

Merging strategy, systems and sustainability

WHAT HAS WORKED?

- Effectively framing and communicating the 'business case' for sustainability to key decision-makers.
- Designing clear roadmaps and performance objectives around material issues.
- Integrating sustainability roadmaps with strategic planning processes, balance-scorecards and incentive schemes.
- Designing robust management approaches and systems to align and monitor implementation.
- Engaging stakeholders in the design of strategic initiatives and the roll-out of partnerships for collective action.
- Using the sustainability reporting process as a tool to advance strategic planning, communication and monitoring.

WHERE CAN WE IMPROVE?

- Integrating long-term thinking and scenario planning into strategy design.
- Providing tools for internal sustainability champions or social intrapreneurs to advocate 'the business case', gain license to experiment and establish effective partnerships beyond the organization's boundaries.
- Transforming business models.
- Going beyond the C-suite and executive teams, and engaging boards and shareholders.
- Building organizational cultures and engaging employees.
- Identifying client's commitment to strategic transformation early on, and implementing check-posts along the way.

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For us, it is clear: sustainable development requires organizations, and corporations in particular, to integrate sustainability into their strategies and management systems. This sparks enormous transformational power, which in turn generates large-scale social, economic and environmental impacts. Additionally, alignment with greater societal pressure towards the adoption of sustainable practices has become a competitive imperative for organizations, as well as a powerful inspiration for differentiation and innovation.

For the past 15 years, and constantly building on the accumulated knowledge and experience of our team, 'coopetitors' and thought leaders, our focus at BSD has been to create impact by supporting organizations on their journey towards sustainability. This is an endless journey that requires constant reflection and innovation.

Driving change in organizational priorities, plans and behavior is however a complex challenge. Clients of different sizes, operating in diverse contexts and sectors, with varied organizational structures, and at different stages within the sustainability journey, approach BSD. We also see a broad spectrum of drivers that initiate or advance the journey, for example, compliance, managing risks, responding to crises, 'peer pressure', improving access to capital or markets, strengthening reputation, achieving efficiencies, and long-term competitiveness. Short-term investor mindsets, vested interests and resistance to change can present systemic barriers to transformation.

Through continuous learning and adaptation, we evolve our thinking to overcome such barriers and we try to identify the best way of designing and implementing strategies for sustainable development – strategies that take into account the interests of stakeholders and adopt an understanding of value that includes social, economic and environmental issues – strategies that can also be implemented, monitored and continuously improved.

"Value creation opportunities, risks and responsibilities are rapidly and fundamentally changing. Sustainable organizations understand their societal landscape, integrate 'the long term' into their thinking and align themselves towards clear priorities and goals."

BSD Consulting, www.bsdconsulting.com/solutions

"While it's great news that 93% of CEOs say they understand sustainability's importance to their businesses - and significant numbers say they have already embedded the agenda in their organisations - you have to wonder whether most of them have any idea of the profound, transformative change that true sustainability will require of virtually every part of our global economy."

John Elkington for the Guardian Professional Network, December 2010