

SUSTAINABILITY IS GOOD BUSINESS

Purpose

Sempre Avanti Consulting has prepared this Position Paper to assist you in understanding the benefits to your organisation of addressing sustainability.

This is a companion paper to our paper on understanding the hype around Carbon Footprint. This paper places the various views on climate change, carbon footprint, and sustainability into an overall organisational context.

Please contact Sempre Avanti Consulting for a discussion of the issues, personalised to your own particular needs.

Introduction

There has been a lot written about Sustainability, mainly in the context of Climate Change. This writing ranges from advocating a return to a pre-literate Stone Age hunter gather society to a 'hair-shirt' return to the Middle Ages and on to a Panglossian view that there is absolutely nothing to worry about. The debate is clouded by whether one is a climate change believer or a climate change sceptic.

Sempre Avanti believe that regardless of your attitude to climate change, Sustainability is good business and should be embraced wholeheartedly by all kinds of organisations. New Zealand's reputation of being "Clean and Green" is founded on sand and is subject to attack from within by environmental activists and from without by the EU. High polluting waste types such as bread waste from a bakery will be regulated and priced to discourage its dumping. Transport will be further regulated because it is New Zealand's second highest emitter of carbon.

First movers will gain advantages that even fast followers will envy.

Sustainability can be viewed on three levels:

- lip service,
- transactional sustainability, and
- transformational sustainability.

Lip Service Sustainability

This is where many businesses are currently placed.

This is the hotel chain that places the 'lip service' card in the bathroom. The card suggests that you can help lessen the load on the environment by hanging up towels to be used a second time. When you do this, the housekeeping staff replaces them anyway because there are no systems in place to ensure staff compliance with the 'policy'.

This is the business that has a general purpose paper recycling bin but no systems to ensure the paper is picked up and sent to the recycler.

Or the business that has a policy to recycle toner cartridges and then has no system to make it easy and wonders why empty toner cartridges end up in the waste bin.

Sustainability at the Transactional Level

This is where sustainability starts to make a difference. It should not be where it ends.

Transactional sustainability is about the three R's – Reduce, re-use, and recycle. Yet that is not all. To avoid 'lip service', the 3R's must be supported with robust systems to ensure easy and simple compliance with the 3R's. Sempre Avanti's proprietary systems and process tools – System-matiX – provides a key underpinning to good quality systems.

To understand how this works lets look at a few contrasts between lip service and transactional sustainability.

Paper Recycling

Lip Service equals old 'lineflo' paper boxes or wire 'cages' scattered randomly over the office space. These are left to get overfull and then they are picked up on a random cycle by the cleaners. If you are lucky, the paper makes it to the PaperChain™ recycling bin but is just as likely to be put in the general waste bin.

Transactional sustainability sees light weight, closed side bins made of recycled material [this could be board or plastic] and with safe lifting handles placed at regular intervals. These bins are picked up everyday by your sustainability management firm and the paper transferred to the correct paper recycling bin. The empty bin is replaced and is available for use without the users having to do anything

Aluminium Cans

Lip Service sees the provision of vending machines selling drink products packaged in aluminium cans. When the product is consumed, the recyclable aluminium can is thrown into the general waste bin or into the bin under the desk of the consumer. All these cans go in the general waste and are conveyed to a landfill.

Transactional sustainability sees lightweight, lined open top bins made of recycled plastic. These are placed within 'throwing' distance of workstation clusters and in public spaces. These bins are picked up everyday by your sustainability management firm and the cans transferred to the correct recycling bin. The empty bin is replaced and is available for use without the users having to do anything.

Transactional sustainability recognises that when making sustainability decisions, the principal trade-off is between sustainability and time and builds robust systems that ensure lack of time does not halt efforts to reduce, reuse, and recycle.

Sustainability at the Transformational Level

Building on the client focussed and easy to use System-matiX validated systems of transactional sustainability, organisations must move to transformational sustainability. Because this is values and leadership driven, it requires much more commitment.

The sorts of things to be considered under transformational sustainability include:

- Engagement of organisation members and stakeholders in a values and leadership programme that incorporates a commitment to sustainability
- Transport fleet assessment and management – carbon footprint measurement and mitigation
- Smart buildings – from fully integrated smart building through to limited impact mitigation of existing buildings
- Travel policy assessment and management – carbon footprint management
- Local sourcing vs carbon certified remote sourcing of organizational inputs – as much to engender debate on the merits and downsides of so called food miles
- Meeting enablers – the use of facilitated Video conferencing and Internet technology rather than F2F meetings
- Design for sustainability

Clearly the work to be done here is more far reaching than the work required for transactional sustainability.

How We Can Help

Sempre Avanti Consulting can help you to start this process and assess and analyse the impact of Sustainability on your organisation through a structured process of site reviews, systems and process reviews, design reviews, mitigation planning, and mitigation management.

We have dedicated and experienced consultants who are able to assist your organisation with this task.

For more information on this topic and to receive your 30 minute free assessment please contact Sempre Avanti Consulting.

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