

SUSTAINABLE TOP MANAGERS AND THEIR ACTIVITIES IN THE ENTERPRISE OF THE FUTURE

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Abstract: Environmental safety management contributes to sustainable development. Sustainable development is a consequence of global ecological and social threats. The natural potential of the Earth is running out, which is confirmed by worsening indicators of Living Planet Index and Ecological Footprint. Acceleration of sustainable development is particularly important to production enterprises. Production enterprises use the majority of the world's non-renewable resources and they are largely responsible for environmental pollution. The negative influence of the enterprises on the environment can be stopped by transforming them into sustainable enterprises. Sustainable top managers should play a key role in this process. Sustainable top managers constitute a new currently emerging category of leaders. They possess knowledge and experience in both management as well as sustainability. Their features include social and ecological sensitivity, innovation and the ability to convince and motivate employees within the scope of sustainable development as well. Their objective is to create an organization whose mission, strategy and operational action programmes include ecological and social initiatives. Due to this, sustainable development is becoming an important and permanent element of enterprise functioning. Sustainable leadership constitutes a key challenge for top managers which they should accept for the benefit of future generations. The support of environmental safety management by sustainable top managers promotes its implementation in enterprises thanks to their knowledge and ecological sensitivity as well as engaging in sustainable development.

Keywords: sustainable development, sustainable enterprise, sustainable top managers, environmental safety management

1. INTRODUCTION

The development of environmental safety management is the result of growing environmental problems. These problems contribute to the deterioration of our planet's condition despite sustainable development initiatives for many years. The source of ecological problems is the constant pursuit of endless economic growth on a planet with limited natural resources. The Nobel prize winner Paul Crutzen thinks that we moved from the Holocene era to a new geological epoch called the

Anthropocene as a result of urbanization, depletion of fossil fuel and environmental pollution. 'During the Anthropocene, our climate has changed more rapidly, oceans are acidifying and entire biomes are disappearing – all at the rate measurable during a single human lifetime. This trajectory constitutes a risk that the Earth will become much less hospitable to our modern globalized society' (WWF International, 2016). As the research confirms, 'humanity currently needs the regenerative capacity of 1,6 Earths to provide the goods and services we use each year' (WWF International, 2016). The natural potential of the Earth has been running out, which is confirmed by worsening indicators of Living Planet Index and Ecological Footprint. Social problems, such as: diseases, poverty, unemployment, crime, drug addiction and alcoholism accompany the ecological problems. They are present – with varying intensity – in each region of the world and each country.

Hindering the negative ecological and social trends is becoming a necessity and it requires taking specific action. This should be implemented particularly at production enterprises. They use the majority of the world's non-renewable resources and they are largely responsible for environmental pollution. Transformation of traditionally operating enterprises into sustainable enterprises should constitute the goal of these measures. Top managers play a key role in the process of this transformation. They make and accept the most important decisions regarding the enterprise. The company will not embark on a path of sustainable development without their knowledge and approval. M. Epstein i A. Buhovac emphasize: 'corporate executives decide whether the company should be sustainable, how sustainable it should be, and what resources are available to achieve sustainability' (Epstein and Buhovac, 2014). The objective of this article is to present required features and main areas of activity of the top managers within the scope of sustainability. Suggested solutions serve as a model. Sustainable top managers constitute a new type of managers who are particularly focused not only on economic aims but ecological and social ones as well. Literature concerning sustainable management whose authors include, among others, S. Cohen (Cohen, 2011), G. Haugen (Haugen, 2014), G. Muller-Christ (Muller-Christ, 2011), B. Bossink (Bossink, 2012), M. Epstein, A. Buhovac (Epstein and Buhovac, 2014), M. Jones (Jones, 2010), I. Ehnert (Ehnert, 2009) does not present features and areas of activity of the sustainable top managers in a complex explicit and structured way. This article fills this gap. A. Pabian attributes a particular role in creating sustainable business and sustainable society to sustainable top managers (Pabian A. 2015; Pabian A. 2016; Pabian et al. 2013). They constitute the driving force of these directions of activity which may considerably accelerate and disseminate sustainable development. Environmental safety management contributes to sustainable development. Thanks to sustainable top managers, this management concept receives strong support based on knowledge and ecological sensitivity in the company.

2. FEATURES OF SUSTAINABLE TOP MANAGERS

The notion of sustainable top managers is used to describe people who hold the most important managerial positions in the enterprises (they occupy the highest positions in the organizational structure) as well as they possess features and perform tasks within the scope of sustainability specified in Table 1. The scope and pace of establishing the sustainable enterprises depend on intensification of these features and actions.

Table 1

Features and main areas of activity of a sustainable top manager

SUSTAINABLE TOP MANAGER				
Features of a sustainable manager facilitating involvement in sustainable development	Knowledge within the scope of <i>sustainability</i>	Social and ecological sensitivity	Innovativeness within the scope of <i>sustainability</i>	The ability to convince and motivate employees within the scope of <i>sustainability</i>
The main areas of activity of a top manager within the scope of <i>sustainability</i>	Planned transformation of the company into a sustainable enterprise			
	Convincing and encouraging employees to implement the principles of <i>sustainability</i>			
	Development of employees within the scope of <i>sustainability</i>			
	Motivating within the scope of <i>sustainability</i>			
	Formalisation of activities within the area of <i>sustainability</i>			

A sustainable top manager possesses knowledge and experience within the scope of both management and sustainability. He or she has explored the secrets of sustainable management. He or she implements planning, organizing, leading and controlling taking into consideration not only the economic goals but ecological and social ones as well. Ecological and social targets permeate all areas of enterprise functioning since sustainable top managers include them in their strategic, tactical and operational plans. A sustainable top manager understands and approves sustainable development. His or her knowledge is not only limited to ecological and social threats present on a global scale. He or she possesses results of the research which explain whether and which ecological and social problems are caused by his or her enterprise and how they can be eliminated.

Features of a sustainable top manager include high social and ecological sensitivity. He or she feels responsible for the condition of the planet where he or she lives and where his or her enterprise operates. He or she wants to act for the benefit of future generations so that they will be able to both survive and develop. He or she is not only focused on the present and near future, however, she or she tries to predict the social and ecological results of his or her decisions over a long horizon of time.

Being innovative constitutes another important feature of a sustainable top manager. Innovative solutions in the area of sustainability are related to numerous issues, including:

- a) technical solutions, e.g. how to construct the products that will be safe for the human and environment, energy-saving and durable?,
- b) technological solutions, e.g. which technological changes should be implemented to make production compliant with the principles of clean production?,
- c) economic solutions, e.g. how to reconcile high costs of business activity within the scope of sustainable development and obtain profits at the same time?,
- d) marketing solutions, e.g. how to advertise sustainable products and services to encourage customers to buy them?
- e) social solutions, e.g. how to motivate employees to get involved with sustainable development?

A sustainable top manager constantly stimulates the personnel to create new solutions regardless of his or her innovative predispositions. He or she does this by

looking for innovators, appointing innovation leaders, implementing attractive systems of financing the innovations and remunerating their creators (Fulton et al., 2011; Lado et al., 1992; Kumar et al., 2011).

Development within the scope of sustainability requires involvement of not only managers but other enterprise employees as well. Building solely on regulations, procedures and official orders which enforce pro-ecological and pro-social behavior in an administrative manner is not fully relevant. A sustainable top manager wants employees to understand the issues of sustainable development and undertake the actions aiming at its implementation with belief in its rightness. He or she considerably contributes to an increase in the number of such personnel as he or she can convince and motivate employees within the scope of sustainability.

3. MAIN AREAS OF ACTIVITY OF SUSTAINABLE TOP MANAGERS

Sustainable top managers have several important roles to be fulfilled in the process of introducing the enterprise on a sustainable development path. They have been specified in Table 1. The fundamental role of a sustainable top manager is to transform the company into a sustainable enterprise in a planned way. The condition of this transformation is to include the ventures contributing to sustainable development in the strategic, tactical and operational plans. Strategic plans established by top managers are of foremost importance. Tactical and operational plans are established on their basis. If top managers do not include actions within the scope of sustainable development in the strategic plans, the enterprise will not execute ecological and social ventures. Inclusion of such actions in the strategic plans completely changes the situation. They become a permanent obligatory binding element of enterprise functioning. What is more, strategic plans are established for long periods (5 and more years) and, as a result, they guarantee involvement of the company in sustainable development over a long horizon of time as well as give prominence to the enterprise.

The next task of a sustainable top manager is to convince lower-level managers and executive employees that the enterprise should be involved with implementation of the ecological and social goals. In this case, it is important to present specific evidence that this procedures will be beneficial to the environment, society and company. Sustainable products, i.e. pro-ecological and pro-social goods constitute a good example. Their production and sale may be a source of profits for the enterprise. Results of the research confirms that many consumers are willing to pay more for the product supporting ecological and social goals. The percentage of this type of consumers in selected states of the European Union is as follows: Germany – 35%, Italy – 34%, France – 30%, the Netherlands – 30%, Belgium – 29%, Great Britain – 28%, Poland – 13%. This coefficient is significantly higher in some non-European countries, e.g. China – 80%, India – 71%, the USA – 39% (Mirońska and Zaborek, 2014). Upward trends are observed on the markets of products supporting sustainable development. 'In the European Union the average annual increase in the sale of ecological products is 20% and in Poland it is approximately 30% [...]. Over half of the world's population (54%) declares that such notions as green, environmentally-friendly, fair trade or sustainable development are important' (Sieńkowska, 2013). An improved image constitutes another significant benefit resulting from involvement in sustainable development.

Another area of activity of sustainable top managers specified in Table 1 is development of employees within the scope of sustainability. Managers should ensure that building the personnel focused on sustainable development takes place in two ways: by recruiting the employees possessing the proper qualifications as well as development of social and ecological attitudes and behaviour of the staff that has already been employed. This is an example regarding the recruitment: when CLP company realized that it had to differentiate the energy sources (including hydroelectric, wind and solar energy apart from fossil fuels) it conducted the recruitment of dozens of engineers possessing the qualifications in these technologies. New competent staff helped CLP to increase the percentage of electricity from renewable sources from the level below 1% in the year 2004 to 18% in the year 2011 (Eccles and Serafeim, 2013, Vorhies and Morgan, 2005).

Employment of competent personnel should be conducted in parallel with educational programmes and development of these enterprise employees who have neither knowledge nor experience in sustainable development. Such actions are taken by more and more economic entities. For instance, 'Nissan, a leading auto manufacturer, has trained 99% of its company staff in environmental issues to foster understanding and sustainability awareness' (Epstein and Buhovac, 2014). A top manager may accept various forms of education and trainings in the area of sustainability, starting with referring employees for post-graduates studies through development courses organized at the workplace to individual or group coaching. In the training processes, descriptions of sustainable events which present sustainability in action are useful. They are related to the issues of marketing and communication, energy, emission of contaminants, transport, water, usage of resources, waste management (Jones, 2010).

A sustainable top manager continuously motivates employees to undertake pro-ecological and pro-social activity. The priority task of the top manager consists in stimulating high involvement of the employees in sustainable development, this should have universal character and last as long as possible. Both financial (salary increases, bonuses, financial rewards, etc.) and non-financial (promotion, non-cash prizes, medals, diploma of recognition, etc.) forms of motivating can be useful within this scope. Particular attention should be paid to employees who doubt the sense of sustainable development or even negate it. In such cases, it is not only necessary to use strong motivators but to raise ecological and social awareness through a system of trainings.

Formalization of activities supporting sustainable development constitutes another challenge for a sustainable top manager. The essence of formalization facilitating sustainable development lies in introducing the regulations and procedures regulating work and behaviour of the personnel which are based on principles of sustainability. The issues of sustainability should be reflected in all significant documents regulating functioning of the enterprise. It is recommended for the organizational structure of the enterprise to include all these positions, cells and organizational units that have been established to fulfil specific functions within the scope of sustainability. This can be a position of a specialist for sustainability development or a department dealing with this issue. For example, there has been the so-called eco-ambassador within the structures of ArcelorMittal Poland S.A. since 2009 who is responsible for undertaking pro-ecological initiatives and co-operation with local government authorities and social organizations (Wypych, 2012). The scope of duties, rights and responsibilities of the

employees should be determined in the way which motivates to perform work in an ecological and socially responsible manner. In the technological manuals it is worth putting emphasis on economical material management in the processes of the basic/auxiliary production as well as safe and ecological exploitation of machines and devices. Formalization of structures and activities related to sustainable development is necessary since it gives prominence to this and it confirms significant involvement of the enterprise in social and ecological issues.

4. CONCLUSION

Environmental safety management does not keep up with increased global environmental threats. Their source is primarily production companies. Production enterprises lead in worsening the condition of our planet since they have the largest share in using non-renewable resources and environmental pollution. Without their transformation into sustainable enterprises, global sustainability will only remain a theoretical concept which will not be implemented in practice. In this particular case, it is not about a transformation which numerous companies are subject to nowadays – they implement various ecological and social initiatives in a selective and fragmentary way from time to time, mainly for the purposes of improving their image. The real transformation consists in planned and permanent implementation of sustainability principles in all areas of enterprise functioning. It is based on knowledge within the scope of sustainable development and belief that the company may considerably contribute to it. This transformation of the enterprise requires leaders. According to the author, sustainable top managers should fulfil these roles. A sustainable top manager is a double specialist. He or she possesses both knowledge and experience within the scope of management and sustainability as well. His or her features include social and ecological sensitivity, being innovative and the ability to convince and motivate employees within the scope of sustainability. His or her aim is to create an organization whose mission, strategy as well as tactical and operational action programmes include ecological and social initiatives. He or she does not want to impose such initiatives on employees solely in an administrative way. That is why a sustainable top manager convinces, trains and motivates employees in the area of sustainability. He or she believes that the more people understand the essence of sustainable development and get to know global and local threats which have a negative influence on their health and life, the more they will contribute to it. This all favors the implementation of environmental safety management. It is easier to apply this concept in enterprises managed by sustainable top managers, that is people with high ecological sensitivity, having knowledge of sustainable development and supporting its ideas.

Transformation of traditionally operating enterprises into their sustainable equivalents constitutes a new challenge for top managers. Future generations will assess whether it has been undertaken and to which extent it has contributed to balancing intergenerational needs.

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