

Green Practices at the Workplace: A Step towards Sustainable Development

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Abstract

Human activities have a deep impact on our surroundings, environment on individuals as well as organizations. Gradually, the impact of human activities on the environment has become intense. The result of this impact is that today more organizations are voluntarily ready to operate in an environmentally responsible way as they understand the significance of business practices to the society and the environment. NGO and environment friendly organizations are also encouraging businesses to become greener by offering incentives. "Being green" is becoming the norm & trend. This research papers tries to explore the issues, strategies and challenges associated with implementing green management practices in the workplace in order to make the world a better place. This paper discusses the strategies that can be adopted by organization to adopt a green path for a better world & tries to find how the employees can make efforts to make green management a success. This paper also discusses strategies associated with implementation of green management practices and attempt has been made to explain that implementing green-practices is a step towards Sustainable Development.

Keywords: Green Management, green initiatives, green practices, environment, go green, sustainable development.

Introduction

Due to globalization, privatization and liberalization, our society is moving at a very fast pace and is facing crises as technology is replacing nature. Moreover, unsustainable development is leading the society towards misuse of social and natural resources. These changes are posing a great threat on the environment, the result of which is soaring temperature on planet. Moreover, human activities like fossil fuel combustion, irresponsible use of all natural resources and extensive deforestation are making us far and far from the dream of a better world. With science, technology and machines replacing natural processes and procedures, all the human activities are making a negative impact on the environment making it necessary for mankind to act fast. Our lifestyle is changing the way; we carry our daily activities & the environment around us. It has become necessary to adopt green way not only at individual level but also at organizational level.

To fulfill the dream of a better world, it becomes necessary to change the present business practices to work towards sustainable development. Sustainable development is based on optimum utilization of resource.

In the present times, organizations have to act in an environmentally responsible way and the people should understand the significance of shifting from machines to

green practices as the future belongs to a green economy. Organizations should understand their responsibility towards society and take every possible step to reduce the impact of their activities on nature and should also try to reduce carbon footprints in all possible manners. The traditional management practices never took into account the environmental aspect associated with nature and therefore, they are being replaced by Green management. Moreover, organizations are also realizing that adopting greener practices is not only good for the environment and society at large but it also provides them competitive advantage in the form of improved customer loyalty and enhanced public image.

Recently, environmental issues and sustainable development have gained importance in developed and developing nations at both the individual and group level. The reason behind this concern over environmental issues is the fact that the future of the coming generations will be seriously threatened if no step is taken to reduce the wastage of resources and carbon footprint. Studies show that organizations adopting green management practices have increased employee satisfaction, reduced labor turnover, and are also able to attract top quality human talent while saving cost.

Rationale of the Study

Today, the need of adopting green management practices are greater than ever before and organization are undertaking every possible step in this direction by educating employees regarding the benefits of going Green in the workplace. A more detailed research is therefore required to analyse the strategies for adoption of green practices in the today's corporate world. Thus, this research would assess the ways in which green management practices can be adopted and the ways in which active participation can be sought by the management in implementing the green management practices in the organisation to make world a better place.

Objectives Of Study

- To study the strategies in which green management practices can be adopted at the workplace.
- To discuss how implementing green-practices is a step towards Sustainable Development.

- To discuss the ways in which active Participation in adoption of Green Practices in the workplace can be sought.
- To discuss latest trends and happening of Green management in the present times.

Green Business

Business Dictionary defines Green business as “a business functioning in a capacity where no negative impact is made on the local or global environment, the community, or the economy and green business will also engage in forward-thinking policies for environmental concerns and policies affecting human rights”.

According to Slovik, 2013 green business is defined as“An organization that uses renewable resources (environmentally sustainable) and holds itself accountable for the human resource aspect of their activities (socially responsible)”

Literature Review

S.No	Study	Outcome of the Study
1	Gilbert (2007)	He identifies a green business activity as an activity performed in a way that has adverse impact on the ecological system & that benefits the natural environment positively.
2	Engel(2008)	He observed that though progress in the last decade has been made on green issues as a result of implementing laws. This is also because businesses know the effect of ignoring green practices in the mode world.
3	Clem (2008)	Today businesses across the globe are facing increased competitive, regulatory and community pressures to implement green business practices in the world. In addition to that going green also reflects a social awareness to preserve Earth’s natural resources for future generations.
4	Croston (2009)	He states that green b usinesses have more sustainable business practices and benefit by ensuring sustainable development through helping people live well today and tomorrow by contributing to the world through healthier green practices.

Strategies to Adopt Green Practices in the Workplace

The significance of adopting green management practices can't be ignored due to change in customer's attitude towards organization adopting green practices & acting in an environmentally responsible manner. Adopting green management practices in the present day's business world is very crucial for the success of business organizations as such it has become more significant to adopt green management at all levels in the organization. The following are the strategies that should be adopted in order to incorporate green management in the business:

Follow the 3 R's Concept

The 3 R's concept stands for **Reduce, Recycle & Reuse**. This can be done by eliminating misuse and wastage of resources. By **Reduce**, we mean that you try to reduce the amount of waste you produce in a number of ways by simplifying and reducing the amount of packaging you use and by using reusable containers. By **Re-use**, we try to use the products again. This can be possible if instead of doing for disposable plates and containers, you start replacing them with plates or containers that can be used again only by washing. By **Recycle**, we mean, you should try to recycle all the used paper, glasses, bottles used in the organization. Also a proper waste disposable system should be employed. Toxic substances, such as used batteries should be disposed of carefully with the help of waste management team.

Organize Green Audits in the workplace

Green audits are a great way of saving energy. Consultations should be done with energy auditors to save energy. Green innovations like installing timers to turn off lights automatically, using energy efficient LEDs bulbs, keeping temperatures at an average range are some ways suggested by these energy auditors for judicious use of energy at the workplace.

Offer green products, services & technology

Green technology is the technique used now-a-days to conserve the natural environment and resources by reducing the wastage of resources. Companies are trying to promote green technology in all the business functions as **it is the need of the hour and will bring business benefits like improved reputation**. The issue for green technology involves innovations without harming the nature and by maintaining the business profitability.

Choose green product over other harmful products as they have increased energy efficiency and low levels of carbon because they make use of material that requires less energy to produce. Moreover green products have positive environmental effect as they use less hazardous materials and can be recycled causing less harm to the environment. The service industry also offers greener and more viable

service options. Services like green holidays that use low-carbon travel, accommodation and food are increasingly getting popular.

Use electricity & water resources judiciously

Replace the old bulbs with compact fluorescent bulbs or light-emitting diode bulbs (LEDs) as CFLs use less energy than regular bulbs and last longer. Encourage employees to save electricity by turning off lights when they aren't being used. Upgrade to modern version of electronic as they consume less energy. Some devices can help you save up to 70 percent. Rearrange workstations to make use of natural lights coming from windows. Simple and inexpensive ways to reduce the power consumption should be employed in organization wherever possible. Use water judiciously as it is a precious resource and use of rain water harvesting technique in the workplace.

Buy eco-friendly products

Use of eco-friendly products should be encouraged as they can be reused and recycled with ease. This can be done by changing the purchasing habits of the employees and discussing the benefits of eco-friendly product with the. Workshops promoting eco-friendly products can also be held to encourage eco-friendly product usage in the workplace. Plastic bags should be substituted them with jute bags and similarly eco-friendly packaging should be employed instead of plastic packaging products.

Choose public transport & go for car-pooling

Carpooling should be encouraged for employees by providing them facilities like free car parking space. It can be done by discussing the benefits of it with the employees and how they can save cost through it. Carpools can be easily created by launching a information sharing board in the organization that help connect people using similar routes for work. Employees should also be encouraged to climb stairs instead of using elevators in order to save electricity and to use public transport system. Start posting transit schedules, bus routes, and details of different transportation in easily accessible places to encourage them.

Use of renewable resources & afforestation

Use renewable sources of energy like solar energy, wind-energy, hydro-energy and other alternative energy sources. *"Plant more and more trees"*. This simple fundamental not only improve the appearance of the surroundings but also goes a long way in improving the quality of environment around you. Planting more trees will improve the aesthetic of office and will also make us a step closer to green management

Reduce carbon footprints

Simple actions such as switching off equipment when not in

use, use of power equipment that have less power consumption, recycling used papers, using disposable plates and containers can help you reduce the carbon footprints in your workplace.

Go Virtual in the Workplace

Teleconferencing and video-conferencing should replace actual meetings in order to reduce the impact on environment. Fuel efficient car and vehicles that saves energy should be encouraged in the organization wherever possible. Face-to-face meetings should be done only when necessary otherwise, if possible try to go for meetings virtually by teleconferencing, and video-conferencing. This simple method can also work wonders in go green initiative for the organization.

Provide Work from home facility

Facilities like work from home one a week depending on the type of task can be given to employees to yield benefits for both organization and environment. Working from home can be a good solution as it saves travelling time and petrol, thereby reducing carbon footprints of the employees working in the organization.

All the above strategies, if properly implemented can help you achieve the tag of green organization which in the present times is a very valuable tag and helps the organizations achieve a better public image and strengthen their reputation.

Fig 1: Strategies to Adopt Green Practices in the Workplace
Compiled by the Authors



Sustainable Development: A step towards Green Management

The concept of sustainable development was defined by the Brundtland Commission in 1987 as “the ability to ensure that humanity meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”It contains within it two key concepts:

1. The concept of **needs**, in particular the essential needs of the world's poor, to which overriding priority should be

given; and

2. The idea of **limitation** that is imposed by the state of technology and social organization on the environment's ability to meet present and future needs in a sustainable manner."

Sustainable Development stands for meeting the needs of present generations without jeopardizing the ability of futures generations to meet their own needs – in other words, a better quality of life for everyone, now and for generations

to come. This concept integrates immediate and longer-term objectives towards social, economic and environmental issues as vital components of human development. Sustainable development can be bought in the world by bringing radical changes in thinking in economic and social structures.

Green management practices and sustainable development have to form a crucial part of the organization to fulfill the dream of better and greener world. The aim of sustainable development is to define schemes that bring together the economic, social, and environmental aspects of the activity related to the lifestyle of human beings. All these aspects should be considered at both level i.e. at individuals and organizational level. Sustainable development aims at finding a healthy balance between the different aspects of human lifestyle. Besides allowing the basic needs of present and future generations being fulfilled with regard to geographic and economic constraints, sustainable development also aims at improving quality of life. Sustainable development aims at optimal utilization of the planet's resources for their conservation of future generations.

The importance of sustainable development as a part of Green management cannot be overlooked. The problem of over utilization of resources is of great concern as the world's population is exploding and the Earth possesses limited resources. This means that the future development of all species living on earth is under serious threat. It is therefore, the responsibility of human beings to take steps in this regards to combat the problem of over-utilization of resources for a greener and safer world.

The interest of achieving sustainable development lies at all levels be it at organizational level, shareholders level, societal level or at individual or employee's level. Moreover, pressure from consumers in this area has increased manifolds due to increased concern towards environmental issues and the need for incorporation of green management practices in the organization.

Seek Active Participation in Adoption of Green Practices in the Workplace

Involvement of employees is a must for incorporating green management as an important part of organization. Studies show that employees initially resist any kind of change in the organization. So, proper efforts have to be made to involve them at each and every step to make the implementation successful.

Generate awareness among the employees: Awareness should be created among the employees regarding green management initiatives. They should be advised to start amend the way their lifestyle both at home and workplace. They should be properly explained the significance of

practicing environmentally responsible behaviors and the changes they can incorporate in their lives.

Recognize the efforts of the employees: Encouragement and recognition of employees can go a long way in promoting green initiatives. Make public announcements and congratulate employees them for the efforts made. Publishing a quarterly or annual newsletter showing the efforts made in this respect can be a good idea. Make a team devoted towards handling all the issues related to green management practices and also invite suggestions from all the employees regarding the changes they want to see towards a better and greener environment.

Inform employees about various associations involved: Keep employees informed and communicate about all Green issues with the employees. Get in touch with different association and agencies promoting green practices to get a better idea of the scenario and take proper steps needed for the implementation of green behavior in the organization.

Follow up periodically: Get to know the progress made by comparing it with the standards set. In case of deviation, start sending continuous reminders to the employees stating that their participation is required to inculcate the green management practices. Review periodically the efforts made by employees.

Train the employees: Develop training programs to adopt informed and responsible behavior towards environment and sustainability. Programs that help train the employees rewarding environment and sustainability issues can help the Go green initiative. Make regular efforts to continuously update yourself regarding the latest changes taking place in the organization.

Involve media for improved public image: Keep the suppliers and customers informed about your efforts with the help of media. Company should publicize the efforts they are making to inculcate green management practices to all its stakeholders like government, media etc. Publicity in media will benefit the company in the form of enhanced reputation and improved public image. Make your product, processes and services have an edge your competitors by regular updates to media about your efforts.

Strengthen your brand image: Develop branding and external communications by promoting green products, services and technology. Promote newsletter, press releases and interviews for creating awareness about green product, processes and technology. Have publications fully focused on sharing your efforts and achievements with media. Use company website to spread your words to media and other concerned parties. Reports should include your policy, targets, strategies etc.

The company should try to seek active participation in every

possible way. The company should share the achievements with media and company's achievements, products, processes, services and plans should be publicized to the general public as well. PowerPoint slides should be made that cover environmental commitments and the steps taken by organization to promote Go green initiatives as these will encourage other stakeholders to be part of such initiatives. The presentation to be delivered to media should also include a brief summary of plans, policy, targets, achievements and future plans. Put this information about your achievements related to green management in documents like brochure to spread awareness about the efforts undertaken in this direction.

Latest Trends in Green Management

- Green management practices should be adopted effectively in order to excel in the global competitive environment. Green Management is revolutionizing organization's functions, product and processes and is becoming an integral part of organizations. Green management practices are beneficial for the organizations as they save money and avoid intervention from the government as they inculcate environmental friendly ways of conducting business activities in the organizations.
- Developed nations are making special efforts to adopt green management practices as a part of doing business but for developing nations, there is lot of scope of improvement to make organization adopt greener and more environmental friendly ways of doing business to make the world better place for the present as well as future generations. Big brand names such as Dell, Google and Wal-Mart are harnessing renewable sources of energy to adopt green management practices in every possible manner.
- There is a greater need for establishing a proper channel to help in adoption of green management practices at the organizational level. Not only government should work harder in this regard but also companies dealing with products like electronic products, automobiles etc should take initiative to improve the environment. The companies should take steps & explain ways to dispose these electronic and hazardous products safely & should promote recycling.
- **Conclusion**

Business organizations are aware of the importance of adopting green management practices in strengthening the public image and the reputation of the business. Therefore, energy-efficient products and processes that reduce wastage are becoming popular among the organizations. Firstly, Adopting green management practices result in reduced cost and improved revenues for the organization by

lowering the overheads costs. It also helps in freedom from government intervention as adopting such management practices results in complying the regulatory pressures by the government. Secondly, adopting green management practices results in enhanced public image & improved market position because it improves the relationship between organization and other stakeholders. Thirdly, adopting green practices enhance organization's profitability as a result of improved public image. Lastly, green management practices helps in better utilization of employee resources. To conclude, it won't be wrong to say that organizations have started acting in an environmentally responsible way and the employees also understand the significance of adopting green management practices at the workplace.

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