

“GREEN BUSINESS PRACTICES : THE BASIC NOTION ABOUT THE GREEN BANDWAGON AND THE COUNTERING MYTHS”

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INTRODUCTION

Green business practices are an emerging strategic imperative that is helping companies improve their operations and increase their competitiveness in the global marketplace,” said John R. Rathgeber, CBIA President and Chief Executive Officer“. Green business, is an enterprise that has minimal negative impact on the global or local environment, community, society, or economy – a business that strives to meet the triple bottom line.

A business that participates in environmental friendly or green activities to ensure that all processes, products, and manufacturing activities adequately address current environmental concerns while maintaining a profit is termed as green.

In other words, it is a business that **“meets the needs of the present world without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs.”**

It is the process of assessing how to design products that will take advantage of the current environmental situation and how well a company's products perform with renewable resources.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

The objective of the present study is twofold; firstly to clarify the definition of “Green Business Practices”, secondly to understand the confusions and countering myths revolving around it.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The data have been collected through secondary sources like journals, articles, reports, newspapers, magazines etc. The study is descriptive in

nature.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Green is in. Green is in vogue. Green is the new black. Consumers are asking for it. Organizations are requesting it. Green managements are demanding it. The future of business is being built on green and social responsible organizations. The green bandwagon is overloaded with posers and images of green without the true understanding of what green means, the methodologies of achieving green, and the applicability of green management.

Nevertheless, being green is fast becoming an essential component of almost every commercial building and interior design projects. At the same time, more architects and designers are looking for high quality green products in order to meet new green building guidelines, which continue to evolve at a rapid pace and, as a result, there are many entities involved in establishing standards and certifying that they have been met.

With that said, green, as applied here, is a term now widely used to describe buildings designed and constructed with minimal negative impact to the environment and with an emphasis on conservation of resources, energy efficiency and healthful interior spaces. Green can also be used to describe sites that are designed in an environmentally sensitive manner with minimal damage to the surroundings.

What is considered as green by people/ organization is differ to others. Furthermore, the definition of green business is becoming undermined by a proliferation of green labeling and standards. These standards are leading some consumers to consider "green labels" to simplify a marketing tool with little significance behind it. The basic concept of a green business lies in business sustainability.

GREEN BUSINESS - DEFINITION

Green Business can be defined as "A business functioning in a capacity where no negative impact is made on the local or global environment, the community or the economy". A green business will also engage in forward thinking policies affecting human rights. According to the Cop of America, Green businesses operate in ways that solve, rather than cause, both environmental and social problems. These businesses adopt principles, policies and practices that improve the quality of life for their customers, their

employees, communities and the environment.

The aforementioned "genetic" link of the green business ideology with that of sustainable development explains why it is often perceived - explicitly or implicitly - as being synonymous with the notion of "sustainable business".

For instance, Brown and Ratledge adopt quite a narrow definition of green business as "an establishment that produces green output" (Brown, Ratledge, 2011).

Meanwhile, Makower and Pyke, in a broad brush way, state that "a green business requires a balanced commitment to profitability, sustainability and humanity" (Makower, Pyke, 2009).

The Business Dictionary indicates that green business is "a business functioning in a capacity where no negative impact is made on the local or global environment, the community, or the economy", and further adds that "green business will also engage in forward-thinking policies for environmental concerns and policies affecting human rights" (Business Dictionary, n.d.).

Similarly, G. Croston states that "Green Businesses have more sustainable business practices than competitors, benefiting natural systems and helping people live well today and tomorrow while making money and contributing to the economy" (Croston, 2009).

K. Slovik proposes an amalgamation of environmental sustainability demand with that of social responsibility: "A "green business" can be defined as an organization that uses renewable resources (environmentally sustainable) and holds itself accountable for the human resource aspect of their activities (socially responsible)" (Slovik, 2013).

Quite obviously, all these definitions attempt to embrace a wider impact spectrum of business activities and not only those that could be considered as related to the environment. The requirement of commitment to the environmental considerations is here complemented by the imperative to honor human rights and to contribute to the well-being of current and future generations while ensuring the economic sustainability of business itself. Such approach obliterates boundaries between the notions of "green business" and "sustainable business", the latter term referring to business being sustainable economically, socially and environmentally.

The other authors take a narrower approach, focusing on the “green” constituent of the term. They define green business as the one “being concerned with and supporting environmentalism” and “tending to preserve environmental quality”(Green Times, 2013), which “has made an enduring commitment to environmental principles in its business operations” (Cooney, 2008), as “Business or entity preparing a plan and taking action to reduce its environmental impact on its immediate area of concern” (Sustainable Green, 2013) or, even stronger, as “Business where its activities do not have a negative impact on the environment” (Calling Green, 2011).

SUMMING UP, THE GREEN BUSINESS DEFINITION AS UNDER

Green business is an organization that is committed to the principles of environmental sustainability in its operations, strives to use renewable resources, and tries to minimize the negative environmental impact of its activities.

In this perception, “greening” of business is part of a long-term strategy of becoming sustainable, i.e. being able to achieve business tasks in the way that does not develop any threat - economic, social or environmental - for both current and future generations.

Enormous economic and population growth worldwide in the second half of the twentieth century aggravated the factors that threaten health and the world – ozone depletion, climate change, depletion, fouling of natural resources, and extensive loss of biodiversity and habitat. In the past, the standard approaches to environmental problems generated by business and industry have been regulatory-driven “end-of-the-pipe” remediation efforts. In the 1990s, efforts by governments, NGOs, corporations, and investors began to grow substantially to develop awareness and plans for investment in business sustainability.

From the business management perspective, green management matters, but it matters only due to the so called triple bottom line. As stated above, the triple bottom line consists of environmental benefits, positive economics effect, and healthy societal images. Contributing to the triple bottom line and supporters of the green management are tax incentives backed by LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design). Many businesses have gone green or in the process of going green. Among them are the more internationally known Google, VMware, and Sony.

Nevertheless, the voluntary process of going green up to date is governed by LEED.

COUNTERING TEN MYTHS ABOUT GOING GREEN

No matter how far down the green path may be, you are sure to encounter skepticism and maybe even scorn from colleagues, bosses, and business partners. Such negative reaction is usually fueled by concerns about cost and an increased workload. Following are ten of the most common myths about greening a commercial endeavor. One may hear them on occasion, or our mind may even wander toward these thoughts when you're feeling less than inspired.

1. THE COSTS OUTWEIGH THE PROFITS

The idea that the costs of greening your business outweigh any potential profits is a very general argument that is actually part myth and part fact. Some projects, such as those designed to reduce waste production, energy usage, excessive materials use, or water usage, can actually save your company money. (These projects are referred to as the low-hanging fruit of green business practices.) The key is to focus on what can be done quickly and easily now – with low cost and big impact!

Other projects, specifically longer-range efforts, like installing a ground source heat pump, retrofitting all of your lighting ballasts, or even building a green facility, clearly have price tags associated with them. For these projects, make sure to convey the concept that as savings accrue from picking the low-hanging fruit, the company will have seed capital to invest in other green projects that may require start-up funding. Emphasize the win- win nature of using short-term savings to fund long-term projects. After all, long-term triple-bottom-line benefits accrue from a portfolio of both short- and long-term projects.

2. GOING GREEN REQUIRES EXTENSIVE ECO-KNOWLEDGE

With words such as eco, sustainable, and green bombarding people day in and day out in the mass media, it is hard not to believe that going green means speaking an entirely different language and acquiring a vast, new knowledge base. However, the basic concepts of going green in the business world are rather easy to understand because they relate to subjects any business owner already knows all about: increasing revenues, decreasing expenses, meeting

customers' needs, and establishing a game plan for the future.

When faced with this myth, respond with a series of irrefutable snippets that are easy to grasp, painless to remember, and simple to repeat. The following few sum up all you need to know about greening business practices in order to start convincing the naysayers:

- Green business is about focusing on the triple bottom line, which consists of people, planet, and profit, rather than looking solely at short-term profit. Thinking in these terms positions your company to cope with all the changes that are occurring in the business world.
- Reducing water usage, waste production, energy usage, and excessive materials use are all big parts of going green that save you money, both in the short and long term.
- Becoming sustainable is a journey and not a destination. So don't worry if you don't understand it all now. Your company will evolve as you make the transition.

3. OUR EMPLOYEES ARE TOO BUSY TO IMPLEMENT GREEN INITIATIVES

The myth of employees who are too swamped to help green their companies isn't entirely far from the truth. If you take a snapshot of most companies now compared to ten years ago, you find that fewer people are doing more work for pay that hasn't kept pace with inflation. So what incentive is there for employees to participate in green team meetings or sort departmental recycling on top of their daily tasks? Preaching about how going green is the right thing to do isn't the answer!

To mitigate employee resistance and incorporate greening efforts easily, make changes as simple as possible to implement, particularly in the introductory phase of greening your business. For example, if your recycling plan makes it easier to toss items in a recycling bin rather than throw them in the garbage, you'll have nearly full staff buy-in. Likewise, if you show employees how they can save \$50 per week by car pooling, you'll pique their interest.

Avoid starting with projects or programs that add a ton of

tasks to your staff members' to-do lists. On Day One, you must make change easy or you'll just be wasting everyone's time. As your employees' eco-conscious spirits awaken through small start-up initiatives, then you can play with ideas that require asking something of them.

4. MY BUSINESS IS TOO SMALL TO MATTER

We often hear businesspeople spout the myth that their companies are too small to effect powerful green change. Although, it is hard to imagine how setting 1/2-inch margins to save office paper will have any impact on global issues such as social inequality and climate change, the truth is that any step toward sustainability (no matter how small) makes a difference. If all companies make small strides, the cumulative impact will be bigger than if they didn't start at all.

Many of the small beginner initiatives (like altering company printing practices to save paper or turning off lights in unused spaces) actually save companies money. Combine that savings with the lower expenses, higher profits, better job security, and superior positioning for the future that comes from greening a business, and even the smallest company can see how embracing sustainability can have an impact on both the environment and the corporate coffers.

5. WHY START NOW? THE EARTH IS ALREADY DOOMED

It seems these days that lots of people have gone from a big collective yawn on the doom-and-gloom front to the "We are dust, why even bother?" state of mind. Although the changes in nature are worth being concerned about, staying focused on the positive is important. The exciting part of the story is how much opportunity exists for businesses to meet the challenges of the 21st century, craft solutions to some of the world's most pressing problems, and enjoy competitive advantages while doing so.

6. THIS CLIMATE CHANGE THING WILL PASS

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, made up of 160 scientists from all over the world, has been studying the issue of climate change for 20 years. Its increasingly solid conclusion? The planet is warming at a rate that most species can't adapt to, and there's a 90 percent likelihood that this warming is caused by human activities. However, some people you encounter will insist that human-accelerated

climate change is just a passing phase. Chances are they will have their own scientific evidence too because there are small-scale studies out there that show contrary results.

Unless you are a climatologist, forget debating the science. That is a no-win situation. Instead, focus on the fact that climate change whether human accelerated or not, poses many challenges and opportunities for business moving forward.

7. NOT TO WORRY – TECHNOLOGY WILL PROVIDE THE ANSWERS!

To assert that technology is the stand-alone answer to the tests facing business today (such as how to cope with climate change, peak oil, and trade deficits) is an easy out. Yes, investing in alternative transportation and fuels, sustainable agriculture, and green construction and building materials is essential to crafting a sustainable future. However, these technological investments aren't instead of conserving energy and water.

Technological advancements don't replace the need to reduce waste, use recycled materials, close the global equity gap, and treat foreign employees with dignity. All these different sustainability components work together. Minimizing your business's impact on nature's systems, via technology or not, is always important.

8. OUR SHAREHOLDERS JUST WANT SHORT-TERM RESULTS

Because of the commercial and cultural emphasis on immediate gratification, especially when it comes to short-term financial results, you may find people claiming that any initiatives requiring long-term thinking just won't fly with the company's shareholders. That's simply not true. Just invite a calculation of total returns over the lifetime of a green project versus its immediate impact.

If you point out that when current energy, carbon, or waste costs are factored in, there is a high likelihood of much bigger costs to deal with in the future, you will have these folks' attention. After all, whether your company succeeds or fails financially in the long run has an impact on them, too. That societal need for immediate gratification will go right out the window – or at least to the back of people's minds for the time being.

9. THE WHOLE GREEN SCENE IS A PLOY BY WHINY ECOLIBERALS

The false idea that the green movement is a stunt being pulled by left-wingers is a result of mass media's passion for segregating and categorizing the greater population to create controversy. After all, without controversy, there are no stories. The move toward greening business, however, can't truly be politicized with any credibility. How can increasing profits while lessening corporate impact on the Earth and contributing to community development possibly be political in nature?

Don't get caught up in this myth. Disarm any cynic who tries to defend it with a few choice facts that illustrate how major multibillion-dollar corporations like Nike, Hewlett Packard, and GE have fully embraced a green agenda to position their companies for the 21st century by being the first to enter and capture green niche markets.

Above all, stay positive and focused on the reality of the business case for sustainability. Dispute is difficult if you stay out of the political arena and remain centered on business.

10. THIS PROBLEM ISN'T OURS TO SOLVE

This myth belongs to a particular demographic group that questions why businesses should be forced to figure out their own sustainability strategies when government policies have been so remiss over the years in encouraging sustainable behavior. For example, it doesn't seem fair to many business owners why they should be left to absorb increased energy costs when government has passed on many opportunities to invest in alternatives.

This group thinks the nation's elected representatives need to lead the way in going green by enacting massive programs to encourage green building, sustainable product design, and research and development for renewable energy. It also believes the government should mandate prohibitive taxes on plastic bags, waste, and fossil fuel emissions.

In reality, the challenges and opportunities inherent in instituting green change on a nationwide scale are so great that it will take power, persuasion, policy, and behavior change on the part of everyone involved. To truly effect change that will enable a sustainable future, nonprofits; state, and municipal governments; businesses; and individuals all need to contribute their resources and wisdom

to that end.

CONCLUSION

Green initiative is neither the repackaging, the reinventing approaches to business, nor business management. Green management is not a concept describing new business management style. Green management is simply the rethinking, or more accurately, being more mindful of how organizations are operating (or a lack thereof) with respect to the environment. It is not the human factors within the organization that are being managed but the components of the organization that are being managed by green management.

The present analysis of the green concept addresses a scarcity that currently exists in the academic literature. Specifically, there are two central concerns:

- (a) What is basically the ideology behind the Going Green concept?
- (b) What are some of the concerns, confusions, and myths to going green?

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