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Green and sustainability positioning... What does that mean and where do I start?

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"Any rational business person should pursue a sustainability plan based upon the savings in energy and waste alone". This is a recent quote from a manufacturer in Westborough, Mass. who will save \$6,600 a year in electricity costs and half of their waste hauling fees. Those are only part of the results from their plan but the real question is what is a "sustainability plan" and should YOUR company develop one?

Sustainability planning establishes targets, tasks and tracking around; energy efficiency, water efficiency, waste reduction, improved purchasing and packaging, pollution control, and sustainable management practices (that lead to a better business model).

Should YOU build a sustainability plan? First ask "does senior management support the concept?" If so, schedule a meeting internally for an initial discussion. Who should attend...your management champion plus representatives from operations, engineering, accounting, purchasing, HR, IT, marketing and/or other stakeholder groups. The agenda should include; where you are in the process of sustainability today, the level of interest and commitment to pursue sustainability strategies, and whether you believe that opportunities warrant building a formalized sustainability plan. If you don't have the time or expertise to answer these questions internally, you could engage a sustainability professional to conduct a brief site visit, speak with key personnel and help assess that opportunity.

If you already have a strategic business plan, build sustainability initiatives around the objectives in that plan. As examples, they could relate to profitability goals through cost reductions and productivity gains, or marketing and branding goals through new positive messaging, or HR goals through improved recruiting and retention.

If you do not currently have a strategic business plan you could create that at the same time as your sustainability plan using the 4 steps mentioned in my first "Green" article in May; 1) see it, 2) plan it, 3) do it, and 4) document it.

Step 1..."See it" is typically developed in 2 parts. First, gather all relevant information about your company's current situation and foreseeable trends. That would begin in the meetings suggested above. Second, use that information to "see"/articulate your vision of sustainability for a specified point in the future.

Vision defines what "success" looks like at the end of the process and agreeing on that in the beginning enables you to manage expectations and drive the desired results.

Start there and the next article on sustainability may begin with quotes about YOUR success.

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