

Clarifying Strategic Issues related to Safety and Environment

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Sustainability, Global Reporting Initiative, Corporate Social Responsibility, Lean, Continuous Improvement, Kaizen and “Green” are terms and initiatives that relate to each other as well as safety and environment, but often cause confusion. This one page summary attempts to clarify issues and show how and why employee safety must be more prominent.

Sustainability

Sustainability is an outgrowth of the 1987 Brundtland Commission (named for the chair) for the United Nations

- The three pillars of sustainable growth are environment, social and economic, sometimes referred to as the “the triple bottom line”
- Sustainability is also referred to as the 3P’s: People, Planet and Profit
- GRI, the Global Reporting Initiative provides the framework for voluntary reporting of performance related to sustainable growth.

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

- Also known as corporate responsibility, corporate citizenship, responsible business, sustainable responsible business (SRB), or corporate social performance (see Wikipedia)
- It is a form of corporate self-regulation integrated into a business model. CSR policy is intended to function as a built-in, self-regulating mechanism where the inclusion of public interest into corporate decision-making facilitates achievement of positive results contributing to the triple bottom line: People, Planet, Profit.
- ISO has been working on ISO 26000, a guidance standard for social responsibility. It is expected to be released in the near future.

Continuous Improvement

- Comes in many forms for different organizations and often associated with a management system to drive continuous improvement
- Dr. W. Edwards Deming’s system of Plan-Do-Check-Act is often considered the foundation of all continuous improvement systems
- Kaizen is a Japanese term that is the equivalent of continuous improvement
- Lean is a term coined to describe the Toyota Production System in the 1990 book, “The Machine that Changed the World”
 - Lean production focuses on the identification and elimination of seven forms of waste, allowing production that is faster, better and cheaper

“Green: Environment”

- Usually associated with any form of environmental initiative to reduce adverse impacts to the planet
- Sometimes used interchangeably with “sustainability.” However, “green” is but one of three legs of sustainable growth
- “Lean and green” are aligning with little mention of safety (perform a quick internet search of ‘lean and green’) and reference www.epa.gov/lean

Safety

- Safety is but a small part of sustainability, GRI and CSR
 - It rarely, if ever, is mentioned in articles and publications dealing with sustainability and corporate social responsibility
- Without safety, the “people” part of sustainability is missing its core, but this is not well recognized.

Current State and Clarifying Issues

- “Silos” in many public and private organizations constrain the needed integration of lean, green and safety for true sustainable growth.
- There is no known national Network to promote sustainable growth in a manner that has safety as a focal point
- Sustainability applies to any size and kind of enterprise (e.g. universities, sales and service, health care, banking, manufacturing), but little is available to guide leadership on the integration of lean, green and safety.
- Many understand that safety “wastes” are injury and illness, while environmental “wastes” are typically air, water and solids. Many understand how to eliminate waste in manufacturing or operations, but few know how to apply the principles to office work
 - The application of lean tools and thinking in office and management systems allows the identification and elimination of waste, paving the way as an enabler for safety and environment

Conclusions

- Sustainability’s triple bottom line is a balanced approach for long-term success that is being embraced by more and more organizations
- CSR is similar to sustainability, bringing external considerations into business decisions
- Continuous improvement is the foundation for driving profit, along with social and environmental issues
- “Green” is but one leg of sustainable growth
- The challenge is to make safety a more visible consideration in sustainability
 - The integration of lean and safe for culture change offers a tangible path forward to make this happen