

////Title: The Role of Human Motivation in Achieving Organisational Sustainability

////Stand-first:

To protect planet Earth and all its inhabitants, humankind will have to re-think its strategies for development, to ensure that they are fair, balanced and sustainable. In a recent study, Professor Martina Blašková (Mar-tee-na Blash-ko-vah) and her colleagues at the University of Žilina (Ji-lee-nah), Slovakia, have investigated the effects of motivation and decision making as preconditions for achieving organisational sustainability. Their work examines the motivation of both managers and employees, as well as the types of decisions that can encourage people to embrace sustainable development strategies.

////Body text:

Because of industrialisation and human consumption, our planet's health has rapidly deteriorated, with severe repercussions for Earth's inhabitants, including ourselves. Therefore, one of humankind's greatest challenges this century, will be that of implementing new development strategies that are fair, balanced and promote sustainability.

The term 'sustainability' entails actions that allow humans to avoid the depletion of natural resources, in order to maintain ecological balance. According to the World Commission on Environment and Development, prompting citizens to commit to greater sustainability is often a matter of educating them about environmental damage, as this can encourage them to take action.

Past studies have viewed sustainability from three main perspectives: environmental, economic and social. These perspectives have often been adjusted according to the fields in which sustainability is applied – such as enhancing corporate social responsibility, environmental aspects of business, responsible innovation and economic progress.

In addition to adjusting the scope and applications of sustainability, most ideas and solutions proposed in past studies have been the product of human efforts. With this in mind, Professor Martina Blašková, at the University of Žilina, Slovakia, has carried out a study exploring the impact of motivation and decision making in encouraging greater sustainability within companies and other organisations.

Her team's work presumes that motivation is a key precondition for an organisation's shift towards more sustainable and balanced development strategies. According to Professor Blašková, motivation lays the foundations for progress, as well as for an organisation's inspirational values. Motivation can be defined as a constantly functioning driving force, which can encourage people and organisations to take action.

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In their recent study, Professor Blašková and her colleagues examined motivation both from theoretical and empirical standpoints. Firstly, they compiled and analysed existing knowledge related to sustainability, motivation and decision making within organisations.

According to Professor Blašková, organisational sustainability connects present responsibility, effectiveness and profitability with the future and potential achievements. In this context, motivation can be viewed as the bridge between present and future. A paradigm of sustainability could help to better understand organisational efforts, as it could inform actions in both human resource management and human potential development. Sustainable human resource management entails the socially responsible management of human resources, which includes

actions that any organisation could perform to make their management of employees more sustainable.

Human potential development, on the other hand, is based on strategic, decisional and motivational perspectives, which regard employees and managers as responsible for their overall potential, including their knowledge, skills, talent and motivation. Sustainable human resource management or sustainable human potential development can help organisations to reach their efficiency and societal performance goals.

In a nutshell, this means that organisations should not only attract and retain talented employees, but they should also sustain and retain human potential that is healthy, productive, loyal and highly motivated. Professor Blašková's recent study analyses previous research highlighting the importance of motivation in decision making, particularly in the context of sustainability. Although several researchers involved in these past studies have suggested that motivation can greatly contribute to positive change, very few have tried to uncover effective strategies to build and retain sustainable working motivation. The main objective of Professor Blašková's study, therefore, was to examine the dynamics and content of the decision-making process in motivating human potential, focusing on three central European countries.

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After outlining existing knowledge and concepts related to motivation, decision making and sustainability, Professor Blašková and her colleagues carried out an empirical study aimed at better understanding the measures that need to be examined when dealing with sustainable motivation. To achieve this, the team performed a survey in early 2018 to respondents from three European countries: Slovakia, Poland and Lithuania. The researchers received answers from 500 respondents in the Slovakia, 390 in Poland and 299 in Lithuania, most of whom were women.

The survey was a structured questionnaire assessing motivation, which was developed by the team into two distinct versions – one for employees and the other for managers. The questions examined approaches, processes, tools and decisions related to work motivation, covering aspects such as awareness, leadership, appraisal, remuneration, communication, atmosphere, motivation programs and level of motivation.

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After analysing the results of their survey, Professor Blašková and her colleagues made a number of interesting observations. They found that the motivation of respondents varied in strength, with some differences in the average intensity of motivation between the different countries examined in their study.

Overall, the researchers concluded that the level of motivation did not reach its maximum potential in any of the areas that they focused on. This highlights an overall need to improve decision-making processes in organisations, in order to enhance the motivation of employees.

In addition, Professor Blašková and her colleagues observed that the factors that can change motivation levels over time varied from country to country. This suggests that using motivational programs that were successful in one country might not be a wise choice in another. In order to be successful, these programs should instead be adapted and tailored around the needs of particular employers and employees.

According to Professor Blašková and her team, the desire to become a more valuable employee or manager results in a high degree of responsibility for one's own performance, development and motivation. It leads to greater self-motivation and systematically links it to self-responsibility. However, such self-motivation is also based on managerial professionalism within an organisation and responsibility for decision making when motivating oneself and others. Professor Blašková refers to the resulting decision making, characterised by such traits, as 'sustainably responsible motivation'.

On one hand, sustainably responsible motivation includes the process of effectively achieving sustainable motivation – essentially motivation that is firm, lasting, constant, permanently renewed, improved and strengthened, and brings new competitive advantages to an organisation. On the other hand, this term also incorporates the responsibility involved in making a decision that impacts on the future motivation levels of oneself and others. Such responsibility must be felt as natural and simultaneously mandatory for all managers and human resource staff.

Based on their analysis, Professor Blašková and her colleagues developed a model of decision making in building sustainably responsible motivation, which they hope will be used to inform managerial decisions aimed at maximising the effects of human resource management, or, better human potential development.

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Overall, Professor Blašková's study provides valuable insight into the role of decision making and motivation in fuelling organisational sustainability. Her findings suggest that when employees and managers think about their motivation and how it can be improved, they perceive their motivation in the long-term and are thus willing to shape it permanently, or sustainably.

In the future, the theoretical model developed by Professor Blašková could guide managers or CEOs who are trying to enhance their employee's motivation in working towards greater sustainability.

Please also see figure 1 in the narrations notes

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Figure 1.

