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One Minute Ideas

Sustainability 101 for Business Owners:

1. Assess the Baseline.
2. Identify Best Opportunities.
3. Plan Implementation Steps.
4. Set Deadlines.
5. Keep Revisiting It.

Achieving Potential

June 2011

The theme of this month's edition of our monthly newsletter "Achieving Potential," is SUSTAINABILITY.

There is no one single established definition for sustainability and there probably won't ever be one overarching definition as sustainability means different things to different companies as well as different industries.

In addition to the articles, my June 29, 2011 workshop will be devoted to business sustainability. [Register Here.](#)

Finally, I would like to recognize three businesses that have developed strategic plans. They are listed in the last section of this newsletter.

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What is your Business Strategy for Being a Sustainable Business

Sustainability as a business strategy needs to be uniquely defined for each company. Understanding the industry, company size, product or service line, the supply chain, and stakeholders'/stockholders' concerns are all important to create a meaningful definition.

Understanding sustainability may start with a definition, but sustainability is really a corporate wide strategy and culture that ultimately focuses on increasing productivity and/or the reduction of consumed resources without compromising product or service quality, competitiveness, or profitability. Embracing a true strategy of sustainability is never ending, as it ultimately should become part of the culture and fabric of the organization.

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Important questions to consider include:

- Where is the organization currently?
- Where do they want to go?
- What will it take to get there?

Similar to the beginning of the quality movement, many companies got on the bandwagon and implemented the concepts haphazardly with no intent or strategy, reaped some results from low-hanging fruit, but never really saw the full impact and the possible results that could have been theirs to realize.

Kevin Myette, Director of Product Integrity at Recreational Equipment Inc (REI) says that "sustainability is the next quality movement ... and it is no longer just for big companies."

If sustainability is viewed as a strategy to be developed over time, then there needs to be a systematic approach to be able to move from where your company is now to where it wants or needs to be. Our systematic approach looks at sustainability through the progression of five levels.

Level 1: Recognize

At this level, an organization begins to recognize that something needs to be done. Perhaps outside forces such as industry regulations or stakeholders'/ stockholders' concerns are driving some action; however, there is no real strategy in place. In fact, if industry standards are driving whatever sustainability action currently exists, the organization is most likely acting out of sheer conformance.

Level 2: Initiate

At this level, management agrees that it is time to look at sustainability as a business strategy. Management begins to see a solid business case for why sustainability makes sense in their organization and management begins

defining their strategy for sustainability. Short-term, measurable results start being obtained.

Level 3: Implement

At level 3, there is a clearer understanding and awareness of what sustainability really means to the organization. A detailed action plan has been created and communicated to employees, customers, and all other stakeholders. Larger projects within the initiatives are beginning to get traction and see results.

Level 4: Operationalize

At level 4, there is full commitment to the sustainability strategy and the action plan is in full force. The organization is maximizing its people and processes to ensure a positive impact on the environment while seeing improvements in their own profitability and core business measurements.

Level 5: Transformation

The value of continuous sustainability is now embedded in the organization's culture. It is part of how they think and make decisions. There is a commitment to continually review where they stand on sustainability issues, and they are committed to take the necessary action steps today and in the future.

At what level is your organization currently? Where should you be?

Blog post by: Tammy Kohl, President, Resource Associates Corporation

A vision for Sustainability

Sustainability began with the concept of being 'green,' becoming more environmentally friendly, and paying more attention to conserving our planet's resources. However, sustainability has become much more than that. Sustainability is a viable and proven business strategy, which takes into account economic considerations, governmental issues, as well as demands from customers and stakeholders.



The base definition of sustainability that many of our clients start with as they begin to define and customize their own strategy and action plan is ... an increase in productivity and/or reduction of consumed resources without compromising product or service quality, competitiveness, or profitability while helping to protect the planet.

The mantra being: People + Process + Environment = Profit.

New strategies and initiatives require change, and positive change requires the leadership team to create and provide a clear vision of where this change will take the organization. This should also address how a strategy of sustainability benefits the organization, the employees, and their customers. Commitment and ongoing follow-up on behalf of the leadership team are critical. No new strategy can survive, let alone thrive, if leadership is not fully on board. We believe and agree with a statement made by the late and former CEO of Hanover Insurance, William O'Brien, "The success of an intervention depends on the interior condition of the intervener. What counts is not only *what* leaders do and *how* they do it, but that interior condition, the *inner place* from which they operate."

A compelling vision should:

- Clarify the purpose for the change

- Describe intent
- Provide a cultural change
- Provide a positive image of the future
- Be felt in hearts and understood in minds
- Help the employees intellectually and emotionally grasp what the organization is striving to achieve and why it is important

Can you describe the purpose of your sustainability initiative? Can your employees? Can your customers?

Highlighting three Entrepreneurs who have developed strategic business plans.

In the last two years I have had the opportunity to work with the [Academy for Entrepreneurial Excellence](#) in partnership with the [Business Council of Westchester](#). Here are three very experienced business owners who have graduated and are taking their businesses to the next level. Congratulations on taking the steps necessary to have sustainable businesses!

Vivian Gallo - [Choices for Long Term Care and Health Resource Consultants](#).

- Vivian's organization provides guidance to solutions for people to maintain their dignity and quality of life.
- Health Resources Consultants, Inc. helps clients secure the long term disability claims benefits to which they are entitled by providing expert guidance throughout the complex claims and appeals process.

Alan Berksoon - [Intelligist Group](#).

- Alan's organization provides "innovation consulting" utilizing social networking media.
- His organization is a resource of the best minds to solve tough problems or take you to your "next".
- His consulting consists of a proprietary process and marketing communications training.

Jim Newhouse - [Newhouse Financial & Insurance Brokers](#).

- Jim's organization is a leading boutique provider of insurance, risk management and financial solutions for families and closely held businesses in the Westchester, Fairfield region.
- His organization provides insurance and financial solutions covering health and life, property and casualty, and other innovative financial and insurance solutions.

Motivational Quotes

"I can't understand why people are frightened of new ideas. I'm frightened of the old ones".

-John Cage

"The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results."

-Albert Einstein

"The one unchangeable certainty is that nothing is certain or unchangeable."

-John F. Kennedy

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Make it a GREAT day,

Grant Schneider

Performance Development Strategies, LLC