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explores the role of working professionals in promoting sustainability amidst rising environmental pollution



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Empowering Working Professionals: Navigating Sustainability in a Changing World with Prof. Mahesh Kumar Hamirwasia

In the backdrop of global warming and climate change, organizational goals have shifted from the classic bottom line to a triple bottom line. Most businesses can no longer make profits to the detriment of the environment (biodiversity, deforestation, climate change, resource depletion, waste and pollution, greenhouse gas emissions, water and energy efficiency) and people. Unsurprisingly, in today's world, mission statements of various organizations often include environmental sustainability goals and contribution to society.

Business sustainability can be viewed as an organization's influence on the environment, which sustains life and its local and global communities in society. An organization that has committed itself to undertake sustainable goals will strive to improve the environment or well-being of people in its community. However, we should not be misguided into believing that sustainability has no scope for profit. In fact, adopting sustainable practices can potentially lead to saving more money in the long run.

Top 5 sustainability attributes that working professionals need to develop or upskill in

Sustainability goals cannot be addressed by Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) professionals alone; in lieu, various working professionals at all levels in an organization will have to contribute to sustainability goals; accordingly, they should aim to build specific skills to satisfactorily commit to sustainability practices in their organizations. So, what are those specific skills or attributes?

Firstly, it is important to have **fundamental knowledge of environmental science and engineering** — global warming, carbon emissions, and climate change. It is important to figure out how an organization's activities are impacting each of those areas and what are they doing about it?

The Bhopal Gas Tragedy in Dec, 1984 is widely considered to be the world's worst industrial disaster. It was a glaring case of corporate negligence, poor attitude towards environment and safety, and an under-trained workforce. What is your organization's carbon footprint? This requires a formal audit to see if various sustainable business practices are being practised or not. Some of the factors to be considered, while conducting a sustainability audit include:

- Carbon emission levels
- Waste produced on an annual basis
- Hazardous materials used in the manufacturing processes
- Waste and toxins created during the product life cycle
- Required infrastructure to support sustainable practices



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Secondly, if your organization is not presently engaged in sustainability initiatives, you will need leaders with a **strong mindset** to make an entry in the sustainability arena to provide **decisive and impactful leadership**. As global warming and climate change issues become more crucial to our survival, it is required to make decisions in the best interests of the society and environment in mind. Strong leadership skills include having an idea about delegation of tasks, empowering others to implement them, and supporting your team in adversity.

Thirdly, **communicate the long-term benefits of sustainable business practices** and the drawbacks of a short-sighted approach to people. Focus on phasing out unsustainable practices, so that sustainable practices can occupy their place. The recent floods in Himachal Pradesh are potential evidence of unsustainable development. If you take nature for granted, it does seem to have its own homeostatic mechanisms to square off things back to a sustainable state in many cases.

We need to immediately phase out some of the unsustainable practices, such as utilization of single-use plastics (banned in Himachal Pradesh); our dependence on fossil fuels (the Internal Combustion (IC) engine may likely be phased out in India by 2030, as we move aggressively towards EV/hybrid vehicles; coal-based thermal power plants are being phased out by some developed nations); over-urbanization and crowded cities; contamination of natural resources like freshwater reservoirs, groundwater, and the soil; and finally, wastage of food and water. It is estimated that almost one-third of the available food and water is wasted by people, due to lack of adequate attention and thought.

Next, **creating an effective business strategy** that is inclusive of your commitment to sustainability requires a lot of foresight and planning. Enlightening people in the organization about the importance of adopting sustainable practices and various schemes/policies/activities that you wish to implement may need an initial investment of time and resources. Identify opportunities and plan for long-term success, besides developing an organizational culture that is conducive to the growth of sustainable business practices.

The fifth attribute is about **having strong knowledge of the best practices in sustainability**, which is extremely critical too. Keeping your eyes on the horizon as new circumstances arise; spotting new opportunities; realizing how sustainability interacts with your organization's bottom line; fostering a sustainability supportive culture; developing a system that can track and analyze the results of sustainability activities along with their impact on business profitability to justify continuity — and devising new methods if it isn't working; effectively communicating a sense of purpose to various relevant stakeholders; showing how the society and environment are benefitting from sustainable practices (for instance, the ozone hole in the stratosphere is gradually coming back to its original condition ever since we phased out CFCs and HCFCs); reflecting on sustainability goals in the strategic intent of the organization; using quantitative techniques to calculate the actual payoffs from sustainable initiatives vis-a-vis earlier practices; highlighting the perils of maintaining status quo and not implementing innovative sustainable solutions — all these are part of the process required to build a sustainable future.

In short, sustainability is good not only for the benefit of the environment, society, and mankind, but also for business success and profitability in the long run.

Finally, what kind of courses/programmes can working professionals consider taking up?

Working professionals should embrace change and acquire the required skills and put their best foot forward to create a sustainable future for posterity. They can consider upgrading their knowledge by choosing courses/programmes in:

- Environmental science and engineering
- Environmental pollution control
- Engineering technology/power engineering/process engineering)
- Pharmaceutical sciences/engineering science/design & computing)
- Sanitation science, technology & management.

Source- https://csrbox.org/Impact/description/Article_full_Environmental-Pollution-%E2%80%94-how-can-Working-Professionals-Help-Create-a-Sustainable-Future-156



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