



Empowering Times

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Dear Reader,

On 5th June, we celebrated the 'World Environment Day'. It couldn't be a better time for us to focus on the emerging concept of 'Sustainability'. What is sustainability all about? Is it only related to the Environment? **Vijayan**, our Principal Consultant, writes about these ideas and more in the **Thinking Aloud** column.

Where do you start if you want to create a 'Sustainable' business? Know from the people who did it. Tata Consultancy Services is one of the only two Indian companies on Dow Jones Sustainability Index. In our column **Podium** we feature **Dr. Joy Deshmukh Randive**, Vice President - Global Corporate Social Responsibility for Tata Consultancy Services. She shares with us their journey and learning.

'Cannibals with Forks: The Triple Bottom Line of 21st Century Business' by John Elkington is our book of the month. If you want to make your business Sustainable, we recommend this book to take your first step ahead. In the **Between The Lines** section **Banashree Das**, our student intern from Sadhana Centre for Leadership Development offers her take on the book.

While we are talking about how to become sustainable, **Figures Of Speech** has **Vikram's** caricature giving a different view point!

We have been receiving a lot of feedback to our previous issues. So do continue to write to pour in your thoughts. To see our previous issues simply [click here](#) or go to the archives section on our website.

Geetanjali Sharma
Editor, Empowering Times

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THINKING ALOUD



"Sustainability is the only viable and life giving platform for us to correct ourselves."

Sustainability for Longevity - Vijayan Pankajakshan

There is no doubt that all of us want to live long. We predict that our lives on this planet would be reasonably long to experience living and play multiple roles.

History has shown that societies have yearned for continuity and all great thinkers, scientists and business leaders are sensitive to leaving behind a legacy when they move out of their 'role zone' to 'life zone'.

Sustainability hence is not foreign to mankind. The current heightened awareness is primarily because now we are facing the unintended consequences of our chase after the fruits of accelerated economic growth & development. The future looks uncertain and different to mankind.

Sustainability is the only viable and life giving platform for us to correct ourselves. We need to bring 'sustenance' as the central theme to our lives through the choices we make. We need to pause and understand that we do not have the 'social license' to abrogate and fritter away all finite resources of the nature at any price. Our very existence is threatened by runaway consumption and unimaginable wastage of resources. Even more shocking is our lack of consciousness and willingness to tackle waste processing and disposal.

We all are part of some organization. It could be a business organization, a social group or a common community. Each one of us has a very good opportunity and responsibility to influence this sphere of people around us. We have this fascinating opportunity "to do more for less, and yet benefit more".

There is another aspect to Sustainability: Total System Sustainability. We need to think end to end and move as upstream as possible and similarly downstream in our thinking, designing and taking actions. For example a garment manufacturer using wool should have a 'view' of the Total Supply Chain System'- where the wool is sourced from, living conditions for the sheep and its owners, distance travelled etc., to its sustainable method of disposal after use.

Let us look at designing sustainable Human Resource Management Practices. If we believe that every employee is an asset to the organization, we will sharply focus on 'sustainable' initiatives like - employee engagement and retention - rather than 'manage' attrition and do 'catch-up hiring.'

When a company takes a decision to launch a campus hiring program, the company needs to deeply reflect on questions like: "Do we have the leaders to lead these youngsters? Do we have the resource engine to provide competitive salaries to new hires year on year? Do we visualize the response of our existing employees towards their growth in the company when they see youngsters from premium B schools being inducted? Is the downside lower than the upside of 'fresh legs'?"

The Total Rewards Plan of an organization needs to be architected with increasing focus on prevention of poor health problems of employees, sharper choices in policy towards decent work life balance, instead of only focusing on increasing Health Insurance cover limits.

Rewards and Recognition programs should focus not only on current performance (and hence current consumption) but also for tomorrow and the day after tomorrow's performance of a superior nature (driving part consumption into future).

Longevity needs to be earned. For this to happen, a deep and expansive search for 'Who am I' and 'Where am I going' has to begin ... NOW.

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PODIUM

INTERVIEW: Dr. Joy Deshmukh Randive on Sustainability

Dr. Joy Deshmukh-Randive holds an M.A. and Ph.D in Economics from the University of Mumbai. She has twenty years of experience in economics and gender development. She is a prolific writer and has many books and research papers to her credit. Prior to joining Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), she was the Director of Indian School of Microfinance for Women, Ahmedabad. She is currently the Global Head - Corporate Social Responsibility. TCS is one amongst the only two Indian companies to be listed on Dow Jones Sustainability Index.

We requested Dr. Joy to answer a few questions on Sustainability. Read on to know more...

ET: What is 'Sustainability' all about in the context of business?

JD: "Sustainability" in a business context generally connotes the ability of the company to address current business needs with agility along with management strategy to plan and prepare successfully for the future business, market and operating environment. Such a strategy would combine both industry wide as well as organisation specific components. In practice, sustainability is about the big picture, about long term and about longevity.

We recognize that even while being a global company with 160,000 IT consultants in 42 countries, TCS is still a microcosm in the larger macrocosm of human and natural environments. Corporate sustainability is seen as being in balance between being economically and socially responsible.

TCS aims to have the customer experience certainty, where high quality is delivered on time. The 'experience of certainty' is enabled by adhering to self regulated measures of compliance in ethics, governance, finance, supply chain regulation, health and safety protection, environmental safeguards and human resource policies. These practices translate into corporate economic responsibility where the company minimizes the risk by efficiently utilizing resources for optimal participation and results in the market.

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is the other half of corporate sustainability, along with corporate economic responsibility (CER). Ploughing back part of profits into communities, is necessary to sustain in the market.

In response to Milton Friedman's challenge one would say that 'the business of business is creating sustainable value'.



"The business's pursuit of profit has to be underpinned by norms reinforced by ethics".

ET: How does one get started to become a sustainable business/organization?

JD: Consistent with this line of thinking one has to first refocus on and if necessary refine the vision and mission of the organization. The profit element is critical, else the business would not be sustainable.

In parallel, there would be processes in place and monitoring mechanism to ensure that there is a commonality of purpose and perspective. This would include care for the workforce through robust human resources practices. The business's pursuit of profit has to be underpinned by norms reinforced by ethics.

The governance of the organization would play a crucial role in providing direction and ensuring the credibility of the business through transparency and adherence to necessary requirements of legal and other regulatory compliance.

A sustainable organization would also review the impact of its operations on the environment, both direct as well as indirect. A chain is as strong as its weakest link. Sustainability also extends to suppliers and vendors not just for quality but to mirror the principal organization's adherence to regulatory compliance, fair trade and concern for human rights.

ET: What are some key challenges one might encounter?

JD: If one may list some key challenges on the journey to sustainability they would be:

1. Defining and Quantifying with a fair degree of precision, what sustainability would mean in one's business context.
2. The challenge of communicating and embedding the vision and cascading the message of sustainability across the organization on a regular basis.
3. The process of monitoring the observance of good practices which have been laid down and which have in themselves found to be crucial to sustainability of the business.
4. Reviewing on a regular basis the norms, processes, standards, observances that have been set up and institutionalized across the organization.
5. Benchmarking with other organization to achieve continuous improvement.

ET: How do you measure effectiveness of the sustainability initiatives?

JD: First of all, sustainability initiatives have to align with the business's vision, mission and values.

Secondly any activity which undermines the business viability or erodes profit cannot be classified as effective. Again longevity and the long term are key to determining the sustainability of an initiative.

Initiatives should be beneficial and have optimum effect on stakeholders and the entire supply chain, especially those critical for the business: customers and employees.

Negation or reduction of environmental degradation through any initiative would count as sustainable.

ET: What are some key learnings from your work on sustainability at TCS?

JD: First and foremost, attention to sustainability in the manner described above is in keeping with the times, since the awareness of the importance of sustainability for a business is now omnipresent.

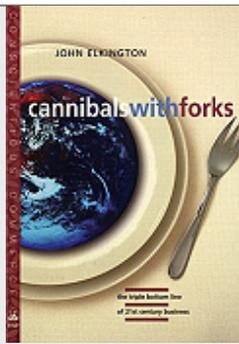
Observing of sustainable business practices and more importantly reporting on sustainability, through the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) and the Carbon Disclosure Project (CDP) has added to the reputation of TCS amongst external stakeholders like investors, civil society organizations, industry bodies etc.

TCS has also invested in measures to support biodiversity and ecological conservation through zero waste disposal, reduction on dependence on fuel and conservation of power through "green IT" initiatives. TCS offers consultancy in the domain of green IT.

The Tata Code of Conduct and business ethics in TCS has guided our business practice and contributed to the reputation of the organization in the eyes of stakeholders who have been shown to have a preference to engage with companies of caliber.

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BETWEEN THE LINES



Cannibals with Forks - John Elkington

In 'Cannibals With Forks' Elkington talks about a new managerial paradigm for next century called 'Sustainable Business'. This is not a new concept but it has mostly been limited to 'Environmental Sustainability'. The book enlarges the concept and presents a broad picture of what social responsibility agenda for business should entail. Business is sustainable only when it lives up to the 'Triple Bottom Line' of economic prosperity, social and environmental well being.

The first of the four part book questions whether Capitalism is Sustainable! It has been found that there are good reasons to believe that sustainable forms of capitalism can be evolved. Elkington talks about the two great waves (upward movements) and the ensuing down waves of environmentalism. He discusses the likely characteristics of the next wave, the third wave as 'Sustainability' and thus the Triple Bottom Line.

The second section talks about the Seven Revolutions - Market, Values, Transparency, Life Cycle Technology, Partnerships, Time and Corporate Governance.

Market: here the author wants to draw attention towards the paradigm shift from Compliance to Competition, which is largely due to growing number of companies, which are challenged by customers and commitments & performance.

Value: the worst blind spot business leaders suffers from is that the business of business is about creation of economic value, and not about social or ethical values.

Transparency: the author says that the society has become a hyper communicative society and there are external watchers. Slipping underneath society radar is no more possible and it is better to learn to play the game by the new rules.

Life Cycle Technology: life cycle thinking is the key feature of 21st century business because of the X-ray environment. The issues are potentially lurking in the supply chains.

Partnerships: they are never in isolation, but in line with all these seven revolutions. The book says that the greater the mutual earned respect and loyalty, the greater the chance that the organisation will be sustainable.

Time: new ways of perceiving, valuing and managing time because building infrastructure of a sustainable economy will take unusually long-term thinking, planning, and funding.

Corporate Governance: the centre of gravity of the debate has shifted from public relations to competitive advantage & corporate governance; from factory fence to boardrooms.

The third section talks about 'Transition to Sustainability in 39 steps'. It explores how business leaders and corporations should respond to the seven revolutions, how to drive sustainability thinking and target the very core of the business policies and practices & how to identify the kind of paradigm shifts needed to drive the sustainability transition.

By end of the book one starts thinking; What if there is no 'either or' between Corporate Citizenship and Competitive Advantage? How do we assess the likely upside and downside of adopting or failing to adopt a competitive triple bottom line strategy? Which performance indicators would be most useful in our sector, value chain and markets?

This is an indispensable reading for anyone who thinks that some relationship exists between Business, Society & Environment.

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