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Article

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Sustainability and Organizational Change

The relevant and, above all, remarkable feature of sustainability is due to its "duality": on the one hand, it is an indispensable element within the companies even if, on the other hand, it increases the costs of many activities and processes.

Facing the challenge of sustainability will determine and create, in the coming years, emerging organizational forms. If ten years ago, many managers clearly expressed their doubts regarding the financial feasibility of sustainability, today, they admit the importance of sustainability for the competitive advantage of the companies they manage.

Currently, companies have great opportunities to support build a sustainable global economy, becoming one of the solutions to the most pressing societal challenges. Whether it is about reducing pollution, global warming, reducing use of water resources and other limited resources or ensuring a better work environment for employees throughout the supply chain, there are many things that companies can and should do.

The alternative to "profit above all" approach is the effective approach to sustainability that focuses on the trinity that gather the individuals, the profit and the planet. The organizations practicing and integrating sustainability ways and means of thinking and practice, apply them within all their operations - thus they are not focused only on what leads to profits but integrate sustainability into their "core" and develop their activities beginning from this point. These organizations are evaluated within the three areas of the trinity, and they design their structures, operations and activities in order to produce a positive impact on each of the three areas.

On the other hand, organizational and cultural change are key ingredients in sustainability operationalization. Without such changes, efforts towards implementing an effective sustainability are subject to failure or, often, to an impending blockage. Changing organizational culture requires interventions in two key areas: governance system and leadership. When an organization has an effective system of governance and an effective leadership, future-oriented, it will be more able to mobilize the forces necessary to change culture and to successfully implement sustainability based on thinking, values and behaviors.

The answer organizations give to sustainability challenges is enhanced by the people who understand the vision of sustainability, who have access to learning resources and who take the initiative of changing. In addition, through accountability and initiative people feel they can get involved.

Education focused on sustainability will create a more integrative approach aimed at change, recognized as offering numerous and sustainable benefits. Through education focused on sustainability is promoted the development of networks and sustainable partnerships that lead to a wider change of society.

Getting involved as researchers of their own practices, organizations are more involved in the change for sustainability. This allows to identify and use the tools necessary to incorporate sustainability practices and processes within organizations. By exchanging experience and ideas among organizations, there can be provided ways and means of action used in organizational change.

Therefore, this issue of our journal is not a step towards sustainability, as change towards sustainability is not a sinuous process, nor is it a reference guide on how to become sustainable. Its main purpose is to stimulate readers to consider sustainability using a new way of thinking, an approach to education for sustainability. This will help each individual and organization to think about what they can do to begin developing the skills and capabilities needed to create a more durable and sustainable economic and social world.

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