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*« The learning challenges of
implementing a sustainable development
strategy within a company : some
reflections about the new ISO 26000 »*

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Introduction

- **Sustainable development becomes today a « must » for most enterprises, especially the larger ones (social legitimacy, image, competitiveness...)**
- **Sustainable business strategies imply dramatic management changes : taking into account the interests of several stakeholders.**
- **Such changes require major learning efforts from all the organization's actors (top management, executives, employees).**

The content of this session includes the following points :

- **Short presentation of the sustainable development standard ISO 26 000 (its main characteristics and distinctive features).**
- **Issue of the integration of this new sustainable development standard in the business strategies with a focus on the changes and learning processes.**
- **Contributions of the participants about the adequate methods for implementing the ISO 26 000 within a traditional company (short questionnaire).**
- **Conclusion : short story of a field experience about a sustainable development approach in a large company with La Rochelle Business School specialized chair.**

Presentation of ISO 26 000 and its main characteristics

- **New international standard of sustainable development should come out at the end of 2010 (it involved 90 countries and more than 500 experts over a several years elaboration process).**
- **Synthesis between the US view (accountability towards stakeholders) and the European view (social development philosophy of the organizations).**
- **A medium to long term perspective instead of short term one.**

- **Normative and ethical management of the various stakeholders (not only shareholders centered).**
- **Business companies cannot only pursue economic & financial objectives because of their impact on the society.**
- **Ethical aspects of the ISO 26 000 : it advocates a socio-political and value oriented approach of economic development for organisations.**
- **It merges the concepts of sustainable development and CSR for organizations.**

- **ISO 26 000 is designed as a guideline towards sustainable development (a « meta-standard » and not only a plain quality standard as the others ISO).**
- **ISO 26 000 aims at generating and to diffusing good practices and it proposes a methodology to improve the sustainable development approach of organizations (heavy document of about 100 pages).**
- **ISO 26 000 is not supposed to become a certifying standard, although consultants will likely propose it to companies (as already in Denmark !)**

The content of the ISO 26 000 standard

- **Discussion of the CSR and the stakeholder concepts as well as their links.**
- **Governance of the organization.**
- **Human rights.**
- **Work conditions and relations.**
- **Environment.**
- **Good business practices.**
- **Consumption issues.**
- **Territory anchoring.**
- **Guidelines for an organization to implement its social responsibility.**

Integration of the ISO 26 000 in the business strategies

- **Environmental and social issues : from a constraint and cost oriented view to a new business strategy vision.**
- **From a shareholders focused approach to a more ethical multiple stakeholders interest approach.**
- **Sustainable development as a mean of grounding new competitive, socially and environmentally friendly business strategies.**

Changes and learning challenges to implement ISO 26 000

- **ISO 26 000 means to learn and to practice another way of managing and leading companies based on new mindsets :**
 - **Another vision of business within the society.**
 - **Dialogue with all main stakeholders.**
 - **Balance between the stakeholders interests.**
 - **New marketing, HR, logistics strategies.**
 - **Medium/long term vs short term profit/ finance perspective.**

QUESTIONS TO PARTICIPANTS :

- 1 - What are the main major changes implied by the implementation of ISO 26 000 for a traditional business company?**
- 2- What are going to be the main likely obstacles down the road to ISO 26 000 for such a company ?**
- 3 - What kind of operational learning and change methods would you suggest to facilitate the management and leadership changes that it implies?**

Discussion of the results

- **Answers to these 3 questions :**
- **Comments and discussions** with the participants

CONCLUSION

Short story about a consulting experience of La Rochelle Business School sustainable development chair with a large French industrial company in order to help to elaborate and to implement a sustainable development policy.

Use of a team learning based approach

- **Self-diagnosis method based on the evaluation of the levels of performance and importance of 34 stakes and of their relation with a comprehensive list of stakeholders.**
- **Members : 8 top executives from the main management functions**
- **Time : several months with regular sessions**
- **Importance of an internal motivated team leader and the support of the CEO.**
- **Accompanying role of the Business School consultants.**
- **Successful results : team work /collective intelligence consciousness improvement and motivation, operational outcome : a justified and shared action plan.**