

Green Leadership: Ways of Practicing it

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Abstract: The climate change and the environmental consequences of the same are being widely anticipated. There is an initiative been taken and pushed to take up steps through which we use more of green resources and help in protecting the environment. There has been lot of propoganda on promotion by corporates for green leadership.

This study tries to find the avenues through which the corporates can become green leaders. Indications from literature are used for a pilot study of green leaders to identify the initiatives taken by them. It is found that the efforts taken by green leaders are appreciable but a lot more can be done by them. There are lessons for other corporates by initiating an ecofriendly drive by becoming green leaders. However it is found that the governmental support and policy support for such initiatives will encourage the green leadership.

Key Words: green leadership, eco friendly, green initiative, corporate social responsibility

1. Introduction:

In the past we have often regarded "sustainability" as an optional add-on, rather than an essential element of corporate and national economic success. We have been changing and the climate as well. Threats to human beings have increased due to depletion in the ozone layer, global warming issues, excess use of the environmental potential. We have been denying man-made climate change and it's devastating harm along with rejecting the need for alternative energy sources that could stem the impact of greenhouse gas emissions. Nevertheless many businesses and even the military are seeking solutions to these threats to our economy, way of life, and our national security.

But creating successful, sustainable practices and policies, and the long-term vision they require is complex. The above challenges are interwoven with vested interests of those seeking deregulation or new tax laws that enable continued profit for themselves, at the expense of the larger society. Investment in infrastructure or human capital is ignored.

Positive solutions call for "green leadership." In business, successful, sustainable practices rest upon an internal foundation, a mindset of emotional and mental perspectives, values and capacities. We define green leadership as "environmental excellence in your internal operations, your products and services, and community support".

This qualitative research briefs you about how we can grow by implementing green and ecofriendly practices. What key areas, companies at a micro level and countries at macro level can modify in order to be green and clean are stated below. Also mentioned are few company initiatives which have made them lead the race of sustainability.

2. What is Green All About:

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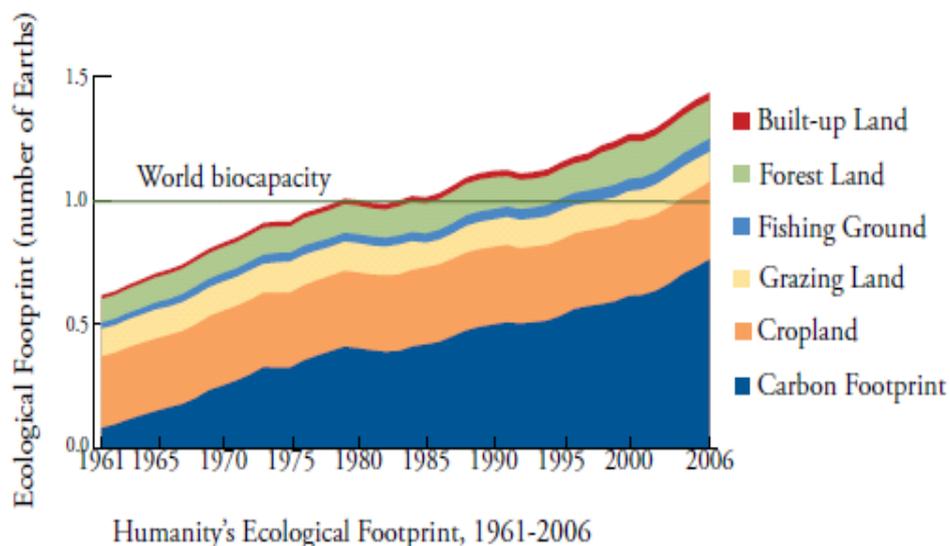
Besides colour, the word ‘green’ also means - A supporter of a social and political movement that espouses global environmental protection, bioregionalism, social responsibility, and nonviolence. Leadership has already been highlighted in the above meaning – ‘A supporter’.

To better understand the rise of “being green”, consider that climate change is recognized and being addressed by many decision-makers, despite the deniers. For example, *The Economist* and others recently focused on the melting Arctic, the sea level rise and ways to deal with long-term implications.

The military recognizes the national security threat of climate change. A study by blue-ribbon panel of military leaders found it could affect Americans at home, impact U.S. military operations, and heighten global tensions. Consequences like famine, drought, and destructive weather raise new threats to our security -- whether at home or abroad.

Many in the business world recognize the need for long-term sustainability, and collaboration around useful strategies. Ceres, a leading organization of business leaders, investors, public interest groups, policymakers and other economic players describes efforts to "incorporate long-term environmental and social risks instead of merely relying on short-term returns as a measure of economic health." (LaBier, 2012)

Adding to the above points, an eye opening study made by Global Footprint Network is as below:



This graph shows the alarming rate at which human impact on the planet is increasing and going beyond sustainable limits. The green line ‘world biocapacity’ shows the biologically productive area that is available to meet humanity’s needs. The coloured bars show the increasing human footprint, in terms of area required for different purposes (e.g. cropland). It shows that since the 1980s our needs have exceeded Earth’s regenerative capacity. (UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre, 2010)

Human activities over the past 50 years to meet rapidly growing demands for food, fresh water, timber, fibre and fuel, have extensively changed ecosystems and led to a loss of these services upon which both society and industry depend. We all need to act, in order to build sustainable business models that address biodiversity. And hence Green Leadership.

Researchers and practitioners have defined ways and means of following clean and green operations. The Sacramento Business Journal hosts the Green Leadership Awards to highlight the region's people, companies and organizations that are developing and implementing the most transformative green technologies, products and services. Categories for nominations include Alternative fuels, solar energy, Green finance, Clean-tech entrepreneurs, Green architects, Green builders/developers, Green nonprofits, Best green practices, Green city, Green agency, and Green transportation (Nominations, 2012). A recent report by Mckinsey on “Green revolution” highlights several key areas on which China can focus are:

- Green Power to replace non-renewable energy
- Green Fleet – Electric vehicles for transportation

- Green Industry – Cleaner high-emission industries
- Green Buildings – Energy efficient buildings
- Green Mindset – Changed consumer behavior. (Mckinsey Report, Kathiresan, 2008)

However these should be practiced by all to make earth a better place to live and overcome or level the Ecological Footprint to World biocapacity.

While the mainstream may have just recently tuned into the “green” channel, some businesses have been focusing on the environmental and social impacts of their operations and products for decades. Those businesses continue to push the sustainability agenda, and they are now increasingly being joined by start-ups looking to revolutionize things like the electrical grid that haven’t changed in decades or even centuries. Even companies in sectors not traditionally associated with environmental responsibility are “greening” their operations in every way possible and expanding their offerings to include more responsible options. (Business Week, 2008)

3. How is Green Practiced:

Considering the above nomination categories and Mckinsey’s report as standard a pilot study was carried out of few companies.

3.1 Google

Google data centers use only 50% of the energy of most other data centers. They use very little of the world’s electricity (less than 0.01%) 35% being renewable electricity. Most of their green initiatives were started by Googlers, and have now grown into company-wide efforts. From the solar panels on our roofs to our bike-to-work program, these initiatives eliminate the equivalent of more than 10,000 metric tons of CO₂ per year. Google has invested hundreds of millions of dollars in renewable energy projects such as large-scale wind and rooftop solar. (Google)

3.2 Intel

Intel has been the largest voluntary producer of green power in the U.S. (in 2008, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency). 14 solar electric installations at Intel locations in the U.S. and Israel—collectively generate more than five million kWh per year of clean solar energy. 18 Intel buildings at all 5 sites are LEED certified. Intel is also working on conserving water, reusing and recycling wastes. (Intel corporation)

3.3 Tata

Tata’s new basic oxygen steelmaking (BOS) gas recovery project at Port Talbot in the UK will reduce the site’s CO₂ emissions by some 240,000 tonnes per year and its dust (PM10s) emissions by 40 tonnes. Besides having one of the most energy efficient operations in Asia, NatSteel’s products are also made from at least 85% recycled material. In Thailand, Tata Steel continues to make significant reductions in its electricity consumption, to eliminate dust and improve its wastewater treatment processes through its Total Productive Maintenance programme. (Tata Steel)

3.4 Ford

Ford is committed to doing its share to prevent or reduce the potential for environmental, economic and social harm due to climate change by reducing CO₂ emissions, improving the fuel efficiency of their products and advancing the use of alternative fuels including electricity and bio-fuels. They are working towards electrified vehicles, which include hybrid electric, plug-in hybrid electric and all-electric vehicles. Efforts are taken to increase use of recycled and renewable materials, improve vehicle interior air quality and eliminate substances of concern. (Ford Motor Company)

3.5 Toyota

Toyota aims at globally "establishing a low-carbon society," "establishing a recycling-based society," “Eco-driving” and "environmental protection and establishing a society in harmony with nature" to

contribute to sustainable growth of society and the planet To realize these aims, they have reduced the environmental impact at all stages of vehicle life cycle from development and design, procurement, production and logistics, sales to waste and recycling, and promote environmental management. (Environmental Responsibility)

4. Findings and Conclusions:

Literature and other references give the areas where one can work towards green operations develop and maintain them. Reducing GHG's alone won't help; renewable energy resources should be utilized. Raw materials, processes, way of processing, final products infrastructure and facilities used, all put together should be ecofriendly.

The companies studied are contributing their bit by excelling in their respective operations and heading towards a greener campus. However all possible green technologies, products and services have not been tapped and all existing companies and businesses have not developed the Green leadership mindset.

Managing biodiversity can help mitigate risk, identify new business opportunities and enable a company to become an environmental leader. This can be the goal for everyone in order to build a greener society. Government intervention through policies, funding and recognizing green initiatives or levying a tax for the same can help more and more businesses to get involved in this Green revolution.

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