform Functionality

The Oroeco platform has two key functionalities. First, it provides users with the option to search its database of thousands of companies to view their sustainability performance along four key dimensions: climate, environment, social, and governance (see Figure 1 below). Each company profile is assigned summary scores ranging from "A" to "D" for each category. These scores are calculated by Oroeco from a combination of proprietary Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) datasets. This information provides

upfront, initial value for users, especially in this early stage where most companies still lack any user-submitted content.
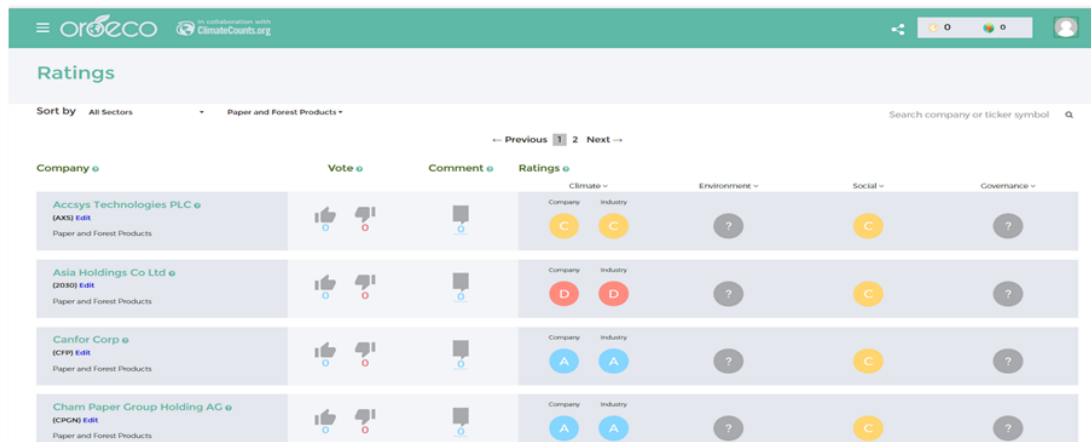

FIGURE 1: The platform allows users to search for companies and view their ratings.

The platform also allows users to comment on and rate companies in a similar format to other crowdsourced ratings apps like Yelp. But it also has an additional feature, which is key to the go-to-market strategy our team recommended: while anyone can comment, those who have "expert" user status (verified through LinkedIn by the Oroeco team) receive a special designation showing their affiliation next to their names (see Figure 2). This amplifies the insights of users designated as experts.
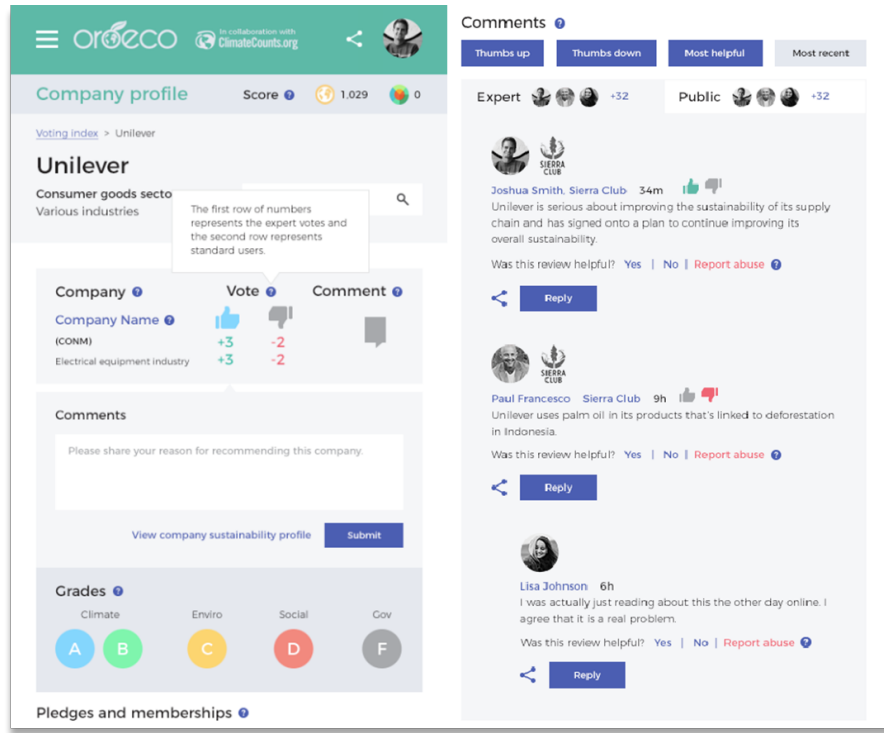
FIGURE 2: The platform allows users to rate companies on the platform, much like Yelp.

The platform's value, of course, is derived from the contributions and engagement of its user base. As a new beta-version platform, Oroeco's most pressing challenge was to attract a critical mass of users who have valuable insights and come from a variety of backgrounds. Our project was to help Oroeco take steps to achieve this goal. Specifically, we set out to (1) improve the usability of the platform, and (2) develop a go-to-market strategy to populate the platform with a body of experts.

2. Goal and Theory of Change for the Platform

The Oroeco Company Sustainability Platform aims to influence company behavior by mobilizing a range of stakeholders. The team identified five broad categories of potential users: businesses, academics, nonprofits, investors, and individual consumers. Each of

these stakeholder groups derives value from the platform in a different way (see Figure 3 below). Individual consumers, for instance, can use the platform to inform their purchasing decisions. Likewise, investors can use the platform as a resource in identifying sustainable companies as potential investment targets. Experts, including scholars and nonprofit advocacy organizations, can engage with the platform to amplify their voices in the area of their expertise. Together, these stakeholder groups have the potential to influence company behavior. Companies may be particularly responsive, for example, to concerted action on the part of individual consumers or investors when these stakeholder groups are motivated by a common concern. The platform strives to provide interested stakeholder groups with actionable sustainability information, and to leverage the role of experts in this process.
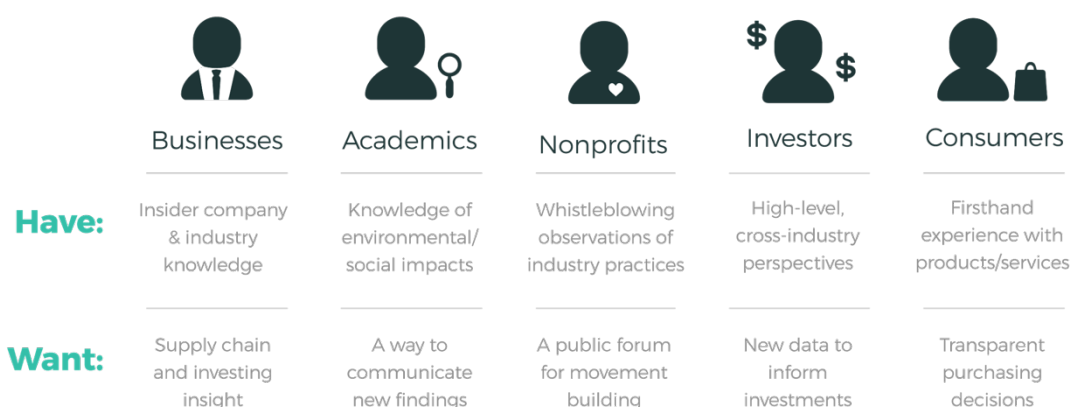

FIGURE 3: User categories identified by the Dow Fellows team, along with use cases for each.

2.1 Individuals' Influence on Companies: Consumer Activism

Individual consumers play an essential role in the platform, both as producers and users of information. While the platform rates companies based on sustainability data

sourced mainly from CSRHub,[1] as the platform grows, any given company's reputation on it will be shaped in part by inputs from individual users; the platform provides a forum for dialogue on current sustainability practices and features consumers as producers of information. Individual consumers may influence company behavior even more directly, however, by using the information on the platform to inform their purchasing decisions. Of course, the purchasing decisions of a single consumer, in isolation, are relatively insignificant for purposes of influencing company policy. But when a large enough group of individuals is motivated to make purchasing decisions on the basis of common information, the resulting expression of consumer preference can be significant enough to effect change at the corporate level.

Consumer activism works in two directions: individuals can consciously refrain from purchasing products or services from a company whose practices they find objectionable (a boycott), or individuals can proactively support sustainable companies with their patronage. There have been a number of successful consumer activism campaigns over the last couple of decades. For example, in response to consumer pressure, Nestle pledged to stop deforestation for palm oil in its supply chain, Kimberly-Clark changed its paper procurement policies to reduce deforestation, and Staples increased the recycled content in its paper products.[2] Likewise, there are companies and business lines today, like Tesla Motors and GE's Ecomagination, that command over a billion dollars in revenue while touting products that are oriented around sustainability.[3]

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[1] CSRHub is a leading source of corporate social responsibility ratings and information. See https://www.csrhub.com/.
[2] These and other examples of successful consumer activism campaigns can be found at http://www.ethicalconsumer.org/boycotts/successfulboycotts.aspx.
[3] See E. Freya Williams, Green Giants (2015).

In some cases, the threat or possibility of consumer activism may be enough to spawn anticipatory change in corporate policy. Companies are ultimately beholden to their customers to maintain profitability: if enough customers demand sustainable business practices, companies will be forced to listen.

2.2 Investors' Influence on Companies

Just as companies can be held accountable by their customers, they may be similarly responsive to the demands of investors. The options for environmentally-conscious investors parallel those of individual consumers, that is, investors can avoid or offload investments in unsustainable companies ("exclusionary investing" or divestment), or investors can proactively seek out investments in sustainable companies ("impact investing").

The mechanisms by which investment decisions influence company policy are less direct than those of purchasing decisions by consumers. In theory, exclusionary investing (screening out unsustainable investments) leads to less demand for a company's stock, which exerts downward pressure on share prices and thus increases the company's cost of capital.[4] The extent to which this produces lower share prices in practice is subject to debate, as there is usually demand for the same investments among neutral investors.[5] In any case, divestment campaigns can be part of a successful strategy of exerting influence on particular companies or industries, particularly when they generate publicity and widespread stigmatization. The campaign for fossil fuel divestment, which began on

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[4] Robert Heinkel et al., "The Effect of Green Investment on Corporate Behavior," 36 *Journal of Financial and Quantitative Analysis* 431, 431 (2001).
[5] *See* William MacAskill, "Does Divestment Work?," *New Yorker* (Oct. 20, 2015). Available at https://www.newyorker.com/business/currency/does-divestment-work.

college campuses in the United States, is a good example. A 2013 study from the University of Oxford concluded that the stigmatization process triggered by fossil fuel divestment "poses the most far-reaching threat to fossil fuel companies and the vast energy value chain," more so than any direct economic impacts of divestment.[6]

Meanwhile, investors appear to have a growing appetite for sustainable investments. Over the last few years, mainstream financial firms such as BlackRock and Goldman Sachs have launched investment products that take into account environmental, social, and governance (ESG) factors.[7] One study found that a clear majority (60%) of executives in publicly traded companies believe that good sustainability performance is important to investors.[8] While some investors may be attracted to sustainable investments purely for ethical reasons, there is mounting evidence that sustainable investments also tend to be profitable.[9] Indeed, Etho Capital's investment strategy is premised on the idea that climate efficiency is positively correlated with financial performance.[10]

Companies are taking notice – the voluntary disclosure of company sustainability data has become a best practice for major companies around the world. While these disclosures are available to several audiences, including employees and the general public, they seem to be driven in part by investors' desire to consider sustainability performance when weighing investment decisions. This indicates that investor behavior,

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[6] Atif Ansar et al., "Stranded Assets and the Fossil Fuel Divestment Campaign: What does Divestment Mean for the Valuation of Fossil Fuel Assets?", University of Oxford Smith School of Enterprise and the Environment, Stranded Assets Programme (October 2013).
[7] Alex Davidson, "'Sustainable Investing' Goes Mainstream," *Wall Street Journal* (Jan. 13, 2016). Available at https://www.wsj.com/articles/sustainable-investing-goes-mainstream-1452482737.
[8] Gregory Unruh et al., "Investing for a Sustainable Future," *MIT Sloan Management Review* (May 2011).
[9] *See, e.g.*, "Sustainable Reality: Understanding the Performance of Sustainable Investment Strategies," Morgan Stanley Institute for Sustainable Investing (March 2015) (finding that sustainable investments have usually met, and often exceeded, the performance of comparable traditional investments on both an absolute and risk-adjusted basis across asset classes and over time.
[10] See https://ethocapital.com/go-in-depth.

whether manifested as exclusionary investing or impact investing, may have an appreciable impact on company policy.

2.3 The Role of Nonprofits and Experts

While recognizing that investors and individuals as consumers are capable of influencing company actions, it bears emphasizing that this influence is collective, i.e., it is effective only when a significant number of actors is involved. Thus, the notion that consumer activism or sustainable investing act as constraints on company behavior presumes that (a) consumers and investors are *informed*, and (b) consumers and investors are *motivated* to act in a concerted way. Thus, the role of information is key in in the process of coalition-building among consumers or investors. Specialized nonprofits or nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) fulfill an important advocacy role in furnishing the public with information about certain causes or issues of general concern. Often, consumer activist campaigns may be associated with one or more of these advocacy organizations. Elaborating on an example from above, when Kimberly-Clark changed its paper procurement policies in response to consumer pressure in 2009, this was hailed as a victory by Greenpeace after a five-year advocacy campaign by that organization.[11] Likewise, there have been a number of climate sustainability organizations associated with the movement surrounding divestment from fossil fuels.[12]

The Oroeco platform provides a forum for such nonprofit organizations, and the experts they employ, to advance their message. These organizations, with their

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[11] "Victory for the Boreal Forest! Kimberly-Clark Announces New Paper Policy," *Greenpeace*, (Aug. 5, 2009). Available at http://www.greenpeace.org/international/en/news/features/victory-for-the-boreal-forest/.

[12] One of the more visible organizations associated with this movement is 350.org. *See* "350 Campaign Update: Divestment," available at https://350.org/350-campaign-update-divestment/.

specialized expertise, can offer information about certain companies, industries, or products which may not be available from other sources. This information, in turn, may be taken into consideration by individuals when making purchasing decisions, or by investors who seek to invest in sustainable companies.

3. Project Work and Methods

We focused on two main objectives for our project work with Oroeco: (1) improving the platform and (2) getting experts on board.

With regard to improving the platform, our goal was to make it as easy to use as possible and streamline the user experience for experts and members of the public who sign on. Making the platform easy to use, we reasoned, would encourage experts to add more comments and visit the site multiple times. We also thought that making the platform easy to use would make experts more likely to refer their friends to it, which was critical for our second objective.

That second objective was to get experts on board. Here, we wanted to motivate a range of sustainability "experts" to use and share their knowledge on the platform. Along with Oroeco, we defined these experts as anyone who had significant knowledge about companies' sustainability track records. These could be anyone from academics (i.e. professors, post-doctoral scholars, Ph.D. students, research scientists, etc.) to nonprofit professionals to current or former employees of companies listed on the platform with knowledge of that company's sustainability practices. Once these experts start to populate

the platform with their knowledge, we thought, the general public and investors would be more likely to find value from the platform and contribute to it.

3.1 Improving the Platform

Improving the platform was not among our goals at the outset of the project. During the initial conversations with our client, we believed that our efforts would be focused mostly on marketing the platform and expanding its user base. As we spent more time on the platform, however, we identified a number of fixes that could help make the platform more usable, which in turn was critical for gaining traction on the efforts we put towards marketing it. Once we decided that it would be valuable to make changes, we had to identify which changes were most critical to make, and more importantly, justify those recommendations to our client.

To identify the most critical changes, the team decided to conduct a round of user research. We determined that this would be the best way to confirm that our ideas for improving the platform were consistent with the attitudes of a larger sample of people, and perhaps discover other suggested improvements that we had not thought of. User research typically consists of a mix of qualitative and quantitative questions asked to a user, typically in a semi-structured interview format. We spoke to several experts who explained that 9 to 10 interviews would be sufficient to identify generalized themes in this context.

Our first step was to build a "script" and list of questions to use in our interviews. We decided to start the interviews with a short introduction to Oroeco in order to orient survey takers to the platform and help them understand the context for the site. We

drafted a short paragraph which we either read from or paraphrased in the start of our interviews. Next, we developed a list of quantitative and qualitative questions to help guide the interviews and to ultimately allow us to uncover insights about possible changes to the platform. First, we asked users to go to the platform and spend five minutes "exploring" the platform as they normally would, and then use three adjectives to describe their experience on the site. Our goal here was to elicit first impressions and initial reactions from our users. Next, we asked users to dive deeper and describe which functionality they liked and didn't like. Then, we helped users navigate to ratings of a specific industry. We asked them how much they trusted or distrusted company ratings within that industry on a scale of 1 to 5. Then, we asked them how much the platform could align with their purchasing decisions, a question designed to help inform eventual outreach to consumers. This question also had a rating of 1 to 5. Finally, we asked users what text, images, or messages they would remember after leaving the site. This question was designed to help us identify what was most salient to users on the site.

Table 1: Overall impressions of the platform from user research (total: 3 words x 9[13])

Negative (13, 48%)	Neutral (6, 22%)	Informative (4, 15%)	Strongly positive (4, 15%)
Confused Disorganized Frustrated Text-heavy Bare Overwhelmed (3) Skeptical Stiff Cluttered Complicated Lost	Clean (2) Loose Basic Simple Orderly	Semi-informative Colorful Informative Educational	To-the-point Encouraging Curious Intrigued

In the aggregate, this user research led to two key findings: (1) users thought that the overall idea for the platform was compelling and useful, and (2) users were confused about how to use the site. As a result of these findings, we decided to create a "first-time user walk-through" to help orient new users to the site and help them figure out what to do first. We later featured this walk-through on the landing page for experts and it is now available on every page of the platform.

For the first-time user walk-through, we put ourselves in the shoes of a first-time user and tried to imagine what questions they might have. Using the findings from our research, we generated a step-by-step guide to help users create an account, link it to their LinkedIn profile, search for companies, and post their first comments. We also provided several examples of clear and concise comments to serve as models for new users to

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[13] One interviewee did not complete this part of the interview, which is why there are 9 instead of 10 sets of words.

reference while drafting their own comments. This was seen as vital by our client, as well, who expressed an interest in setting a positive and intellectual culture among users by setting good examples from the start.

3.2 Getting Experts on Board

Our second objective proved more complicated. Engaging experts required several steps:

1. Identifying the ideal experts to target

2. Figuring out *how* to target experts

3. Figuring out *what* to say to experts (e.g. the best messaging/value proposition).

3.2.1 Identifying the Right Experts to Target

From our own experience, we knew that a product is only as successful as the fit between the product and its prospective consumer. In order to create a clearer portrait of the platform's intended audience, we sought advice from Dr. Andy Hoffman. We decided to approach Dr. Hoffman given his role as an academic working at the intersection of business and sustainability. He could thus be a target "expert" for Oroeco. Upon talking with Dr. Hoffman, it became clear that scholars might not be the best initial target. Scholars are often extremely busy, have their own methods of communication through scholarly journals and books, and are often averse to putting their reputations at risk by publicizing their personal opinions. We also spoke with Dr. Hoffman about possibly targeting ex- or current employees of companies. However, after our conversation, we determined that the best initial target group of experts was non-profit employees.

Non-profit employees at certain organizations (especially watchdog or industry-specific organizations) generally already possess a wealth of knowledge about the companies they work with, which means that they have a lot of potential knowledge to contribute to the platform. Like Oroeco, many of these organizations are also interested in influencing consumer behavior. Finally, nonprofits may have difficulties marketing and publicizing their word (e.g. getting their research and recommendations out to consumers). Thus, we thought that nonprofits would be particularly interested in the added visibility they could garner for their work by using the platform and the opportunity it offered to better reach consumers.

3.2.2 Analyzing How to Target Experts

The next area we had to tackle was figuring out the best way to target experts. Would online solicitation work? Offline? Reaching out at conferences? There are a multiple of potential marketing channels available to reach nonprofit experts and it was important to find a channel that made sense in the context of our project goals and budget. In order to answer this question, we enlisted the help of Jim Price, an entrepreneur at the Ross School of Business at UM and expert in marketing for digital products. Jim Price encouraged us to think about how other similar platforms and products have grown successfully in the past. Yelp, the example cited above, has become almost ubiquitous among smartphone users looking for restaurants, with millions using it to inform their decisions every day. Yelp didn't start out by launching to the entire world; rather, it began with a specific geographic area and heavily targeted users in that area. Ride sharing apps like Uber and Lyft have similar origin stories.

Thinking about content quality, the team looked to Q&A crowdsourcing platforms Yahoo Answers and Quora. Both platforms are similar in format and structure, and both use social gaming theory to incentivize users to answer questions posed by others. But whereas the infamously poor quality of Yahoo Answers often makes it the target of jokes and mockery, Quora has become a broadly trusted and highly visited trove of wide-ranging and iteratively-improving opinions, articles, and discussions. What made the difference? While Yahoo Answers had the early advantage of attaining massive scale instantaneously its launch due to its integration into the Yahoo ecosystem of products, our team and others suspect that this was in fact one of the main reasons the content quality is not generally of high quality. With any Yahoo user automatically having an account that makes public an avatar and username for their answers and more focus on providing quick answers than on iteratively improving upon them, there are few incentives for anyone with specific subject knowledge on a matter to spend time contributing when their voice is likely to be drowned out. Quora, on the other hand, highlights the identities of respondents and therefore incentivizes its own "experts" to stimulate their own reputations on the site. And in stark contrast to Yahoo Answers, it began invite-only, focusing on only topics related to startups, silicon valley, and computer science. We considered these differences when crafting our strategy.

To supplement our conversation with Jim, we referenced a book called Crossing the Chasm (by Geoffrey Moore), which details how other companies have dramatically increased the size of their user communities. One of the main takeaways from this book was, again, the power of referrals. Many companies with digital products, from Dropbox to Gmail, have used referrals to help build a loyal user base. The thinking goes that the

best marketing comes from people who are already "sold" on the product and who are invested in seeing more people joining the platform. This marketing is also the cheapest and has the potential to spark virality if done correctly. Additionally, this marketing creates a sense of exclusivity, which can help to increase the value of the product/platform for users.

Our conversation with Jim, and the research it spurred on suggested that the best way to grow a user base was twofold: (1) start with a small group of users and (2) leverage referrals to grow from there. While we had already identified nonprofit professionals as our target group, we knew we needed to narrow down further. To do this, we decided to analyze industries represented on the Oroeco platform. These ranged from packaged consumer goods companies to heavy industrials to electronics. We ultimately decided to target industries where there is a significant number of players in the nonprofit space, and where consumers could make an appreciable difference with their purchasing decisions. With this approach, we identified two key target industries: electronics and paper goods.

Next, we had to create a referral program. After talking with our client, we decided that the best approach was to leverage our client's existing network in this space, email them, and then ask them to send us names of additional experts to target. We could then communicate with those contacts and explain that someone had suggested they would be a good addition to the platform.

3.2.3 Crafting a Message to Experts

Once we identified our target experts and a potential channel to reach them, we had to craft our message. As a starting point, we referenced an existing email template provided by our client. The team reasoned that it would be valuable to talk with an expert to help clarify what exactly would be beneficial about the platform and how we should describe these benefits. We reached out to Amelia Harris, a former employee at the Forest Stewardship Council, a nonprofit watchdog for paper product companies and, as such, a part of our target expert group. Amelia helped us to understand what nonprofit professionals are looking for and why the platform could be beneficial to their interests. Using this information, we crafted a short, succinct email template to send to potential target users. The template laid out several key benefits for participating on the site, listed in the table below:

Table 2: Benefits of Joining the Oroeco Platform

- Vote and comment on the sustainability of up to ~6,000 companies
- Provide links to resources that support your views (including links to your own publications)
- Have your name featured as an expert reviewer on Oroeco's web and mobile apps
- Have your name and organization linked to every time you comment on a company
- Have the option to comment as an "Anonymous Expert" on sensitive issues
- Help inform how millions of dollars are invested by companies like Etho Capital
- Empower citizens, companies, and investors to align stated values with actions

In consideration of the feedback from user experience surveys as well as considering the lessons learned from our communication with Jim and research on similar platforms about the importance of a sense of exclusivity and commitment from early users, we set out to also build a landing page—an initial webpage that would link from our email solicitations and become the first interaction our potential expert users would have with the platform. The objective was to help these potential experts quickly and easily understand the value of the platform, the logic behind it, and the benefits to them of using it. We looked to established web marketing principles to organize an appealing design and structure. Then, using the Adobe Creative Cloud suite of design applications and an open source JavaScript package to convert our designs into the HTML and CSS used in browsers, we crafted a mobile-optimized website that neatly lays out the vision for Oroeco's Corporate Sustainability Ratings Platform and how consumers, experts, and investors can leverage their collective power to influence companies' sustainability performance. This page then links to the first-time user walkthrough and then the expert user account creation page, creating a seamless user experience. By the time a new user now reaches the platform, many of the confusions we identified in troubleshooting and user surveys have been cleared up and the user ideally feels aligned with the Oroeco mission. Figure 4 below shows a screenshot of the landing page.
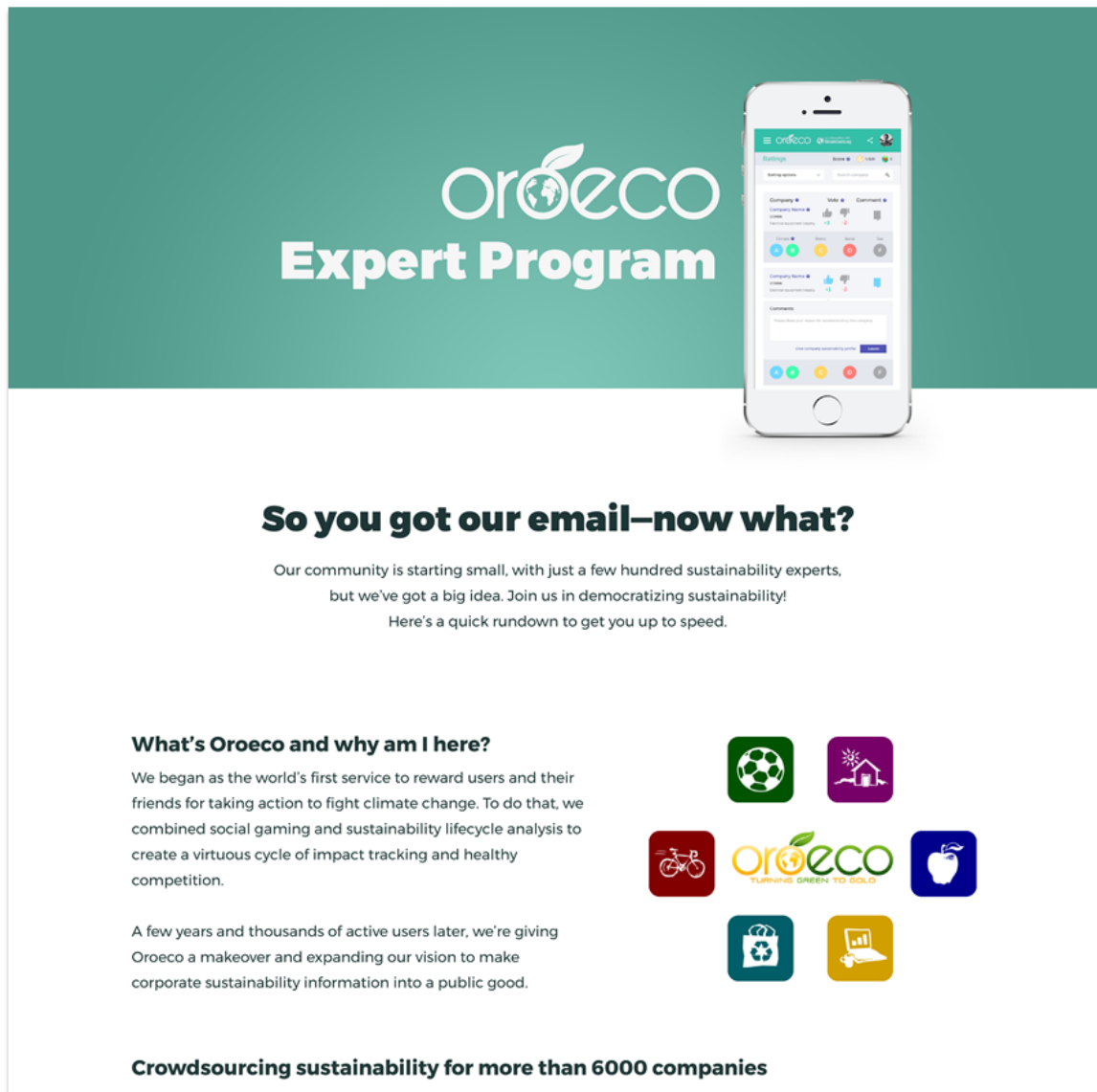
FIGURE 4: Landing page created by the Dow Fellows team to secure buy-in from early users.

4. Conclusions and Next Steps

4.1 Client Impact and Next Steps

Our work with Oroeco provided the organization with a strategy and plan to successfully launch the Sustainability Ratings Platform. Specifically, we provided

Oroeco with four key deliverables. First, we provided Oroeco with user research and testing to help identify improvements to the platform to make it more intuitive, and assembled a new database of tens of thousands of affiliated subsidiaries and brands that will make searching for companies vastly more straightforward. Second, we provided Oroeco with a first-time user walk-through guide, which makes it easy for new users to navigate the site and contribute their first content. Third, we provided Oroeco with an analysis and strategy for which experts to target first to ensure a successful launch. And fourth, we created a landing page for experts to help them understand the value of the site and encourage them to sign up. Together, these four deliverables will help ensure that Oroeco fulfills its potential and becomes a catalyst to increase transparency and action in business environmental responsibility for consumers, nonprofits, companies, and investors.

Possible next steps on this project could include additional user testing and development of the platform, creation of additional materials to help users understand the value of the platform (conference presentations, printed materials, etc.), as well as additional sample comments to guide users toward meaningful contribution on the platform.

4.2 Lessons Learned by Team Members

4.2.1 Caroline Hodge

This project was very valuable in shaping my understanding of how to apply business frameworks across a range of contexts. At first, none of us were sure how to approach the problem. However, after spending time discussing the platform and the

challenges it faced, it became clear that we could apply business frameworks for marketing and product growth to help structure the problem and guide us towards a solution.

This project also helped me to understand how valuable execution is. I was initially drawn to this project because of the novelty of the idea behind the platform. I liked the idea of bringing in experts, consumers, and investors to leverage their power together to influence companies. During the course of the project, however, it became clear to me that execution is equally if not more important. Executing on a good idea takes hard work, persistence, and a great team of people, which was a huge part of what I think explained our success in our recommendations.

4.2.2 Jongeun You

We were able to leverage our position as Dow Masters Sustainability Fellows to creatively navigate sustainability issues and effectively incorporate the various inputs into our project. One of things I've learned throughout this journey is to put ourselves in client's shoes: What is their main point? How can we create value for them? I look forward to taking full advantage of my invaluable experience through this project to explore possible new research projects to make a real difference in the world.

I am grateful and happy to have met Oroeco and Ian Monroe. I was very impressed how Oroeco has been very successful in achieving their social impact at scale. It was made possible only through committed leadership and a hardworking, mission-driven team with brilliant ideas. Lastly, I loved working with our wonderful team:

Caroline Hodge, Matthew Irish, and Shay Longtain. This was really a highlight for my life at the University of Michigan.

4.2.3 Matt Irish

I've come away from this project with new technical experience as well as lessons learned through collaboration with my teammates, our client, team advisors at U-M, and our fellows in the cohort. This project and my interactions with everyone involved came to be a defining part of my graduate experience and will continue to shape my career. Our subject matter and the need for interdisciplinary expertise embodied the values of the Dow Fellows Program, and throughout the course of this project I saw that concept transform in my eyes into something tangible. As someone who has worked mostly in academia and the public sector, I enjoyed the chance to work with a private client. Managing a project remotely where the team members themselves were physically apart for most of the year and we never met the client in person was also a very practical new skill for me.

On a more personal note, I believe earnestly in Oroeco's mission and feel a sense of fulfillment having contributed to its chances of success. I am confident that corporate sustainability information will be democratized, and whether it will be by this platform or a future iteration of it, our work will not have gone to waste.

4.2.4 Shay Longtain

I feel fortunate to have had the opportunity to be involved in this project through the Dow Sustainability Fellows program – I think that the concept behind Oroeco is very compelling. The platform sits at the convergence of two trends of our times: a

proliferation of information and data, and a growing environmental ethic among consumers. It seems natural that consumers (and investors, too) desire company sustainability information in a neatly-packaged, user-friendly medium, and the Oroeco platform seeks to provide this service.

As a law student, one of the most rewarding aspects of this project from my perspective was being part of an interdisciplinary team. "User experience testing," "go-to-market strategy," and "referral leveraging" are not terms that I hear in my classrooms. It was challenging to grapple with new concepts and frames of analysis, and I thought that our team's approach to problem-solving was enriched by our interdisciplinary backgrounds.