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Creating and Maintaining Environmentally Sustainable Organizations:

Recruitment and Onboarding

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Berrin Erdogan (Ph.D., University of Illinois at Chicago) is Express Employment Professionals Professor of Management at Portland State University School of Business, and is an affiliated faculty at the Industrial/Organizational Psychology program. Dr. Erdogan regularly teaches classes in Athens Laboratory of Business Administration (Athens, Greece) and Koc University (Istanbul, Turkey). She teaches courses related to organizational behavior and human resources management at undergraduate and graduate levels. As a researcher, Dr. Erdogan studies how organizations can create an engaged and motivated workforce and increase employee retention through a focus on fairness in their human resource practices as well as through leadership, organizational culture, and organizational climate. She also conducts studies in person-job misfit, with a particular focus on overqualified employees. She is the recipient of 2008 Western Academy of Management Ascendant Scholar award. Dr. Erdogan's work has been published in

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Sully Taylor (Ph.D. University of Washington) is Professor of Human Resource Management at Portland State University and Director of International Programs in the School. She has also served as Director of the Master of International Management Program and as Associate Dean for Graduate Programs. She regularly teaches at the Instituto de Empresa, Madrid, Spain, and served as Chair of the International Management Division of the Academy of Management. Dr. Taylor teaches international management, global human resource management, and sustainable HRM. Her research interests include international human resource management, organizational social capital in MNCs, and sustainable HRM. Dr. Taylor has consulted for/provided training for a number of firms, including Intel, Hewlett-Packard, Tellabs, NEC America, and Boeing. Dr. Taylor has published in such journals *Academy of Management Review, Journal of International Business Studies,* and *Journal of Organizational Behavior* and has written a number of book chapters. With Nancy Napier, she wrote a book entitled *Western Women Working in Japan: Breaking Corporate Barriers*. She serves on several editorial boards. Dr. Taylor has received two Fulbright Awards, and was named an Ascendant Scholar by the Western Academy of Management.

Author Notes

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Creating and Maintaining Environmentally Sustainable Organizations: Recruitment and Onboarding

Recent changes in the global environment have led companies to realize that by solely focusing on maximization of shareholder financial returns, the long term economic viability of their firms is threatened by inattention to "…use of resources, waste management, pollution, climate change and biodiversity" (Grayson, Jin, Lemon, Rodriguez, Slaughter, & Tay, 2008: 2). Climate change has the potential to create vast desert lands in many countries. A recent report indicates that due to the rise in global temperatures, it is possible that the Horn of Africa will lose between 80% and 94% of its agriculture activity (Oxfam, 2009). There is a growing realization that economic sustainability of the firm is intertwined with environmental sustainable development.

The World Commission on Economic Development defines sustainable development as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (WorldWatch, 2009). Most companies, however, define sustainability as 'the triple bottom line,' which is conceptualized as pursuing economic, environmental and social goals simultaneously (Bansal, 2002; Hart & Milstein, 2003). Within this, the environmental bottom line is based on the assumption that "…ecosystems have limited regenerative capability and that the earth's land, air, water and biodiversity will be compromised by irresponsible actions" (Bansal, 2002: 23), and sustainable firms will be those that preserve that regenerative capability while achieving economic and social goals (Osland, Drake, & Feldman, 1999).

In this chapter, we focus primarily on the environmental aspects of sustainability. Specifically, we will discuss how organizations may build a culture emphasizing sustainability

using HR practices. HR practices that may create and maintain a sustainable culture include recruitment and selection, onboarding and training, performance appraisals, and management of reward systems. By hiring and selecting employees who share a passion for environmental issues, by educating employees in environmental matters, and by incorporating environmental issues into the assessment and rewarding of performance, organizations may gain a competitive advantage and increase the sustainability of their business operations.

Recruitment and Selection for Environmental Sustainability

The first section of this chapter will address work that has been done in the area of recruitment for environmental sustainability. In order for sustainably focused firms to obtain the needed skills, attitudes, and behaviors, the first step is to attract and recruit the right potential employees. At the same time, an organization having a sustainable organizational culture and reputation can be a strategic tool for an organization's ability to attract high quality job candidates. This overview will include examples of research in this area as well as examples of recruitment practices. Finally, we will review potential individual differences in attitudes of potential recruits and their implications for practice.

Research on Recruitment for Environmental Sustainability

Conceptual writing and empirical research on the links between environmentally sustainable firms and employee attraction have grown in the last decade. Research shows that individuals are attracted to organizations with good reputations (Turban & Cable, 2003). They are also attracted to firms with values consistent to their own (Highhouse, Hoffman, Greve, & Collins, 2002). And finally, they tend to be attracted to organizations which they perceive as having a strong person-job and person-organization fit with themselves (Chapman, Uggerslev, Carroll, Piasentin, & Jones, 2005). Fernandez, Junquera, and Ordiz (2003) have argued that

companies that have a reputation for having a culture emphasizing sustainability will attract the most skilled employees.

The link between a sustainable culture and organizational attractiveness has been found in surveys. For example, Chong (2009) reports on illuminating findings such as a survey conducted by Cone Inc in 2002, in which 80% of respondents in the United States of America mentioned that they would refuse to work in a company that is known as a "bad citizen." Similarly, in 2007 NetImpact surveyed over 2,000 MBA students and more than half of them indicated that they would be willing to accept a lower salary to work for a socially responsible organization. In addition, more than 80% of those individuals interviewed for the Edelman (2008) *Annual Trust Barometer* said that a company's environmental record is important for whether they trust the company or not. These findings suggest that, by developing a reputation emphasizing sustainable development and ecological sensitivity, organizations can increase their attractiveness to potential candidates, increasing the ability of the organization to access a wider and higher quality candidate pool. In other words, companies that have built a reputation for environmental sustainability should have little difficulty attracting highly qualified candidates because they will be regarded as more trustworthy and better places to work.

More formal studies also support this contention. For example, Wei-Chi and Wen-Fen Yang (2010) examined the relationship between company image and organizational attractiveness. They proposed that social identity and signaling theories explain the relationship. According to social identity theory, employees will derive their own image from the image of the organization and that negative images will threaten the individual image, may bring unfavorable comments from friends and family, and may depress the person. Signaling theory suggests that candidates tend to infer what type of an organization they are interacting with during recruitment

from the image they hold of the company. Wei-Chi and Wen-Fen Yang's studies with a total of over 800 students showed that citizenship image was positively related to organizational attractiveness. The values associated with caring for and acting to help preserve the physical environment can be an important factor for individuals considering to which organizations to apply for jobs. While the research is limited in quantity, researchers have established that potential recruits are more attracted to organizations with positive ecological stances than those that do not have positive ecological stances (Aiman-Smith, Bauer, & Cable, 2001; Bauer & Aiman-Smith, 1996; Strand, Levine, & Montgomery, 1981). For example, Bauer and Aiman-Smith (1996) used an experimental design to find that students were more highly attracted to an organization that professed caring for the environment. In their follow up study, Aiman-Smith et al. (2001) found that an organization's environmental stance was related to the attractiveness of the organization above pay and layoff potential. Similarly, Behrend, Baker, and Thompson (2009) found that a fictitious firm's positive environmental message on its website could influence applicant attraction regardless of the environmental stance of the individuals viewing the information.

Examples of Recruitment Practices for Environmental Sustainability

While a reputation for environmental sustainability will be useful in general in an organization's recruitment efforts, it is also critical for these organizations to attract candidates who have value alignment with their core mission revolving around environmental sustainability. This is particularly important for the maintenance of the organization's culture supporting environmental sensitivity. For this reason, we see that organizations that have a reputation for being environmentally conscious actively seek candidates who are concerned about environmental matters. Aveda, which is renowned in the cosmetics industry for its leadership in

sustainable innovation and for its packaging efforts maximizing post consumer recycled content of plastics, emphasizes these values in their recruitment efforts. For example, in their online job application system, the first message potential job applicants come across is that the company is looking for candidates who are personally committed to environmental sustainability (Aveda, 2011). Patagonia, the outdoor clothing company that is famous for its clothing made of recycled materials such as soda bottles, goes one step further and asks job applicants to be environmentally responsible in the preparation of their application materials (Patagonia, 2011).

Individual Differences in Attitudes toward Environmental Sustainability

In practice, however, it should be pointed out that not all applicants are likely to be equally attracted due to different attitudes toward the environment. For example, Rodrigo and Arenas (2008) conducted a qualitative study in the construction industry in Chile. They identified three types of employees regarding their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) attitudes. CSR refers to perceptions of how much care an organization has toward "doing the right thing" which includes toward the environment. Using their typology of employees, they found that *committed employees* are very concerned and enthusiastic about CSR issues. *Indifferent employees* primarily care about their own work and career. *Dissident employees* are frustrated that money spent on environmental issues is not being spent on salaries or other employee initiatives. They have a sense of justice but it is focused on themselves.

In another typology, Soyez, Hoffmann, Wunschmann, and Gelbrich (2009) noted that employee ecological orientation has four dimensions. *Egocentric individuals* are those who are dedicated to sustainability because they enjoy nature. *Ecocentric individuals* care about the environment for its own sake. *Anthropocentric individuals* believe that nature serves humans and therefore it needs to be protected. *Environmentally apathetic* individuals tend to believe that

environmental concerns have been exaggerated. Obviously, firms focused on environmental goals must take these varying attitudes into account during recruitment. The ability of an organization with a reputation for environmental sustainability to attract job candidates will to some extent depend on the ecological value orientations of employees, and it is probable that such a reputation will be more powerful in attracting job applicants in the case of egocentric, ecocentric, and anthropocentric individuals.

Onboarding Employees for Sustainability

Our next section focuses on the onboarding of new employees. Once applicants find an organization attractive enough to join, the process of new employee onboarding begins (Bauer, Bodner, Erdogan, Truxillo, & Tucker, 2007). In this section we review the onboarding process and how environmentally friendly attitudes and behaviors can be developed and retained over time as well as sharing examples of onboarding practices.

Onboarding opens a rich avenue for fostering environmentally friendly job attitudes and behaviors. In particular, once hired into the firm, the inculcation of the firm's sustainability values and goals should be a well-thought out processes. It has been found that what happens in the first few months of a new manager's joining into the hiring firm – the onboarding process – can have enormous implications for the newcomer's success in his or her job (Bauer, 2010). Employees are likely to form their beliefs about the depth of the company's commitment to social and environmental goals in the first months on the job based on the norms encountered, anecdotes told, and mentoring they receive. Organizations need to be aware of how to socialize new employees to foster environmentally friendly behaviors.

A key component for companies to communicate the depth of their commitment to environmental goals is through the creation of a corporate culture that reinforces this

commitment. In practice, this can be done in several ways. For example, Nike created the position of VP of Sustainable Business and Innovation. By having such a position, Nike is signaling to new and established employees that they value sustainability and the environment. As Hannah Jones who currently holds this position at Nike notes, "I didn't expect to go into business." She says she joined Nike's sustainability team in order to see if it was "more effective to shout from the outside or work from the inside" (FastCompany, 2010). She decided she could get more traction and positive outcomes for the environment from inside a large manufacturing organization than from outside of it.

Research on Onboarding for Environmental Sustainability

In addition, several studies have examined the link between environmentally friendly corporate cultures and employee socialization. Many of them emphasize key HRM policies that are characteristic of sustainable cultures. For example, del Brio, Fernandez, and Junquera (2007) note that communication of environmental objectives by top management, as well as allocation of resources help build a sustainable culture, while Ferrell, LeClair, and Ferrell (1997) found in their study of fast food restaurant managers that perceived organizational environmental efforts were related to the perception that the organization was socially responsible. In a study of European companies that are environmentally proactive, Ramus and Steger (2000) found that "…employees who perceived strong signals of organizational and supervisory encouragement were more likely to develop and implement creative ideas that positively affected the natural environment than employees who did not perceive such signals" (p. 622), further illustrating the power of supervisory as well as organizational actions in nurturing sustainability oriented cultures.

Examples of Onboarding Practices for Environmental Sustainability

The attention to training and development, through such actions as company-organized seminars, can also help create a sustainable culture (del Brio et al., 2007; Haugh & Talwar, 2010). For example, at PricewaterhouseCoopers, field assignments in developing countries are part of their global leadership development program. In their "Ulysses Project," teams of high potential managers work in cross-sector partnerships with NGOs to develop greater understanding of global sustainable development (Pless, Maak, & Stahl, 2011). Finally, participating in environmental activities can also increase new employee awareness of ecological efforts of the organization (Hunton-Clarke, Wehrmeyer, McKeown, Clift, & King, 2002). As an example, Patagonia employees may leave their jobs to join an environmental initiative, while continuing to receive their salaries and benefits through the company's internship programs that are open to current employees.

In other words, part of the new employee socialization process is to make employees aware of the organization's efforts toward sustainability, through company orientation and training programs, formal communication by upper management, and involvement of new employees in corporate environmental efforts. Simple exposure to the efforts of an organization and being a part of these efforts will increase new employee awareness and commitment to environmental efforts of the organization. For example, imagine the situation of a new employee asked to bring cups to the company get together. When the employee arrives at the social gathering with Styrofoam cups in hand, if he is gently told to think of greener alternatives next time, he will be given a powerful form of feedback. Such peer pressure will be as effective as any written reward system where employees are assessed for their environmental initiatives and performance.

In another example of making this process personal, Wal-Mart developed the "Personal Sustainability Project" where each participant picks some part of his or her life that is not sustainable and sets a goal toward making it more sustainable. While this is a voluntary program, those who embrace it have seen great success. This success seems to stem from the personal nature of the goals.

Benefits of Effective Onboarding

Employees who are onboarded effectively through an interactive process of socialization into an organization will perform better in sustainable firms. Effective socialization also helps with retention as well as job attitudes and innovative behavior. Several studies have established a link between corporate environmental activities and job attitudes of employees. For example, in a study of a multinational organization in the UK, researchers found that perceived corporate commitment to sustainability was significantly related to organizational commitment and trust in management (Andersson, Shivarajan, & Blau, 2005). In a study of over 1,000 employees in Turkey, Elci, and Alpkan (2009) found that when employees perceived their organization as environmentally responsible, they reported higher work satisfaction.

Post-Onboarding Performance Management Practices for Environmental Sustainability

This section provides an overview of post-onboarding practices such as performance management for environmental sustainability. It includes an overview of research that has been done in this area and examples of practice in this area.

New employees will get their cues about how important an ecological mindset is from many sources, including company leadership, rewards and incentive systems, and written performance assessment of employees. Therefore, ensuring that these HR systems incorporate desired employee behaviors targeting the environment would increase the likelihood of

successful onboarding of new employees in a corporate culture emphasizing sustainability. Besides communicating with new employees in the area of environmental sustainability, performance management and rewards systems may be utilized to indoctrinate employees in the environmental values of the organization. Assessing employee environmental initiatives as part of a performance appraisal system, providing employees recognition for their environmental initiatives and efforts, and providing rewards and other incentives for employee efforts in this area have been observed as critical in fully engaging employees in the organizational efforts toward ecological sustainability (del Brio et al., 2007; Nord & Fuller, 2009). The structure of the performance and pay system can also matter. In a study of the pay structure of CEOs of high-polluting companies, for example, it was found that more pollution prevention occurred in firms using long term company results as a basis for rewards (Berrone & Gomez-Mejia, 2009).

Examples of Post-Onboarding Performance Management for Environmental Sustainability

When Wal-Mart embarked on their sustainability initiative, they brought in former Sierra Club champion Adam Werbach to help them run a key environmental initiative designed to teach 1.3 million employees about sustainability. One of the things that struck Werbach about Wal-Mart was their clear strategy to integrate evaluations and bonuses to sustainability performance. This is a key goal of Andy Ruben, Wal-Mart's VP of Sustainability (Sacks, 2007). Similarly, since 2008, Intel utilizes the company's environmental performance in its calculation of all employee bonuses. At Westpac, an Australian bank group, all new employees have "…a corporate responsibility component to their scorecard" and each executive team member has their emissions-reduction target for the year in the personal performance scorecard (Cohen, 2010: p. 127).

Recommendations for Practice

The final section of this chapter includes specific recommendations for practice. While the growing research evidence suggests that organizational HR activities may benefit organizational actions toward sustainability, more research is needed. However, there is still much that we do know which can be implemented in practice today which will be described in the following section. In addition, a best practices checklist is included for both recruitment and onboarding.

Recommendation for Practice: Use the Recruitment Best Practices Checklist

Best practices in terms of recruitment for environmental sustainability follow (please see Figure 1). Organizations should consider how each best practice for recruitment can be conducted to emphasize environmental issues for both current employees who run recruitment programs and potential recruits. For example, a recruitment best practice is to include information about what the organization is really like. Therefore, information about an organization's goals and initiatives around the environment can be integrated into this process by including environmental sustainability content as part of the program.

[Insert Figure 1 Here]

Recommendation for Practice: Use the Onboarding Best Practices Checklist

Best practices in terms of onboarding for environmental sustainability follow (please see Figure 2). Organizations should consider how each best practice for onboarding can be conducted to emphasize environmental issues for both current and new employees. For example, an onboarding best practice is to include a formal orientation program. However, environmental sustainability can be integrated into this process by including environmental sustainability content as part of the program.

[Insert Figure 2 Here]

Recommendation for Practice: Reinforce Recruitment and Onboarding with Other HRM Practices

We have focused in this chapter on the individual practices within recruitment, onboarding and post-onboarding performance management that are effective in promoting environmental sustainability. At the same time, it is clear that unless there is an integrated approach to the design and implementation of these practices within a company, the intended positive impacts will not be forthcoming. Thus the HR practices for sustainability described in this paper should be embedded in, and reinforced by, the larger strategic HRM system of the company. What would this look like in a firm pursuing environmental sustainability?

HRM scholars have generally found that in order for individual HR practices to have their full positive effect on achieving strategic outcomes, it is necessary to adopt a strategic HRM focus that matches the company's organizational goals with the appropriate set of HRM practices that are also consistent with each other (Ambec & Lanoie, 2008; Delery, 1998; Jackson, Renwick, Jabbour & Muller-Camen, 2011; Schuler & Jackson, 1987). There are several practical implications of this research for the HR function in firms pursuing environmental sustainability. First, it is important to select that set of HRM policies and practices that most closely aligns with the particular environmental sustainability outcomes desired by the company. If the firm is seeking to mitigate environmental risk or cost (Hart & Milstein, 2003), for example, then desired employee behaviors will be focused on following standard safety routines, or careful scrutiny of present production processes to find ways to decrease the level of inputs or the use of environmentally detrimental materials. On the other hand, within companies seeking to replace present products or services with more environmentally friendly ones, employees will be asked to contribute innovative ideas, and focus on eco-innovations (Hart & Milstein, 2003). The HRM

system must also encourage alignment horizontally, across the different parts of the company. Dan Henkle, Senior Vice President for Global Responsibility at the GAP, emphasizes how crucial this alignment was in his company's sustainability journey: "It was really important to collectively align with a single philosophy… Was there one message from the Global Responsibility and Global Sourcing teams?" (SHRM Research Report, 2011: 26).

Second, a strategic HRM system must encourage the ability to work with outside stakeholders, such as suppliers, in order to achieve environmental goals. This can sometimes include greater cohesion between the internal, company HRM system and that of crucial suppliers. For example, when inter-organizational HR practices are in conflict between important partners, quality problems can result (Koulikoff-Souviron & Harrison, 2007). For HR managers, identifying the multiple stakeholders (e.g., suppliers, employees, communities at home and abroad, etc.) that need to be involved in order to successfully achieve environmental goals, and designing strategic HRM systems that encompass that recognition, has become crucial.

Finally, the overall impact of the HRM system on employees' wellbeing and on their communities may be important to examine, as this can be tied to negative outcomes for the environment when people are not healthy or have decreased social capital from their employment situation (Pfeffer, 2010). A truly strategic HRM system for environmental sustainability recognizes that for the company to achieve its environmental goals, the health, stability and welfare of the people affected by the set of HRM policies it adopts must be given high priority in its design. Employees who force themselves to come to work when they are sick because of fear of losing their jobs will give scant attention or commitment to ensuring plant safety or material waste reduction on the shop floor.

Recommendation for Practice: Engage All Relevant Stakeholders

Organizations can be more effective in attracting and retaining key individuals if they have established themselves as a leader in the community. Building an image as a trustworthy and fair organization would necessitate the organization to treat each stakeholder with respect. In other words, while treating the environment and future generations as a stakeholder, the organization should not neglect its responsibility toward its current employees and their families. In this regard, the Northwest US fast food company Burgerville has gained distinction in its industry for offering full health benefits to all its employees. "Burgerville's decision in 2005 to provide *affordable* healthcare coverage to all employees working over 20 hours a week for at least 6 months was truly unique within the Quick Service Restaurant industry: for $20/month individuals receive full medical, dental and vision coverage with no deductible, a worker and spouse pay $30 monthly, and family plans cost just $90. Health benefits are frequently cited as by far the most appreciated benefit available to employees. As one employee stated, 'I'm treated differently because I have an insurance card'" (Burgerville Case, 2011). This action underscores for employees that Burgerville's environmental initiatives, such as working to utilize 100% renewable energy in all of its operations, are not green washing but part of an integrated sustainability strategy.

Recommendation for Practice: Consider Partnering on Environmental HRM Research

It seems that while organizational sustainability has been linked to job attitudes of employees, we currently know little about how it affects actual work behaviors of employees as well as employee retention. Do organizations that have a reputation for sustainability engender safer employee behaviors, higher job performance, and lower turnover? To the degree that organizational values around ecological sustainability engender higher levels of trust in organization and management, positive organizational and individual outcomes are expected.

Understanding how sustainability affects retention of employees and actual performance is critical for making a strong case for initiatives supporting environmental sustainability. Therefore, we would recommend practitioners and academics to collaborate on answering this question. Any data that is revealed linking environmental sustainability to employee outcomes would both add to the literature, and create an additional incentive for other organizations on the fence about whether to commit fully to an environmentally sensitive agenda.

Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to help summarize the limited work that has been done on sustainability in the workplace and recruitment and new employee onboarding. We reviewed the work done to date and generated potential future research directions. Our hope is that this chapter will help to stimulate research and practice for recruitment and onboarding which leads to more environmentally sustainable outcomes.

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Figure 1. Best Practices for Recruitment with an emphasis on environmental sustainability.

✓ **Recruiting Best Practices**	**Recommendations for Developing Environmental Sustainability during Recruiting**
✓ Evaluate your current recruitment practices.	Update anything that isn't working and be sure that you are including environmental sustainability content as part of the program.
✓ Have recruitment material that sends consistent messages regarding your organization during recruitment.	Get buy in at all levels of your green initiatives, goals, and values.
✓ Be honest and avoid greenwashing.	Communicate the difference between your current status as well as goals and aspirations for the future regarding the environment.
✓ Use technology to facilitate the process.	This is an easy way to cut down on paper and model sustainable practices.
✓ Lead by example.	Engage in green recruitment practices such as virtual interviews to save on carbon emissions and paperless options during the recruitment process.
✓ Ensure that the program is monitored over time.	Follow up with new employees to be sure that environmental sustainability isn't being lost during their recruitment process.

Figure 2. Best Practices for Onboarding adapted from Bauer (2010) with an emphasis on environmental sustainability.

✓ **Onboarding Best Practices**	**Recommendations for Developing Environmental Sustainability during Onboarding**
✓ Implement the basics prior to the first day on the job.	Include environmental sustainability expectations as part of that process.
✓ Use formal orientation programs.	Include environmental sustainability content as part of the program.
✓ Develop a written onboarding plan.	Include specific environmental sustainability goals in the written onboarding plan.
✓ Make onboarding participatory.	Consider programs such as Wal-Mart's Personal Sustainability Project where employees are involved in choosing goals.
✓ Ensure that the program is monitored over time.	Follow up with new employees to be sure that environmental sustainability isn't being lost during their onboarding process.
✓ Use technology to facilitate the process.	This is an easy way to cut down on paper and model sustainable practices.
✓ Use milestones, such as 30, 60, 90, and 120 days on the job—and up to one year post-organizational entry—to check in on employee progress.	While environmental sustainability is important, new employees need to focus on learning the basics right away. Following up at key milestones is important for reinforcing and maintaining a focus on sustainability.
✓ Engage stakeholders in planning and include key stakeholder meetings as part of the program.	New employees with managers and coworkers who do not show commitment to environmental sustainability will not do as well as those who do. Having meetings with key stakeholders can help new employees see support for this.
✓ Be crystal clear with new employees in terms of:	As with any other type of goals, being clear in terms of these

→ Objectives → Timelines → Roles → Responsibilities	factors will help with environmental sustainability.