



OF SUSTAINABILITY



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Sustainability

Sustainability is a wide-ranging term that can be applied to almost every facet of life.

It can be defined as the process of ensuring the thriving of all three - economy, society, and the environment.

The ABC of Sustainability explains some of the key terms and concepts used in the practice of sustainability. Its objective is to accelerate the learning process of stakeholders and help them in taking the leap from comprehension to action.

Air



Air pollution is a major health risk. Every year, indoor air pollution is responsible for the death of 1.6 million people - one death every 20 seconds*. Protecting our air quality, protects our health.

** World Bank Estimates*

Biodiversity



Biodiversity signifies the vibrant mix of life forms on earth and is a measure of the health of our ecosystems. A greater diversity of species ensures natural sustainability for all life forms.

Climat Change



Rise in greenhouse gases is altering natural climatic rhythms and is visible as extreme weather, floods, rising sea levels, all of which are causing irreversible damage to our habitat.

Deforestation



Deforestation is the 3rd largest contributor of greenhouse gas emissions. Forests that once enveloped over half the planet, now cover only 1/4th of its land surface*.

* WWF

Earth Hour



Earth Hour is a global climate change initiative to inspire individuals to take demonstrative action by switching off their lights for one hour, every year on the 27th of March, at 8:30 pm.

Food Miles



It is the total distance that food travels from field to plate. Food transported across the world burns a lot of fuel and contributes to global warming. Eat local.

Green washing



It is greenwashing when an organization spends more time and money advertising to be "green" than actually implementing business practices that minimize environmental impact.

HEVs



Hybrid Electric Vehicles run on a combination of electric power and conventional fuel. They offer large environmental benefits and their global sales are expected to surge at a 12% CAGR.

Innovation



Sustainability and innovation are joined at the hips. If we want to continually improve living standards for more and more people without resource degradation, innovation is a must.

Jatropha



Jatropha is a shrub that produces small seeds which contain oil that can be used as fuel. Its promise as a sustainable biofuel has kindled huge interest among auto and aviation majors.

Kyoto Protocol



It is a legally binding agreement under which 37 industrialized nations have agreed to reduce their collective emissions of greenhouse gases by 5.2% as compared to the year 1990, by 2012.

Literacy



Higher the literacy, higher the health, productivity and quality of life of the society. To facilitate inclusive growth each one should teach one.

Materiality



An oft used term in sustainability reporting, Materiality signifies the potential of an issue to impact the organization's commercial success and its importance among stakeholders.

Negawatt



The saving of a megawatt of power by reducing consumption or increasing efficiency is termed as a Negawatt.

Organic



The basic principle of Organic is to produce without the use of pesticides and chemical fertilizers. Over the years, it has gone beyond food and clothing to Organic holidays and Organic living.

Population



At 6.8 billion* human population is so large and growing so rapidly that questions are being raised whether the life support systems of the planet can sustain the impact of so many people.

*World population in 2009 as per the Population Reference Bureau

Quality

Sustainability and its adoption across the globe have added two new dimensions to quality-Environmental and Social. The carbon footprint of a product is now one of the measures of its quality.

Recycle

Recycling reduces waste, saves energy, minimizes pollution and is a vital tool to combat climate change. Just one ton of paper recycled can save 7,000 gallons of water and 17 to 31 trees.



S Stakeholders

A person, group, or organization, that affects or can be affected by an organization's actions, is a stakeholder. To be sustainable, we must carry along all stakeholders and not just shareholders.



T Triple Bottom Line

An addition of social and environmental bottom lines to the traditional economic, to holistically measure an organization's long term sustainability. Also known as "people, planet, profit".

Upcycle



Upcycling is the process of converting waste materials or useless products into new materials or products of better quality or a higher environmental value.

VOCs



Volatile Organic Compounds are hazardous gases emitted from certain solids or liquids such as paints, printers, adhesives, etc. They are not acutely toxic but have chronic effects on human health.

Water



Without water, life would not exist. It is a prerequisite for human and economic development. Wastage and rampant water pollution have precipitated a water crisis. We must use water judiciously.

Xeriscaping



A water-efficient landscaping technique, utilizing unthirsty, native plants and drought-tolerant exotics. It helps conserve water and requires less fertilizer and pest control.

You



You can be the change. Every individual needs to contribute towards sustainability. Tiny as it may seem, each act counts. Transformation is nothing but a summation of a billion small acts.

Zero waste



Zero waste is a concept wherein waste is eliminated across the entire product life cycle, resulting in significant cost savings, greater competitiveness and reduced environmental impacts.

New terms that I learnt

cognito is a sustainability communication advisory, which helps organizations internalize sustainability, report on their triple bottom-line performance and in due course leverage sustainability for competitive advantage.

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