References


Further information

Roger Burritt can be contacted at roger.burritt@anu.edu.au

TBL VICTORIA

Monica Vandenberg, Principal of encompass economic + environment + social>>sustainable.

The TBL Scoping Study "How Victorian businesses, governments and non-government organisations are taking the journey towards the triple bottom line" was conducted of behalf of the TBL Victoria for the State Government. The following article is the executive summary of the Scoping Study (see TBL Victoria 2002).

“Purpose

This report provides an overview of:

- The way the Triple Bottom Line (TBL) is currently being integrated within business, Government (Local and State) and Non Government Organisations (NGOs).
- The key influences that encourage or discourage organisations to move towards a TBL philosophy.
- The resources being used by organisations to implement TBL.
- Examples that demonstrate how organisations have integrated TBL.

Main findings

Defining the Triple Bottom Line

There are various ways in which organisations are defining and integrating TBL across all sectors. At its broadest, TBL is defined as an integrated philosophy requiring a company
to address its economic, social and environmental values, strategies and processes. TBL measurement and reporting is taking the TBL definition at its narrowest. Local government consistently linked its definition of TBL with sustainability and sustainable outcomes.

Confusion about the definition and implementation of TBL exists across all sectors, at both staff and management levels.

Developing a clear definition within an organisation is an important first step towards gaining employee commitment. A consistent definition of TBL across government departments was also highlighted as an essential activity for the Victorian government to undertake.

The Drivers of TBL

There are internal and external drivers that are motivating organisations to take a TBL approach. The greatest internal driver is senior management. How TBL is broadened across an organisation is largely influenced by senior management commitment and understanding of TBL.

Stakeholders are considered the strongest external driver. The stakeholder base of employees and shareholders has expanded to include community groups, NGOs and suppliers. Government suppliers and those seeking funding see the Victorian government as an external driver.

Integrating TBL into an organisation

How organisations integrate TBL varies across all sectors with no one sector having a similar approach. When financial, marketing and public relations departments are driving TBL, it would appear that TBL becomes a measuring and reporting activity. Organisations committed to integrating TBL as a philosophy have developed and implemented training and processes to support management and staff.

Formalised stakeholder engagement, rather than an ad hoc approach, is an essential component to integrating TBL. This requires organisations to provide greater access for stakeholder dialogue and to build stakeholder engagement into their project time frames.

Strategic alliances between social and environmental groups are growing. These collaborations are viewed as vital in the creation of sustainable outcomes.

While most organisations are attempting to take a holistic approach to integrating TBL, there is still much to be learnt across all the sectors.

Issues surrounding TBL reporting

TBL reporting raises a number of issues and differences of opinion.

Some organisations believe they required standardised measurement tools. Those organisations that have been integrating TBL for a longer period recognise that these tools did not enable the organisation to integrate TBL into its core values and strategies. For these organisations, stakeholder engagement was the key driver, for how or if they would measure and report, rather than the utilisation of a standardised reporting template.

Views vary regarding the issue of mandatory TBL reporting. The general perception is that TBL reporting will become a commercial imperative rather than an imposed measure. Governments’ preferred role in this is seen as descriptive rather than
prescriptive. Mandatory reporting may divert organisational resources towards measurement and reporting rather than directing resources and attention towards the integration of TBL and making real change.

Many organisations, especially those new to TBL reporting, compartmentalise the economic, social and environmental bottom lines rather than seeking ways to integrate them.

The role of government in TBL

Through the provision of business incentives, education and research opportunities the Victorian government can be a catalyst for new TBL thinking. The Victorian government can lead by example by setting a framework for its own departments and agencies and develop grants and awards that encourage behavioural change.

For the government to demonstrate a commitment to TBL, opportunities need to be created for stakeholders to genuinely engage in decision making and reporting.”

An update from Monica Vandenberg in May 2003 indicates that the State government is taking positive steps and starting to implement a number of the recommendations detailed in the report.

Reference

Vandenberg, M., (2002). TBL Victoria Scoping Study: How Victorian businesses and non-government organisations are taking the journey towards the triple bottom line, Melbourne, February.

Thanks are given to TBL Victoria for granting permission to reproduce this executive summary.

Further information

Further information on TBL Victoria is available at:  http://www.tblaustralia.net.
The Scoping Study is available at:  http://www.tblaustralia.net/resources.htm.

Monica Vandenberg can be contacted by email at:  mgv@alphalink.com.au.

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ENVIRONMENT EXTRA!

CHINA – INTEGRATING GREEN ISSUES IN GRADUATE BUSINESS SCHOOL CURRICULA

In 2002, representatives from over half of China’s 62 accredited MBA programs joined representatives from industry, government and non-profit organizations at WRI’s "China BELL 2002: 2nd International Conference on Environment and Business Education" to discuss the role of management education in reconciling development with sustainability. The conference took place at Fragrant Hills Hotel in Beijing, on April 22-24, 2002.

Qian Yi, WRI Board Member and Professor at Tsinghua University, opened the conference and QU Geping, Chair of the Environmental Resources Protection Committee of the Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress, offered keynote remarks underscoring the importance of educating business leaders in sustainability. The opening plenary, “Sustainable Business in China: Environment, Development and