A Novel Managerial Toolkit for Deciding Company-Specific Corporate Environmental Sustainability Solutions

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Project Overview

• **Project aim** = to use 2 companies to design a methodology for deciding company-specific corporate environmental sustainability (CES).

  – 3 part-time researchers for 7 months.

  – 2 companies (one large; one small).

• Phases:
  1. Current goals (Sub-phases 1-2)
  2. CES improvements (Sub-phases 3-5)
Our perspective

• Goal hierarchy, and goal to goal connectionist, perspective from the psychology literature;
• Which we used and adapted to analyse organisational practices rather than people’s cognitions.

• “Goals” = activities/aspects/the *whats* (and *hows*), not just aims.

• We examined ‘all’ goals and not just ‘CES goals’. Why?
  – No one size fits all approach to CES;
  – A goal can have implications for, or relationships with, another goal.
  – Thus, the context of non-CES goals should drive a company’s specific CES.
  – Not considering environmental goals in an interdependent and systemic way -> reduces the likelihood of successful transformation to net0.
(1) Map current goals & interconnections
Output = Current Organisational goal hierarchy (OGH)

Visions, missions, values = yellow goals; highest level of abstraction

Project goals and longer-term strategies = blue goals; highest level of abstraction

Activities and initiatives = pink goals; lowest level of abstraction

Goal to goal synergy = grey line

Goal to goal tension = red line

Black border = CES goals

Covered over for anonymity

Output = Shared understanding explicitly on paper (point of view; not visible)
How

Draft OGH

- Researchers coded company reports & archival data.

Feedback

- From 6 execs (individual hour long interviews)
- Agreement with goals, and goal connections?
- Missing goals, and connections
- All researchers analysed the data for reliability.

Final OGH

- Matrix
- Participants x goal-goal pairings.
- Cells = 4 goal connection types
- From 6 views to 1?
- Consensus on ‘connection type’.
- No consensus; some red and some black; or if even one person said orange = orange connection.
(2) Interpret the current OGH
How

- Researchers evaluated patterns of connections involving both CES goals, and none CES goals, to identify:
  - (i) weaker areas of CES goal embeddedness; and
  - (ii) opportunistic means for improving CES.
- As a result, we produced 2 example lenses, through which each company could brainstorm CES improvements.
(3) Produce CES ideas & describe their connections with other goals
How

• Half-day workshop per organisation (6 execs; 35 participants across a virtual and in person half day).

• We disseminated the findings so far.

• We gave them the 2 scenarios to discuss in groups of <10, probing:
  • (i) How they could turn certain red or orange connections (goal tension) into synergies
  • (ii) How they could create necessary new synergistic connections.

• Afterwards, researchers coded:
  • CES ideas as green-coloured goals;
  • ‘Fit’ between each green-coloured goal & other goals (using the 3 types).
Output (‘Ideas OGH’)  

**Green goals**  
(Note, similarities vs differences between companies)

Connections of green goal with other goals

Covered over for anonymity

Synergy: black vs grey
(4) Evaluate CES ideas
Evaluated each CES idea in terms of feasibility and effectiveness based on:
- Its number and type of connections (synergy or not);
- The importance of goals connected to it.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CES idea</th>
<th>Easy wins</th>
<th>Big hitter</th>
<th>Trade-off</th>
<th>Change required</th>
<th>Back-burner</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Awareness of shared problem</td>
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<td>Process improvement</td>
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<td>Assess product mix</td>
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<td>Organisational memory system</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>(OMS integrated with retention &amp; staffing aspects)</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Fit for purpose/fewer sites</td>
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<tr>
<td>Investment in new technology <em>(&amp; dedicated team)</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>(1 trade-off connection to accept)</em></td>
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<td>Industry groups/lobbying</td>
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<td>University partnerships</td>
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<tr>
<td>Diagnostic tool <em>(&amp; dedicated team)</em></td>
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<td><em>(1 trade-off connection to accept)</em></td>
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</table>
Company expands the evaluations by following set prompts

2 hour meeting to start with; with 6 execs, including project stakeholder.

**EASY WINS**
- Check not missed any ‘in tension’ connections & check it should be on the potential list.
- Ask what would be needed?

**BIG-HITTER**
- See above; plus if the ‘yes list’ may be smaller than the ‘potential list’, check the importance of the goals it’s been connected to.

**TRADE OFF**
- Check the ‘in tension’ (red, orange) connections cannot easily be changed;
- Ask do the positives outweigh the negatives? How will you accept the tradeoff?

**CHANGE REQUIRED**
- Ask how the ‘in tension’ (red, orange) connections could be reduced; and check the appetite for doing so.

**BACK BURNER:** They may move an idea from 'change required' to ‘backburner’ if it’s not synergistic with important enough goals.
(5) Choose which CES improvements & plan their implementation
Choose which CES improvements

• Decide what CES will look like.
  – Choose which ideas (all or some).

• Decide when for each main CES idea.

• Given the goal-goal perspective taken, they’ll have the why.
Action plan

• For each CES idea decide: **Who & how** (using existing strategy processes and tools).

• For ideas graded as:
  – ‘**tradeoff**’ – work on creating cross-company awareness of the mind-set shift/acceptance.
  – ‘**change required**’ – thoroughly consider how you’ll reduce the ‘in tension’ connections (orange and red).

• Use goals synergistic with the idea to further enable it – consider **what, how, who, when**.

• Before implementing the idea, check there’s no unidentified ‘in tension’ connections.

• Repeat the whole process every 5 years.