

Intelligent Mindsets



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“Business must become agents of transformation. We have the resources. We have the talents. And let’s be clear here, we have the self-interest. Business has stepped up with both promises and programs. But if we add up all the great progress to date, it’s only a mildly encouraging start. It’s time to scale up. It’s time to leverage our efforts through concerted, coordinated, cooperative global action”.

E. NEVILLE ISDELL Chairman and CEO, The Coca-Cola Company, 2007

Sustainability is now part of mainstream business conversation, woven into companies’ activity at many levels. Businesses’ awareness and understanding of “sustainability” is becoming broader than some other terms such as corporate citizenship, sustainable development, and corporate social responsibility (CSR).

With varying degrees of awareness, companies are beginning to see that global overshoot—our collective exceeding of the finite ecological limits of the planet—is a serious threat to the organization, society, and the earth itself. Progress is being made, much of it incremental in nature, yet the complexity of sustainability issues is becoming clearer, as is the importance of and need for large-scale systems redesign to address these issues.

Leadership – most essential sustainability success factor

The cutting-edge leadership research is about understanding how to address our biggest social, environmental, and economic challenges. What makes some complex initiatives a success while many others fail? Is it about how they’re designed? Can answers be found in how their leaders engage and interact with them during implementation?

The recent empirical studies outline the following top contributors to success of companies’ sustainability efforts.

- Shared Values, Ethics, and Guiding Principles
- Structure, Goals, Metrics, and Reporting
- Key people, who define sustainability, set direction, champion efforts, and hold the organization accountable for results.
- Company’s culture, collective worldview, and language that support sustainability efforts.
- Engaging all stakeholders - whether internal or external - in a process of listening, understanding, and building buy-in on direction, plans, and activities.
- Communication of overall direction through goals and targets, and measured achievements.
- Creating organizational forms, positions, placement of right people in right places, and support for decision-making and action.

Leadership is what keeps it all together, as these success factors yield only so much perspective by themselves.

Leadership for Sustainability

A multi-dimensional or comprehensive approach to sustainability gear up-shifts is needed. Culture, systems, experience, and behavior all need suitable attention. The success of embedding sustainability—planting sustainability roots deeply into the business - directly reflect the interior mindsets and integrating capacities of those involved.

Mindset is the "software", our interior patterns of mind, or frames of reference, from which we see the world – and thus sustainability and its importance. Our "mind settings" ultimately determine how we act. They develop throughout our whole life. As they do, we become better at integrating bits and pieces, handling greater complexity and managing diversity we get exposed to.

Leadership is a function of a leader's mindset

It is the leader's own mindset and its potential for transformation, that becomes a crucial factor in the organization's potential for gearing up along the sustainability ladder. *Sustainability is as much about the mindset through which the world is seen as it is about the activities taken in support of it.*

The fact is that our mindset develops and so can the quality of our leadership. When the prerequisites are in place, the mindset learns to become more differentiated, inclusive, and integrated—and capable of more optimal functioning in a complex and changing world. As development unfolds, one's tolerance for difference and ambiguity increases, while defenses decrease. A strong correlation between the gears of leaders' mindset and those of corporate sustainability has been clearly established through a number of recent empirical studies.

How do we know whether our current leadership capacity matches the level of the challenge we face? What leadership competencies do we need to develop for more effective performance in the face of corporate sustainability challenge?

The Leadership Development Framework (LDF),

one proven model that reflects vertical expansion in a progressive series of stages, helps bring leader mindset development into clear focus. The Leadership Development Framework (LDF) is a full-range model of stage-based mindset development for leaders and is supported by an assessment tool called *the Leadership Development Profile (LDP)*.

The LDF differentiates degrees of mindset capacity through evolving stages of development, ones that represent milestones of growth along a spectrum of development. Spanning from early to later stages, it reveals the underlying rationale for the varying views of sustainability—and why some recognize and consider the higher- more embedded – sustainability gears as critically important while others do not. It also gives credence to the idea that later-stage leaders see the world more broadly, in a more complex and integrated fashion, and from a more holistic viewpoint.

Leadership for Sustainability

Leaders with later-stage mindsets – a prerequisite for shifting to fully embedded sustainability and system re-design

To actualize the highest gears of sustainability, leaders with later stage capacities will need to be engaged. These leaders can help envision, formulate, mobilize, and harmonize the integrated sets of actions needed for large-scale systems redesign and radical shifts forward. These leaders can also translate sustainability into communications and methods of change and engagement that match the mindsets and worldviews of others.

Later-stage mindsets alone do not make an effective leader, yet we know that leaders with expanded mindsets are more fully equipped to guide organizations through the sustainability change. For organizations to achieve and sustain high-gear up-shifts, interior mindsets of their leaders must match the complexities of a new reality.

Albert Einstein said, “No problem can be solved from the same level of consciousness that created it.” In essence, a shift in consciousness is needed to effect substantial change. Embracing the complexity of sustainability calls for understanding it at a new level of consciousness.

It is a challenge to be met with grace and joy. The very nature of progress through the gears of sustainability brings transformative power. The journey offers a return on investment previously immeasurable at the human and organizational level. The future holds infinite possibilities and the rare opportunity to leverage new capacities in leadership to transform not just the organization but also our vision for humanity and the way we live.

Intelligent mindsets is a growing community of consultants and coaches who live in different countries but have one interest in common – helping leaders to develop through their interaction with the environment. We are informed and inspired by the developmental constructivism and sustainability leadership theory. Having different background, we all explore transforming power of leadership for long-term sustainability of business. All of us are engaged in business and community practice. Our originator and the focal point is a Sweden-based company "Runa Business Support".

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Find out more at www.intelligentmindsets.com