

*Editorial*

# **An Integrated Sustainable Business and Development System: Thoughts and Opinions**

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**Abstract:** Companies understand the importance of monitoring and managing their environmental impacts and aim to integrate, with consistent quality control, effective reduce-reuse-recycle programs and risk preventions. By building an integrated sustainable business and development system to meet certain environmental standards, many companies are eligible to be “green” certified. Companies may consider recognizing global visions on sustainability while implementing local best practices. An integrated sustainable business and development system includes talent management, sustainable supply chain, practicing strategies of leveraging resources effectively, implementing social responsibilities, initiating innovative programs of recycling, reducing, and reusing, advancing leaders’ perceptions towards sustainability, reducing innovation barriers, and engaging sustainable practices strategically.

**Keywords:** reduce-reuse-recycle; integrated sustainable business and development system

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## **1. Introduction**

Based on global environmental trends, many companies are committed to minimizing current and future negative environmental impacts while conducting their operations. To sustain a safe operational work environment, the list of priorities may include a safe performance improvement, minimizing risk and stressful situations, implementing safe and sustainable energy management systems, and incorporating know-how innovative technologies. Companies aim to utilize new technologies to establish sustainable value for their employees, customers, and stakeholders in terms of profitable

growth and to minimize the carbon footprints of their operations and products. For example, creating product and process innovations aims to increase economic benefits in all aspects. Development may include packaging innovations, creative ideas to improve the sustainable quality of products, duration of economic benefits and creative ideas, and making more materials recyclable.

Companies understand the importance of monitoring and managing their environmental impacts and aim to integrate, with consistent quality control, effective reduce-reuse-recycle programs and risk preventions. By building an integrated sustainable business and development system to meet certain environmental standards, many companies are eligible to be “green” certified. Companies may consider recognizing global visions on sustainability while implementing local best practices. An integrated sustainable business and development system includes talent management, sustainable supply chain, practicing strategies of leveraging resources effectively, implementing social responsibilities, initiating innovative programs of recycling, reducing, and reusing, advancing leaders’ perceptions towards sustainability, reducing innovation barriers, and engaging sustainable practices strategically. By executing sustainable consistent strategies, companies are striving to connect talented employees with committed customers to assist business growth.

## **2. An Integrated Sustainable Business and Development System**

### *2.1. Talent Management*

The importance of sustainable talent management has drawn the close attention of companies and corporations. By developing talented employees through engagement, retention, and leadership opportunities, associates, customers, suppliers, and shareholders will align with the corporate visions and will actively support long-term success. Aligned with company core values, many companies and businesses focus on establishing the image and brand of their employees’ choice through a process of consistent assessment and in all regions culturally and effectively. Unleashing innovative ideas and globalizing company inclusion efforts will build a diverse range of leadership that will drive growth for businesses. Many companies have recognized the importance of attracting and retaining the most talented individuals and have therefore developed talent management to reduce turnover rate regionally and globally. Additionally, to enhance long-term sustainable competitiveness, it is vital to recognize opportunities among diverse supply chains and to prevent potential risks.

### *2.2. Supply Chain*

Sustainable co-values must be presented and shared with company stakeholders to achieve the key point of sustainability efforts and commercial imperatives. Investors wonder how companies evaluate the effectiveness of sustainability in the networks of supply chains. Specifically, investors and stakeholders are interested in the challenges and opportunities among corporate materiality assessments and value chains. Companies are leveraging immense resources to subscribe to the green practices that can improve business bottom lines and refine their brand images.

### *2.3. Leverage Resources*

More small and medium companies are enticed by financial incentives to embrace applications that offer innovative solutions that will impact their daily operations and sustain positive cash flows. Those companies are also facing unforeseeable resource pressures and financial constraints while undertaking with capital improvements. Initiating proactive sustainability efforts may serve as a company's road map to distinguishing itself from its competitors and to connect with the beliefs of its customers and the expectations of its stakeholders. While facing the challenges of corporate social responsibility, embedding a sustainability culture into the company's core-values will not only reduce its operational footprints and produce significant efficiency in all aspects but will also improve economic benefits.

### *2.4. Social Responsibility*

Communities will gain jobs and economic benefits through corporate volunteerism and financial giving, and the enriched relationships between the business and public sectors will sustain thriving communities by advancing sustainable initiatives, supporting charitable activities, and civic enhancement. Various corporations provide financial donations to impact-driven communities and non-profit organizations that are committed to sustainability and that support corporate missions and values directly or indirectly, such as encouraging the engagement of residents and employees, promoting education, reusing, reducing, and recycling.

### *2.5. Recycle, Reduce, and Reuse*

Recycling produces many benefits, including economic benefits, energy efficiency, primary resource efficiency, presentation of a positive image, and reducing greenhouse emissions and the carbon footprint of products. Costs for collecting and processing recycled materials must be offset to meet the bottom line or even to produce sufficient revenues. An affordable and effective collection system must be addressed in specific regions to keep pace with the trends and issues in the recycled market and to meet the needs of sorting techniques with the support of customer awareness and commitment. Corporations may consider including innovative programs that will sustain their business core values and leverage their business objectives among employees, suppliers, customers, and communities.

## **3. Examples of Innovation Barriers**

Examples of innovation barriers ranked by managerial individuals include lack of effective communication within the corporation, lack of sufficient customer input, lack of sufficient creative ideas, lack of support from top management, lack of reward for individual sustainable efforts to encourage continued engagement, lack of adequate performance measurement, and insufficient implementation of lessons learned to facilitate future action plans. Those innovative programs will focus on promoting sustainability concepts of reduce, reuse, and recycle actions, retaining high quality associates, managers, and leaders, sustaining leaders of boards of directors and members who contribute to the visions and missions of the company, establishing wellness programs, and rewarding centers that lead the sustainable business implementations to the next level of success.

### 3.1. Perceptions and Attitudes of Corporate Leaders

Accenture reported the findings of surveying the perceptions and attitudes of corporate leaders toward sustainability efforts. Key barriers identified by corporate leaders regarding their hesitance in adopting and implementing sustainability include lack of government incentives (30%), additional cost (43%), lack of capacity of measuring sustainability efforts (31%), and underestimating what one company can do to prevent climate change (29%). Approximately 66% of the respondents see sustainability as a worthy investment, while 34% responded that sustainability efforts generate more cost and bring minimum to no benefits on return of investment. Approximately 49% of all respondents indicated that sustainability will generate positive benefits in reputation and trust, greater brand (41%), and lower cost (42%). Specifically, managerial associates and leaders have stated that the most common areas for sustainability initiatives are product development (44%), talent sustainability (47%), and reducing electricity usage and green initiatives (51%) [1].

Companies that were recognized for their sustainability commitment and implementation financially outperform their peers during the period of economic recession. Sustainability efforts could be woven into corporate key cores and utilize green initiatives as part of strategic approaches that can fulfill corporate social responsibility and increase company profits. Companies aim to develop strategic sustainability visions by prioritizing their core values, such as customer loyalty, reductions of energy and resource consumptions, employee retention, talent management, and evaluating greenhouse gas production and the impacts of waste generation. Governments play a vital role in motivating corporations to incorporate sustainability into their business plans and tax reduction. Through tax laws, financial supports, and public policy requirements, private sectors will benefit while making sustainability part of their core values.

According to the MIT Sloan Management Review (MIT SMR) and the Boston Consulting Group (BCG), companies that adopted and modified their business models due to the outcomes of sustainability opportunities are profiting and are recognized as “Sustainability-Driven Innovators”. Approximately 2600 executives and managers of companies across the continents were surveyed and asked about their thoughts and experiences regarding sustainability efforts by their companies. The respondents indicated that more than 50% of the companies studied have changed their business models and incorporated more sustainability mindsets into various disciplines, including product development, strategic growth, marketing, supply chain, and energy efficiency [2].

Those Sustainability-Driven Innovators enjoy financial benefits due to sustainability opportunities and focus on increasing their market shares, increasing energy efficiency, and establishing greater image and brand. By working cooperatively with corporate stakeholders and involving customers while driving sustainability as main objectives of their business focus, many Sustainability-Driven Innovators have executively included sustainability within their operation and management agenda. More than half of the respondents recognized the importance of obtaining support from top-management, collaborating with customers, and implementing innovative strategies into daily company sustainability activities. Sustainability cannot only be seen as an idea, but it can result in significant financial rewards.

All companies that benefit from sustainability are aware of the importance and reap the benefits of incorporating sustainability as one of the main keys of organizational cultural, integrating

sustainability activities into the corporate business models, generating top management support towards sustainability initiatives, investigating customer willingness to pay for a higher rate while involving sustainability issues and environmental conservations, and seeking sustainable internal and external supports among businesses, organizations, customers, public sectors, and individuals. Various businesses have recognized the value of incorporating social media into management, organizational communication, marketing, customer support, public relations, bridging corporate communications, and green brand addresses. Using social media wisely to deliver meaningful messages that imparts the companies' main core value to stakeholders and the target audience will launch a market that engages strategies and conveys corporate social responsibility strategies to make positive contributions at all aspects. To advance conversations and discussions among stakeholders, businesses, communities, and individuals, social media provides the platform for sustainability-focused organizations to further their engagements in all respects.

### *3.2. Sustainable Implementation: A Hotel Case*

Imagine what future hotels would look like if sustainable and innovative technologies were adopted? The implementation of the reuse of property buildings includes the use of insulation on roofing, the reuse of recycled materials during a construction process, the use of LED lighting, and the reuse of water for property plant irrigation and house cleaning. In the lobby area, the use of natural lighting and ventilation and of reused lighting fixtures may reduce the cost of installing unnecessary lighting. A heat recovery system may generate cool air in the hallway. The use of a Radio Frequency Identification Technology (RFID) key card system, a CCTV fire alarm, and reused lighting fixtures can all assist the property in saving operational costs in the hallway areas. Using reclaimed solid hardwood to install built-in desks and floors, installing fixed windows for sound insulation, and implementing a linen reuse program will save operational costs. Using water-saving taps with aerators and Siphonic jet toilet flushing, installing eco-certified organic bathroom amenities, using a waste segregation program, and implementing a towel reuse program will reduce the cost of operations. In the ballroom and conference rooms, the use of eco-friendly cleaning materials and insulated double-glazed glass for windows will increase energy efficiency and reduce waste.

Hotels aim to educate their employees regarding the importance of changing their daily behavior. Hotels have also initiated programs to reduce negative environmental impacts. For example, the Hyatt Regency initiated cell phone recycling programs, reduced water volumes for sinks and toilets, installed energy efficient light bulbs, and collected plastic bags for recycling from their employees while offering a grocery bag made of recycled materials to encourage their associates to shop green. The Hyatt Earth Training program has trained more than 35,000 employees regarding the green innovation and changed their behavior to embrace a green and greater quality of life. More than 88% of Hyatt hotels recycle plastic, glass, aluminum and paper [3]. To enhance the innovative sustainability movement to the next level of success, many companies in the hospitality and tourism industry have been focusing on engaging their associates and customers in environmental initiatives and empowering numerous team members to make positive changes and to create notable positive environmental impacts. A list of examples includes:

- Companies and many public places provide filtered water stations to reduce the waste involved in using plastic water bottles.
- Companies have proved the advantages of using 100% recycled paper to support the awareness of earth day.
- During a conference, placing note pads and pens in a central region for conference attendees.
- Making the right decisions to eliminate the use of disposable products and to set the room temperature is an efficient approach to reducing unnecessary waste.
- Many hotels are implementing innovative ideas, including using AC condensate water to sustain their roof-top veggie/herb garden and providing plug-in power for hybrid vehicle guests.
- Many properties provide recycling bins at various spaces as a green service.
- Printing on-site and on recycled paper is friendlier to the environment.
- Properties offer communication channels that encourage guests, employees, and stakeholders to explore their creative ideas around sustainability to enhance a greener image of hotel operations.
- Sharing ideas and thoughts through social media to demonstrate how properties initiate their innovative ideas through sustainable efforts integrates with their customers to add opportunities for implementing Corporate Responsibility (CR).
- The creation of a menu could be impacted by guests' eating habits. Understanding customers' behaviors can benefit the bottom line of the properties and restaurants.
- Through innovative implementation in the hospitality and tourism industries, many major companies have experienced and expected positive increases in their profit margins and success in waste management, energy effectiveness, water conservation, and savings in operations.
- Utilizing locally sourced and grown products and featuring local flavors will reduce transportation emission and transportation costs.
- While heading to a meeting, shipping less during the trip will reduce fuel, energy, and paper waste.

Overall, by incorporating achievable sustainable initiatives through integrating every facet across all operational divisions among companies, the positive impacts of environmental contributions are measurable and sustainable in the communities. Such companies as Hyatt, Marriott, and Hilton demonstrate their missions of sustainability efforts by creating a corporate culture that aims to pursue social responsibility and environmental awareness that empowers their employees at lodging properties, for example, to initiate and identify opportunities to increase energy efficiency, reduce water consumption and waste, and that encourages them to make positive green changes in their own dwelling places.

Many properties feature the importance of constructing sustainable buildings that are able to incorporate innovative technology and greener operations by including environmentally friendly materials. Properties are committed to utilizing and purchasing more environmentally preferable materials, including recycled plastic bottles of shampoo and lotion, recycled plastic, reusable cloth laundry bags, recycled carpeting, zero-VOC paint, and locally sourced menu items. Properties also have installed thousands of LED light bulbs in the past three years. Restaurants offer antibiotic/hormone-free beef hamburgers and cage free eggs. For instance, using EcoLab cleaning detergents and products has reduced the waste of millions of gallons of water and of natural gas by hundreds of thousands of themes. Guests have been encouraged to reduce the frequency of linen changes and are informed how their behaviors have helped to preserve the natural environment by reducing the use of chemicals,

water, and energy. Assessing energy consumption patterns among properties, understanding the renewable energy potentials, and undergoing energy audits can assist companies to prepare various energy efficiency programs across public and private sectors.

### *3.3. Sustainable Food and Agriculture: A Case of Sustainable Food*

Organic agriculture and food production may minimize adverse environmental impacts, increase the level of biodiversity, decrease soil and plant pollution caused by pesticides, lower carbon emission, and sustain energy efficiency. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has approved a set of standards that assure consumers that foods labeled “organic products” are appropriately processed and certified [4]. Sustainability implementations on livestock and plant production and packaging can generate various social, environmental, and economic benefits. Most recently, the trends of using locally produced products, such as those produced in the backyard garden, may reduce greenhouse gas emission, air pollution, gasoline cost, noise pollution, congestion, and accidents while compared to the cost of using food products that have travelled long distances to get to the shops, such as imported food related products. Additionally, local farmers may benefit from the increased demand from their local consumers.

According the U.S. National Restaurant Association [5], the top 10 most important trends identified by interviewed chefs included locally sourced meats and seafood, locally grown products, healthful meals for children, hyper-local sourcing, sustainability, children’s nutrition, gluten-free/allergy-conscious food, locally-produced wine and beer, sustainable seafood, and wholegrain items in children’s meals. More individuals and organizations agree with the terms of “sustainable food” as safe, healthy and nutritious. Additionally, they believe in respecting biophysical eco-systems and in recognizing environmental limits. They also aim to assist in supporting rural economies, farmers, and sustainable local products. Through certain lifestyles changes, these committed groups have positively affected the vegetarian movement, protecting the natural environment and focusing on animal welfare.

## **4. Summary**

Companies focus on improving their operational processes to support environmental systems, reduce water and energy consumption, and divert reusable waste to increase economic benefits. Many corporations and companies have established programs to reduce negative environmental impacts, reduce operational costs, and implement compliance strategies to perform consistently in significant ways. Environmental sustainability requires a long-term commitment and endeavors that consist of innovative implementation and conscious awareness with a willingness to change behaviors. Companies foresee the need to set achievable goals for their annual green initiatives to reduce gas emissions, waste, water consumption, and energy use on a daily operational basis. By tracking the effectiveness of progress, those committed companies continue to identify opportunities for continuously innovative development and improvement. Overall, a comprehensive list of sustainability efforts may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- *Secure a sustainable business* may include (1) starting a sustainable business plan that aims at business innovation and growth; (2) communicating with associates and stakeholders to explain why and how green initiatives can make a recognized brand and workplace; (3) challenging each employee and executive to re-think their roles within business sustainability; and (4) connecting the ties between bottom line and sustainability strategies.
- *Energy Efficiency*. Presenting and pre-assessing the benefits of focusing on energy efficiency across the corporation and how energy can boost the business bottom line.
- *Engage employees* such as (1) compiling a plan that encourages employees to be engaged and committed to corporate social responsibility; and (2) rewarding corporate divisions and individuals who walk extra miles to promote and implement green deeds.
- *Community involvement and partnership*. Engaging and providing incentives to encourage communities to be part of the green initiatives through financial award systems.
- *Support and ideas from stakeholders*. Welcoming stakeholders' innovative ideas and utilizing social media to provide more timely communications among all parties to increase effective engagements.
- *Sustainable Leadership*. Sustaining talented associates and leaders of the corporation will likely reduce the cost of human resources. Companies need to sustain a healthy work culture that empowers their employees to resolve issues on a daily basis.
- *Stakeholder Engagement*. Examples consists of (1) using regular communications at horizontal and vertical levels to ensure that the overall visions and sustainable business strategies are well presented to internal and external partners; (2) challenging companies to tell their stories about their sustainability ideas and implementation; and (3) incorporating daily sustainability efforts into associates' performance metrics to meet corporate social reasonability objectives [6,7].

Collaboration between public and private sectors can launch effective sustainable projects that focus on reducing carbon footprints, reducing the use of fossil fuel, increase the use of renewable energy, increase corporate competitiveness, and improve corporate images. Utilizing environment-friendly technologies will lead societies to a smarter place that can foster greater life styles and build sustainable societies for future generations. The issues and trends of climate change, deforestation, biodiversity loss, and water shortages have attracted attention among nations. More corporate leaders have established goals that are related to ecosystem services to embrace aspirational visions that foster zero emissions, water and carbon neutrality, and minimization of adverse impacts on biodiversity.

Identifying and implementing innovative approaches to resolve sustainability challenges of the present and future can assist in minimizing carbon footprints and maximizing economic benefits for companies. To ensure the validity and effectiveness of implementing sustainable business models, developing measurable matrices that can assess and evaluate the pre and post analyses of sustainability efforts will assist corporations to sustain their bottom lines and to maximize their return on investment. More executive individuals have captured the interest of promoting innovation across companies that are actively participating in the path of an aligned corporate culture towards their business sustainability.

Identifying achievable objects by converting innovative ideas into actual implementable projects can assist dialogs that can energize supply chain stakeholders, incorporate customer needs, and engage employees in the direction of aligning corporate core values. Identifying business sustainability benefits and pre-measuring business derailers can favorably position companies in the journey of global



economic recovery. Social media engagement can be used to strengthen a company's network and to complement the company's sustainable business strategy by broadcasting messages to prospective markets and customers. Many customers have indicated that they are interested in participating in co-developing products and making co-decisions aligned with their interested companies. By sustaining a high bar, extending corporate visions toward sustainable business, motivating influential partnerships, equipping associates strategically, and capturing the impacts of sustainability on society, achievable mitigations of sustainability efforts may be structured constructively in a timely manner.

As mentioned previously, companies are leveraging immense resources to subscribe to green practices that can improve business bottom lines and refine their brand images. While facing the challenges of corporate social responsibility, embedding a sustainability culture into the company's core values will not only reduce the company's operational footprints and produce significant efficiencies in all aspects, but will also improve economic benefits. Communities will gain jobs and economic benefits through corporate volunteerism and financial giving. Also, the enriched relationships between the business and public sectors will sustain thriving communities by advancing sustainable initiatives, supporting charitable activities, and promoting civic enhancement. This Special Issue aims to discuss strategy frameworks from a sustainable business and development perspective. Scholars across the continents contribute to this issue by submitting comprehensive reviews, case studies or research articles, presenting a variety of methodological approaches, and offering suggestions for further implementations.

## Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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