

Workshop 2 / Sustainable Enterprise and Social Capital: A Competitive Advantage?

Speakers

Michel DE KEMMETER

UHDR, Belgium

We focus on sustainable development but often, we forget human capital. We need to bring both together in an effective and resilient way. Again, our speakers will be giving presentations after which, each table will share their thoughts on a viable action plan.

Christophe SEMPELS

École Supérieure de Commerce (ESC) Lille, France

How is it possible to **combine the strategic challenges for businesses with sustainable development?** Sustainable development transforms our individual and collective ways of working, our way of running our businesses. Today, **it is essential to break the link between growth on the one side and consumption of resources and energy on the other side. Rather than selling an amount of product, one should sell the uses of this product**, which represents a level of service. This change represents an innovative consumption and management behaviour, redefining the scope of the business' activities, requiring new skills, and involving a larger number of players in business projects. By sharing private property this model favours the right to use over the right to own. It redefines a social project.

Producing biogas in Sweden

Tore HELMERSSON

EBN / Cleantech, Sweden

We believe in cooperation. Our innovation and technology park provides a science centre, teaching programs for children and professionals, and an incubator program along the same lines. We work with various technologies, and are trying to get young people involved.

We've been working on creating biogas from waste-matter, which is used to power vehicles. The project involves various actors to whom we are connected via pipelines, which allows the gas to be transported from farmers to upgrading systems, and back again once it has been processed. The biogas is produced from manure and then rid of chemicals and odours. The people involved – farmers, university theoreticians, technicians – are our social capital. We receive a lot of public financing, without which this project – the first attempt of its kind – would be impossible.

We've created two companies, the first as an economic cooperation between the farmers, while the second produces the biogas. The project cost 300,000€ although the entire system, including the equipment, upgrading stations and pipelines cost 8 million.

Lots of people have shown interest in our business model, such as the whisky industry in Scotland. We are working on a kind of Intellectual Property which could then be exported and sold, to create new environmentally-conscious businesses.

Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs

Margarete RUDZKI

European Chamber of Commerce, Belgium

Our goal is to revive the entrepreneurial spirit in people and thereby create sustainability. In Europe, 51% of young people are interested in entrepreneurship, though few follow through. Globalization also allows for many opportunities for SMEs, yet only 8% export in Europe. Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs is a European Commission-financed project, aiming to help young entrepreneurs with a viable business plan get in touch with experienced entrepreneurs in Europe, in order to learn how to set up and run a business. Matching compatible entrepreneurs is done via intermediary organizations, while the European Chamber makes sure the matching is done correctly. People with a viable business plan toying with the idea of setting up a business, or whose business is less than three years old, are matched with host entrepreneurs who have to be experienced, and manage an SME or micro-organization. Young entrepreneurs learn which pitfalls to avoid, how to achieve sustainability, get access to finance and business management, and how to refine their business plans. Host entrepreneurs get access to skilled, innovative knowledge, business contacts, knowledge on how other countries conduct business, as well as the satisfaction of mentoring someone. The pilot phase of the project was launched in February, and will run until January 2010. We have received 65 applications, 42 of which were accepted. If you wish to apply, you may do so at erasmus-entrepreneurs.com.

Cleantech, Finland

Lauri YLÖSTALO

EBN / Cleantech, Finland

As a small country, Finland is oriented towards other countries. While climate change is a big challenge, it is also a source of business potential for companies. Finland is currently looking for the next generation's success story and we at Cleantech are putting everything forward to be it. Our bureaucracy is well-organized and has helped us create a strong environmental sector. Three years ago we created a national Cleantech cluster around four of the major areas. In the north, we've got 40 people working on a 40 million-euro portfolio. Our three main markets are China, India and Russia. In China we've got 90 active companies selling solutions, products and services, and we are starting the same thing in India and Russia with mini-clusters of 8 to 12 companies in the fields of global energy and recycling. Our venture-capital is crucial and we need overseas help at the moment. Cleantech has the single largest incubator program in the country and is improving rapidly. Around 80 companies are in incubator programs, with half of them being Cleantech companies. Our case shows that even traditional industries are turning towards Cleantech.

Networking

Ted VICKEY

Fitwell, USA

I created my first company at 24. My first client was the White House. I know pressure, but I needed to learn how to connect with people. There are lots of countries present here; when we all leave today, how will we connect? Social capital is crucial when improving business. I highly recommend Keith Ferrazzi, whose two books on how to connect with entrepreneurs are crucial. Another source of networking is LinkedIn, which allows for greater personal connections, by breaking down the four walls and creating interaction between entrepreneurs.

UHDR – Universal Human Development Research

Michel DE KEMMETER

UHDR is a think- and do-tank in Belgium which brings people to the centre of businesses. Here are five images to illustrate the importance of combining human capital and sustainable development. The first illustrates the choice between diving underwater and surfing, or hoping to survive and learning to adapt. The second shows the metamorphosis from caterpillar to butterfly, which demonstrates that the capacity for change is already present in everyone. We need to act as a catalyst for the change, rather than forcing it. The third shows an iceberg. Everyone knows the visible part of the iceberg is the smallest part, and that it is carried by so much more. Companies are also carried by the invisible; loyalty, motivation, knowledge. We need to take this into consideration. The fourth image is a tree, representing the economy. To be viable, we need strong roots, we need to know who we are and where our skills lie, in order to bear the fruits of success. Our last image is from *The Matrix*. In our race towards change, we often forget that *we* need to change. We can't remake a society with the old way of thinking, and we can't rely on politicians. It is up to us.

Our university holds 50 people, and will be launched in spring 2010.

Michel DE KEMMETER

Create an action plan to sustainably activate human potential within society and company performance.

Feedback Group Philippe VANRIE

Integrity and ethics are major drivers for social and economic development. They should be taught in university programs. We also need technology development, which should be screened to make sure it is viable. Community-based collaboration is also important as a way to ensure viable businesses that also push ethics and integrity.

Feedback Group Ted VICKEY

Ethics and trust are crucial. We can't look to governments for change; we need to do it ourselves. Management, operations and ideology need to be interdependent.

Feedback Group Lauri YLÖSTALO

Customers are insufficiently informed. When purchasing, their choice is often based on price, rather than sustainable indicators. Policy-makers should be educated, as should the people. We need to implement European standards in other countries while maintaining flexibility. We have to involve people emotionally because facts aren't enough.

Feedback Group Margarete RUDZKI

As students we want a system that allows us to discover our potential. After school, we should be allowed to explore different fields to see where we excel before we start our professional life. The education system also needs to change; too much emphasis is placed on grading, so people are afraid to take risks and fail.

Action plan presentations

Claire WHILHELM

Master in entrepreneurship student, EDHEC

Social labels or sustainable development labels should be created. Above all else, change must be individual, supported by education from the earliest age and by public funding.