

Liz's Newsletter

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Happy Earth Day!

As we continue to experience a challenging global economy, people wonder if businesses' recent 'green' efforts will continue. I believe that the importance of sustainability will not simply remain but it will become stronger over time.

Having a sustainability program is no longer a differentiator but a license to operate. I believe that as we emerge from the current economic landscape, higher valued products – especially those that align with consumers' personal values – will succeed. I hope the articles in this newsletter help keep your organization on track and looking to the future.

*Best regards,
Liz*

Sustainability Training

Corporate Responsibility (CR) departments are often tasked with establishing a company's sustainability strategy. But they rely on other departments to integrate the strategy in business plans and daily operations. These departments often look to a CR team to identify priorities and provide guidance and direction.

One way CR departments can accomplish this is through trainings. I have provided numerous trainings on subject matters ranging from asbestos and indoor air quality to integrating sustainability goals in procurement contracts. Each training is tailored to the audience clearly linking the sustainability strategy to their business strategy. It is important to present the company's priorities and, whenever possible, introduce resources and tools that participants can use when back at their desks. Examples of sustainability resources include green procurement guides, 'white papers' on various alternative materials and/or processes, standard procedures and sustainability scorecards. Resources are most effective if they can be integrated into existing systems, manuals or training material. (continued on page 2)

Building Resilience in Your Supply Chain

Last year I had the pleasure of leading a team to outline climate change's impacts on the apparel supply chain and opportunities to build resilience to these impacts for Oxfam America. I would like to share a bit more on how to identify potential risks to your supply chain and build resilience to these risks.

In the report, we discuss how climate change will affect regions around the world differently, some regions will not be able to respond or adapt to these impacts as well as others. These communities' ability to respond to sudden or long-term impacts may affect your business through fewer or less predictable raw materials, interruptions in processing, reduced speed to market or more. For instance, what will be the impact to your business when droughts prevent farmers from producing cotton, corn, soy or sugar? If energy or water is rationed in suburban communities, will your suppliers' be able to produce your product on time? How will employees get to work/home should flooding occur?

While a global brand may not be in a position to address these concerns across their entire supply chain, it is wise to evaluate risks and identify priority concerns as well as opportunities to mitigate the most significant risks. A company may also identify and/or partner with strategic suppliers and local organizations to help strategic sourcing regions develop plans to sustain or adapt to climate change impacts as appropriate. Some areas most affected and various resilience-building opportunities include:

Farm	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Advance research efforts directed toward developing countries, raising efficiencies, productivity, and crop quality• Promote better agricultural practices and use more appropriate varieties of seeds (e.g. drought tolerant)• Provide more affordable crop insurance
Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Finance water/energy-efficient technology/equipment• Provide disaster aid and help communities develop disaster response plans• Promote water conservation and recycling through training and equipment upgrades
Consumer	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Raise awareness of climate risks in developing countries amongst consumers• Facilitate consumers' contribution to resilience-building efforts

Please go to www.lizmuller.com (Newsletters & Work Products) to view the report's executive summary.

Child Labor in Agriculture

The International Labour Organization (ILO) estimates that the vast majority of child labor—69 percent—occurs in agriculture. I have had the honor of participating in two recent discussions on how to best address child labor in agriculture. Both meetings were hosted by The Coca-Cola Company and brought together a wide variety of experienced stakeholders to discuss ways by which all stakeholders can work together on this issue.

While all participants agreed that child labor is a pressing issue, they recognize that it is complex and challenging to address. Child labor often is linked to – or the result of – other root causes such as poverty, access to affordable education and health care, cultural pressures, and limited enforcement of existing laws.

Effective efforts must address these root causes rather than trying to “police it away.” This requires participation from buyers as well as local stakeholders, including employers, trade associations, labor and social organizations and appropriate ministries. Each stakeholder plays a different and important role in the design and implementation of a successful program. For example, global brands can help convene stakeholders and improve coordination in their supply chain. Local organizations, on the other hand, are better positioned to provide necessary support and services that farmers will need as they transition to a new economic and social model.

There is a lot of information available that can help an organization begin to address child labor and other labor issues in agriculture. I suggest the following two organizations as a place to start:

- The ILO is a tripartite United Nations agency that is responsible for establishing and overseeing international labor standards. They have various programs and resources that support their mission to ensure decent work for all people. Their International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour focuses specifically on child labor. Information and resources can be found at www.ilo.org or www.ilo.org/ipec.
- Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI) is an alliance of companies, trade unions, charities and other organizations that work together to improve working conditions in global supply chains. ETI has several resources, but one that is particularly helpful in agriculture is the ETI smallholder guidelines. These resources can be accessed via www.ethicaltrade.org.

Please contact me if you would like to learn about additional resources.



Photo courtesy of uzbekistan.neweurasia.net

In the Next issue:

- Cost effective ways to build a sustainability program
- A new sheriff is in town: Preparing for compliance audits

Sustainability Training

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The most important thing is to align your business partners towards a common strategic vision and empower them to support it. This can be achieved in a variety of ways, including:

Presenting at staff meetings: Present the strategy highlighting how it aligns with their business objectives.

Supplier summits: Provide an overview of the company's strategic priorities, providing how it intersects with the supplier's business or product.

Brown bag presentations: Focus on outlining the company's strategy and allow time for employees to ask questions to better understand how they play a role in its success.

Please let me know if you would like additional advice on sustainability training.

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