

Chapter 18

How to Manage Sustainability: A Framework for Corporate Sustainability Tools

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ABSTRACT

Sustainability has increasingly become a critical issue for wellbeing of human life and maintaining sustainability is responsibility of many parties such as individuals, corporations or governments. When taking its social, economical, or environmental impacts into consideration, maybe the most important player in that arena is organizations and in order to take the necessary actions about sustainability, first of all a common understanding of the topic is needed. For this reason, in this chapter it is aimed to create awareness about sustainability issue and commonly used tools for management of it. In this context, definition of sustainability and four corporate sustainability management tools (Environmental Management System - EMS, Sustainable Value Stream Mapping - Sus-VSM, Total Quality Environmental Management - TQEM and Sustainable Balanced Score Card - SBSC) have been explained.

INTRODUCTION

Sustainability is a new paradigm which came into prominence in the near past and since it is critical for the Universe, maintaining the necessary conditions for sustainability - from a single individual to businesses - is the responsibility of every entity in the World. Then the question is this; why is sustainability so much important today? Especially after the industrialization, in centuries, CO₂ levels in the atmosphere has been increasing and causing temperatures to rise, oceans to acidify, ice caps to melt (Watson, 2012:viii). Therefore, unless necessary actions are taken, the only inheritance to our next generations will be unfortunately a ruined ecology and all of us know what this means for life.

More generally the term “sustainability” means to endure. The term is used in different areas such as sustainable city, sustainable food, sustainable agriculture etc. (Young & Dhanda, 2013:3). Although it is used in different areas, sustainability is related with the quality of life and long lasting resources. Also from the point of environmental science, the term is used for the quality of not being harmful to environment or depleting natural resources, and thereby supporting long-term ecological balance (www.dictionary.com).

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How to Manage Sustainability

In today's highly industrialized world, one of the most critical actors in sustainability issue is obviously businesses. For this reason, corporate sustainability takes the attention of many scholars. Corporate sustainability incorporates a societal three dimensional goal of sustainability for corporations, governments and civil society. And these three dimensions comprised of economic, environmental and social facets (Wilson, 2003:1). This is also called as Triple Bottom Line (TBL) and for corporate sustainability; companies need to measure their impacts not only on the bottom line (profits), but also on the community and the environment as well. (Young and Dhanda, 2013:3).

Since globally people desire to live in a more humane, caring, equitable environment with prosperity, attention of scholars and the number of sustainability researches are increasing every day (Ikediashi, Ogunlana & Ujene, 2014:305). Parallel to this global tendency, colleges and institutions are opening sustainability courses in order to increase the awareness about the topic (Sisaye, 2013:224). With these developments, businesses are facing some pressures internally and externally about their responsibilities in social and environmental issues (Winter & Knemeyer, 2013:23) and as a result of this, a movement towards a sustainable environment is emerging.

In order to manage sustainability, organizations need to control their operations and link this with their strategies. Therefore, mechanisms to achieve sustainability have critical importance. For this aim organizations can use some tools to manage corporate sustainability. In this context, commonly used sustainability tools can be mainly classified under the four headings as environmental management system (EMS), total quality environmental management (TQEM), sustainable value stream mapping (Sus-VSM) and sustainability balanced score card (SBSC) (Young & Dhanda, 2013:3). In order to apply these tools based on their needs, businesses need to know the necessary basic knowledge about corporate sustainability tools. Therefore, mainly the basic knowledge about sustainability and commonly used tools for managing corporate sustainability has been presented in this chapter.

More specifically, readers of this chapter will;

- Get basic knowledge about definition and history of sustainability
- Learn different usages of the term in different areas
- Learn about sustainable development and triple bottom line
- Get awareness about importance of the topic
- Dive into topic with a corporation view point and
- Learn commonly used corporate sustainability management tools.

BACKGROUND

Although the term sustainability has a long history, it has been getting more and more importance and attention from many scholars and business people for approximately past a few years (Chowdhury, 2013:603). Some of the main reasons of this increasing awareness about sustainability are increased research and investigation on environmental problems caused by climate changes in recent years and several calls on international platforms for consciousness about the topic (Ikediashi, Ogunlana & Ujene, 2014:305). Actually origins of sustainability can be traced back to centuries ago (Jones et.al., 2013:90), but at that time the term wasn't mentioned with its today's naming and it was explained in the context of another issues such as environmentalism, economic theory, scarce resources etc.

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