Chapter 1
Workplace Culture as a Driver for Social Change:
Influencing Employee Pro-Environmental Behaviors

Deanne Turnbull Loverock
Royal Roads University, Canada

Richard Kool
Royal Roads University, Canada

Ingrid Kajzer-Mitchell
Royal Roads University, Canada

ABSTRACT

An individual's employer can be a strong authority within an influential milieu. This chapter examines the impact employers committed to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) can have on their staff, as measured by the type and extent of Pro-Environmental Behaviors (PEBs) practiced by staff at work and at home. Empowered internal stakeholders self-report that they adopt pro-environmental behaviors at work, find that they become habits, and report that they pass these new behaviors on to their family and members of the community. Tracking the development and diffusion of PEBs demonstrates the efficacy of CSR in action, confirming the workplace as an important leverage point that governments, businesses, and NGOs can use to encourage rapid social change.

INTRODUCTION

The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment declared that "human actions are depleting Earth's natural capital [and] putting such strain on the environment that the ability of the planet's ecosystems to sustain future generations can no longer be taken for granted" (Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, 2005, section 2). Most of the environmental problems we are witnessing are rooted in human behavior (DuNann Winter

& Koger, 2004; Vlek & Steg, 2007), therefore changing individual behavior is central to achieving a more sustainable future.

Encouraging the adoption of pro-environmental behavior (PEB), "behavior that consciously seeks to minimize the negative impact of one's actions on the natural and built world" (Kollmuss & Agyeman, 2002, p. 240), is a major challenge. Due to inertia, denial, and dislike of sacrifice, those in the developed world find it hard to reduce their environmental impacts (Oskamp, 2000). People do not voluntarily change their behaviors if there is no obvious benefit to them (De Young, 2000), yet may engage in PEBs because of the personal, internal contentment they gain. De Young claims that to be effective, environmentally responsible behavior must be durable, intrinsic, include a component of personal-satisfaction, be generalizable and allow someone to feel competent while performing the behavior.

Rogers has argued that the fastest rate of adoption of behavior change "stems from authority decisions" (2003, p. 29). Employers can be a source of strong positive authority and leadership (Li & Hung, 2009) and the potential role of the organization in achieving a sustainable society has been well documented in the corporate social responsibility (CSR) and management literature (e.g. Holmes, 1976; Jennings & Zandbergen, 1995; Matten & Crane, 2005; Shrivastava, 1995). Organizations willing to commit to CSR approaches frequently adopt a stakeholder approach (e.g. Freeman, 1984), assuming more social and political responsibilities that go beyond legal requirements (Scherer & Palazzo, 2011); this willingness can be creatively leveraged in public-private partnerships that focus on reducing the effects of human behavior on the environment.

This study investigates whether the pro-environmental workplace behaviors desired by employers can become habits for their employees, and if those employees then model these behaviors to friends and family thus diffusing these practices into the community.

There is limited literature about how employee pro-environmental actions in the workplace are affected by employer directives or modeling, and little research focused on whether PEBs expected of staff create habits that are practiced at home and in their communities (Unsworth, Dmitrieva, & Adriasola, 2013). This lack of research overlooks the potentially habit-forming influence of an environment where many spend at least 35%[1] of our waking lives. It also overlooks the role of employees as primary organizational stakeholders (Clarkson, 1995) upon whose continuing participation in CSR activities any sustainability-oriented organization depends upon.

Management scholars have primarily taken a firm-centric perspective examining the business opportunities of organizations adopting corporate social responsibilities (e.g. Hart, 2005; Salzmann, Ionescu-Somers, & Steger, 2005). CSR research has explored the drivers behind adopting sustainability strategies within organizations (Clemens & Douglas, 2006) and examined the associated challenges of the increased responsibilities of business firms (Harris & Crane, 2002). Scholarly work has predominantly focused on the outcomes of CSR, for example on corporate social performance (e.g. Wood, 1991), organizational commitment (Brammer et al., 2007) and employer attractiveness (Backhaus, 2002). Current research has shown that while CSR may have an impact on business' bottom lines and social license to operate, CSR approaches can also provide transformational models for employees to become empowered and active stakeholders in the business (Jatana & Crowther, 2007; Yu, 2009). This body of work is placing greater emphasis on employees' participation in CSR practices. Others have examined relationships between corporations and external entities such as local communities and nonprofit organizations (Crane, 1998; Milne, Siyer, & Gooding-Williams, 1996; Sakarya, Bodur, Yildirim-Öktem, & Selekler-Göksen, 2012).

22 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage: www.igi-global.com/chapter/workplace-culture-as-a-driver-for-social-change/192307

Related Content

Implementation of Industry 4.0 in Transformation of Medical Device Maintenance Systems
Lejla Gurbeta Pokvic, Lemana Spahicand Almir Badnjevic (2020). *Handbook of Research on Integrating Industry 4.0 in Business and Manufacturing (pp. 512-532).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/implementation-of-industry-40-in-transformation-of-medical-device-maintenance-systems/252379

An Empirical Investigation of the Consequences of Technostress: Evidence From China
Leida Chenand Achita Muthitacharoen (2018). *Social Issues in the Workplace: Breakthroughs in Research and Practice (pp. 667-690).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/an-empirical-investigation-of-the-consequences-of-technostress/192342

Knowledge Sharing in Business Organizations: Leadership Role in Knowledge Sharing at Turkish Enterprises
Korhan Arun (2017). *Organizational Culture and Behavior: Concepts, Methodologies, Tools, and Applications (pp. 886-906).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/knowledge-sharing-in-business-organizations/177608

Stemoh Leadership: A Multicultural Christian Approach to Contemporary Leadership
Dana-Marie Ramjit (2021). *International Journal of Responsible Leadership and Ethical Decision-Making (pp. 17-37).*
www.irma-international.org/article/stemoh-leadership/308454

Exploring the Relevance of Intrapreneurship and Innovation in Mature Organizations
Fernando Almeida (2020). *Journal of Business Ecosystems (pp. 22-42).*
www.irma-international.org/article/exploring-the-relevance-of-intrapreneurship-and-innovation-in-mature-organizations/262222