

# Empowering TIMES



June 2011

## Editor's DESK

Dear Reader,

Since 1972, the UN has used the World Environment Day (WED) celebration to be one of the primary methods through which the UN catalyses global awareness about environment and gathers political attention and action. Keeping in view the WED, which is celebrated every year on the 05th of June, we decided to delve into the subject of Sustainability for this month's edition. Sustainability or 'the capacity to endure' has environment at its core, but is not limited only to that. Also does Sustainability only 'apply' to organizations, or does it apply to us as individuals? This month's Empowering Times takes a deep dive into Sustainability and I am confident that it will help in untangling many of your queries on Sustainability .

Sustainability and 'individual identity' are concepts which seem unconnected, but nevertheless are strongly interconnected. In **Thinking Aloud**, Vijayan brings out the connection which these two concepts have. He says that until organizations and individuals do not expand their 'identity element' it is nearly impossible for them to be truly Sustainable.

On the **Podium** this month, we have Mr. J R Tanti, Managing Director, Synefra Engg. & Construction Limited (erstwhile Suzlon Infrastructure Limited), who tells us about the awareness of Sustainability among Indian organizations. He believes that the existing reporting mechanisms on Sustainability are competent enough to drive Sustainable measures, if businesses implement them comprehensively.

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By Himanshu Shetty



From the person who coined the term 'Learning Organization', in ***Between the Lines*** this month we review Arie de Gues' book 'The Living Company: Habits for Survival in a Turbulent Business Environment'. The book hypothesizes the company as a living being and tells us how organizational longevity is connected to learning.

Keeping the common thread of Sustainability running, this month's ***Standing Ovation*** features 'Vanamitra', a NGO for Nature Conservation with special focus on Wildlife. With its primary aim being welfare and conservation of wildlife, the Vanamitra team takes various initiatives to fructify this aim.

In ***Figures of Speech***, Himanshu re-defines Sustainability!

As always, we value your opinion, so do let us know about how you liked this issue. To visit our previous issues you can visit the Media & Archives section on the website or simply [Click Here](#). You can also follow us on [Facebook](#).



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## Sustainability and Identity - Vijayan Pankajakshan

While reflecting on Sustainability, I was serendipitous to read an article in the Times of India, 'Expanding Circles of Identity', written by Rabbi David Rosen.

The Rabbi, in the article, speaks about the different components of our human identity, i.e. as individuals, spouses, member of families, communities and nations. He says that these represent the 'expanding circles of our human identity' and 'each of which has its place and value.' He goes on to articulate that 'these circles of human identity should spiral outwards from the smaller spheres- such as family- through the larger (such as community and nation) to ultimately embrace the widest circles uniting all people in universal human solidarity.'

Turning to Sustainability, I am drawing inspiration from the Rabbi's perspective. In our living process, the focus that gets priority is on self preservation and establishing security for at best the members of the family. In the organizations' context, the focus more often than not is to satisfy the needs of the stakeholders, including shareholders and employees and customers. These are examples of exercising of the core identity, wherein the primary purpose of 'is it sustainable' is limited to a small circle of 'influence' or 'territory'. Individuals and families are reasonably pleased and happy with themselves, if their children are doing well, their house and its immediate surroundings are clean. Most of us do not bother to really 'care' for the neighbor's well being, cleanliness of the streets close to our home, etc.

As long as we continue to limit our 'identity element' to the 'smallest circle of self/spouse/family, we will be unable to expand our identity outward to the bigger circles. In the case of organizations and nations, this chasm is reflected in organizations making super profits side by side with degradation of natural resources (water, air, soil etc.), well being of the citizens not being in consonance with a 8% plus GDP economic growth context.

I see a close connect between Identity and Sustainability.

Sustainability thought processes get initiated when we first recognize and then decide to expand the circles of our human identity. When we do this, our perspective will change, when perspectives alter, our assumptions and beliefs are up for review. Growth is an outcome of this thought process. When we decide to expand our identity elements and actually take the first few steps, we are beginning to think 'Sustainability'. In the case of a business organization, the moment it chooses to expand its circle of identity (beyond the limits mentioned earlier) it begins to experience a different landscape. It begins to encounter questions on utilization of resources vis-à-vis replenishment/regeneration etc. The

organization has to now begin thinking through a different 'lens' to conduct its business profitably while aligning with the needs of the stakeholders in the expanded circle of its 'organizational identity'.

The unwillingness or the incapability of organizations to craft its emerging and expanding circles of identity (by updating the response to 'Who am I') is increasingly reflected in reactionary processes eg: terrorism, land acquisition related challenges, financial and systemic scams.

In conclusion, I would like to state that, the key focus for an organization or a community or a society or a nation or an individual to realize its true potential and live wholesomely in alignment, working on defining identity and its evolving and contextual definitions is critical. In this process of realizing multiple 'fields' of our identity, individuals and larger entities like organizations become more sustainable in their thoughts, behavior, actions, means and ends.

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## J R Tanti - Managing Director, Synefra Engg & Construction Ltd



Mr. J R Tanti, Managing Director, Synefra Engg & Construction Ltd (formerly Suzlon Infrastructure Limited), a Tanti Holding company is engaged in executing infrastructure projects globally which include strategic consulting, conceptualizing, investing, developing and facility & asset management.

Mr. Tanti has spearheaded three hi tech engineering Special Economic Zones which are the fastest commissioned SEZs in the country. These are operational in three different states which are fully performing for the last 4 years. The recently commissioned Suzlon One Earth, the Global HQ of Suzlon Group at Pune is a benchmark in green and sustainable infrastructure. The project

has been awarded the dual distinction of LEED Platinum and GRIHA five stars, the highest green building certification by any corporate campus in the country today. The Suzlon campus is a world class structure and an exemplary model of responsible and responsive infrastructure.

Under his leadership, Synefra Engg & Construction has developed and incorporated various initiatives like 'Sustainability & Responsibility', 'New & Relevant technology' and 'Business Excellence' to become integral for day to day operations. Mr. Tanti has been a crusader for Green Building initiatives and his projects have always focused on and reflected environmentally responsible architecture adhering to values like - energy efficiency, environment conscious, neighborhood enhancement and social responsibility.

He is an architect by profession and the co-founder of Suzlon Group.

ET: In your opinion, how concerned are Indian firms with creating sustainable business models?

JT: I would say that in the last decade the level of awareness not only in Indian firms but individual Indians as well, regarding sustainability as a concept has risen substantially. Due to this, many large and medium firms are now focused and committed towards creating sustainable business models. On the other hand, I can say that it is now inevitable for survival that sustainable business models are adopted by organizations. Hence, so far, the number of firms faithful to a sustainable business model might not be very high and as required but it is definitely rising and that is quite encouraging.

ET: Could you please share what are the steps that Synefra has taken to create awareness in the organization on Sustainability?

JT: Synefra is in the business of creation. We are part of the Engineering & Construction sector and are responsible for infrastructure development. As a business philosophy, our company comprising of Project Management, EPC and SEZ development and maintenance, works on the principle of reduce, reuse and recycle. Every process is thought of in terms of sustainability and our survival as a planet. We are in the business of affecting large skylines hence a great responsibility lies on us as to how much we impact the surroundings where we create infrastructure. At Synefra, sustainability is a way of life and it is embedded in every process from concept to commissioning to operations.

ET: What governance, systems and processes are needed to report on Sustainability?

JT: While reporting Sustainability definitely puts responsibility on a priority but in my opinion it is more to do with what actually you do as a company in terms of your systems and processes. Already there are stringent governance and processes in our sector like the pollution permissions, the EIA report etc which if taken seriously are enough to protect the environment that we have inherited and will hand over to the next generation. I do not think any extra teeth need to be provided for Sustainability, but a re-look at the current systems might just be enough if each organization implements them over the table than resort to under the table methods.

ET: In your opinion, does the Indian stock market assign a premium to businesses with sustainable business models?

JT: The Indian stock market works on very varied parameters and as far as I know, currently sustainable business models do not rank very high on its list of assigning a premium. It is not because of any other reason but simply because organizations have not been able to show margins or high growth potential due to sustainable business model. While stock markets rely and react only on actual performances and green figures on your balance sheet.

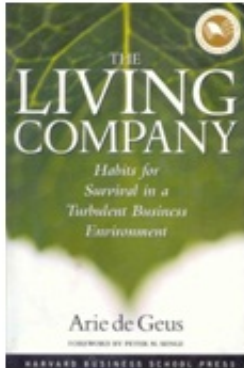
ET: Is Synefra ready to provide green GDP data by 2015 as per government norms?

JT: We would be attempting to do that.

ET: As a leader in creating sustainable business models, what message would you like to give to companies which are taking starting steps on the path of Sustainability?

JT: I would only say one thing to each one of them – think responsibly because it is a matter of our survival and what we are going to leave for our own children. Mother Earth has her own corrective measures to punish us in the form of earthquakes, tsunamis and floods so it is only a matter of our survival now.

## The Living Company, Arie de Gues



During his long innings with Shell, Arie de Gues pioneered a study of Fortune 500 companies which revealed that the average life expectancy of these firms was around 50 years. There were also some companies that had lasted over centuries. This sparked off questions about the mortality rate of most companies which do not last over 50 years. Demolishing the age old thinking that the number one goal of a business is to make money, the author stimulates thinking on the significance of human capital and its importance to the longevity of the company as compared to the exaggerated focus on cash reserves and profit.

Dwelling on this issue, Arie de Gues highlights the two main hypotheses of this book:

- The company is a living being &
- The decisions for action made by this living being result from a learning process.

Getting to the bottom of corporate longevity, the author implores managers to harness employees' knowledge and stresses on the importance of their efforts on the potential of the company. With straightforward logic he lays bare why capital, profits and revenues can no longer be king and it is ultimately only skills, knowledge and capabilities of the workforce that will propel a company to prosperity and longevity.

Arie de Gues is also credited with coining the term "Learning Organization". A successful company is one that can learn effectively and continuously accept and adapt to change. He goes so far as to highlight that planning an organization's future should be considered a learning process. Summing it up, it simply means that 'learning is tomorrow's capital'.

The Living Company bears the testimony of a person who believes that the prosperity of a company can be achieved with a resounding impact through practicing the human side of the enterprise. Arie De Gues reinforces a concept which binds the book together - identifying a company as a living entity. To quote the author, " Like all organisms, the living company exists primarily for its own survival and improvement: to fulfill its potential and to become as great as it can be".

Arie de Gues had a 38 year stint with Royal Dutch/Shell and worked in three continents before retiring as the Corporate Planning Director. A prolific writer, his HBR article – 'Planning as Learning' published in 1988, stamped him as a leading expert in organizational learning. The book 'The Living Company: Habits for Survival in a Turbulent Business Environment', has been translated into more than twenty languages and has been a recipient of numerous awards. Arie de Gues currently serves as a founder member of The Society for Organizational Learning and the Global Business Network, has been a visiting fellow at the London Business School and is an advisor to many governments, private companies and institutions.

## Vanamitra; Nature Conservation with special focus on Wildlife



Vanamitra, is a NGO for Nature Conservation with special focus on Wildlife across the state of Karnataka. It was established by three young wildlife conservationists - Jaishankar, Suresh Kumar and Sumanth Madhav in the year 2009. They have been working relentlessly in the field of nature conservation for close to a decade by supporting various other NGOs. The Vanamitra team comprises of volunteers from various walks of life who have united for a common cause of Conservation of Nature. Volunteers have played vital roles in many rescues involving large wildlife along with the Forest Department officials.

Vanamitra's primary interest is welfare and conservation of wildlife and it takes various initiatives that lead to its ultimate goal. It conducts awareness and education programs for people across all age groups and all classes to bring awareness & sensitize about wildlife and environment conservation. It also organizes Jungle Nature Camps that are specially designed for the sole purpose of introducing

enthusiasts to the field of wildlife conservation. In addition to this, Vanamitra's other conservation projects include:

- State wide wildlife rescue network
- Wildlife rehabilitation
- Biodiversity Surveys
- Support Forest Watchers, the lowest level staff of Karnataka Forest Department
- Environmental disaster prevention education

With the human population growing at a heavy rate constantly, forests, hills and jungles are being cut down indiscriminately to make space for us. Water bodies are either encroached upon or disturbed. This puts a lot of pressure on the remaining bit of forests & water bodies to support the existing population of wildlife. Due to this, in dire shortage of food & water, very often wild animals end up into conflicting situation with humans. During times of such conflict, Vanamitra volunteers are called for Emergency Wildlife Rescues and Resolving Human/Wildlife Conflicts. Vanamitra also proactively works to avoid such conflict situations through education/ awareness or involving localities in projects to support Forest Department staff. For their exemplary service, they deserve a Standing Ovation!

If you want to get more information and support Vanamitra you can look up their website [www.vanamitra.org](http://www.vanamitra.org) or write to [suresh@vanamitra.org](mailto:suresh@vanamitra.org) / [Sumanth@vanamitra.org](mailto:Sumanth@vanamitra.org).

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