

Greening the Workplace: An Exploratory Study in Puerto Rico

Maritza Soto, Ph.D./JD, SPHR, GPHR, CCP, GRP

Professor

University of Puerto Rico- Rio Piedras Campus

Department of Management

Greening the Workplace: An Exploratory Study in Puerto Rico

ABSTRACT

During the past decades, global awareness has begun to emerge around the need for proactive protection of our planet. What was initially seen as an environmental movement is now an imperative for future generations. In response to this, scholars from diverse corporate functions as accounting, marketing and engineering, supply-chain and even marketing management have been analyzing how managerial practices in these areas can contribute to environmental practices through managerial processes. There is, however, little information regarding human resources practices and its link to an environmentally-friendly workplace.

This paper reports the results of an exploratory study of businesses in Puerto Rico, to determine to what extent they are utilizing green practices in the workplace and what factors are encouraging or inhibiting this use. The research finds that while businesses are aware of the possibilities and opportunities offered and some green practices are in plan, the full implementation of these practices is scarce. It finds some support for a number of factors influencing the decision. This study was conducted with considerable optimism that a new outlook on managerial practices is emerging in Puerto Rico. Grounded in 77 survey responses,

the key contribution to this paper is that it provides a general overview of the position of Puerto Rican firms regarding greening the workplace. The paper concludes with an outline of its limitations, proposes approaches for further work and stresses the importance of this neglected area.

Keywords: green workplace, role of human resources, environmental sustainability

Greening the Workplace: An Exploratory Study in Puerto Rico

INTRODUCTION

During the past decades, global awareness has begun to emerge around the need for proactive protection of our planet. What was initially seen as an environmental movement is now an imperative for future generations. In response to this, scholars from diverse corporate functions as accounting, marketing and engineering, supply-chain and even marketing management have been analyzing how managerial practices in these areas can contribute to environmental practices through managerial processes. There is, however, little information regarding human resources practices and its link to an environmentally-friendly workplace. There is even fewer information regarding this topic in Puerto Rico. With few exceptions, very early in 1996 we find a book by Wehrmeyer called *Greening People: Human Resources and Environmental Management*, but other than this, there is scarcity of research linking the field of human resource management and environmental practices until after 2003. This is surprising, as any organizational responses to environmental concerns must involve decisions and behavior by an organization's employees.

Fortunately, the role of human resources in this area is beginning to be recognized. For example, we found that in September 2007, the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) conducted the SHRM 2007 Green Workplace Survey to examine environmentally responsible practices from the perspective of HR professionals and employees. This survey brief explored types of practices organizations have in place, human resource professionals' and employees' perceptions of their organizations' practices, and HR professionals' role in their organizations' environmentally-friendly programs. In 2008, the Economic and Workforce Development Agency through the California Community Colleges conducted the Green Economy Workforce Study with the objective of better understanding the implications of the green economy workforce and its implications for industries, employers and workforce alike. This study developed a green economy profile, the industry employment and the green jobs that had been created, the workforce challenges and the education and training needs in order to create a greener workforce. At the 2009 Annual Meeting of the Academy of Management, which had as its theme "Green Management Matters", papers were presented that linked human resources functions such as performance management and recruitment to environmental management. Studies designed to improve our understanding of environmentally-friendly employee attitudes and behaviors also have begun to appear. In order to elicit more scholarly papers, a special conference was developed in Germany and a compilation of papers were published in the *State of the Art and Future Directions for Green Human Resource Management: Introduction to the Special Issue*.¹ Since then, more and more papers, studies and models are being presented as a new beginning to what needs to follow for human resources. The transformation from the traditional practices into "green" practices is not a fad. It is change of

¹ Jackson, S., Renwick, D., Jabbour, C., Muller-Camen, M. Zeitschrift fuer Personalforschung - German Journal of Research in Human Resource Management.. Volume (Year): 25 (2011) Pages: 99-116

mindset that requires behavior modification in each individual in our businesses and preferably, in our society, in order to ensure long term sustainability. Going green is an imperative that not only reaps global ecological benefits, but also actualizes a plenitude of benefits for organizations to profit upon.

This paper reports the results of an exploratory study of businesses in Puerto Rico, to determine to what extent green practices are being implemented and utilized in the workplace and what factors are encouraging or inhibiting this use. Grounded in 77 survey responses from a variety of businesses, the key contribution to this paper is that it provides a general overview of the position of Puerto Rican firms regarding greening the workplace. The paper concludes with an outline of its limitations, proposes approaches for further work and stresses the importance of this neglected area.

BACKGROUND LITERATURE

What was once a word in the backburner is now a critical part of organizations. In addition to realizing substantial cost savings, organizations that build environmental practices and sustainability into their daily operations improve their image in the marketplace for customers and current as well as future employees. More and more people want to work for companies that make a difference in the environment and community. Competitive organizations should recommit to becoming green and promoting corporate citizenship throughout the community as well within their given industry. According to the 2009 Green Workplace Study conducted by the Society of Human Resources Management, 20% of human resources professionals work at companies that have formal, environmentally friendly policies. This percent is expected to increase after 2011 as more and more organizations seek to gain a competitive advantage by becoming the *green* leader in their given industry.

How many people are aware that an average tree yields 50,000 sheets of paper? That may sound like a lot of paper but consider this alarming statistic: an organization that hires 100 new employees a year wastes more than 20,000 sheets of paper on offer packages alone. If you add employee handbooks, stock option information, employee surveys, benefits enrollment, performance evaluations and all of the other critical documents that human resources distributes on an annual basis, you can see that a human resources department's dependence on paper-based processes will translate into killing numerous trees each year. Integrating simple processes such as automating the organization's human resources processes, including recruiting and selection, web conferencing, reduced paper use, direct deposit, mass transit programs, recycling and performance management programs would contribute favorably to the environment and to "going green".

An increasing number of organizations are taking their corporate green initiatives a step further. Some organizations are purchasing Green-e Certified Renewable Energy Certificates (RECs) to match their annual energy usage. Others are certifying their buildings as LEED (*Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design*), which is an internationally recognized green building certification system, providing third-party verification that a building or community was designed and built using strategies intended to improve performance in metrics such as energy savings, water efficiency, CO₂ emissions reduction, improved indoor environmental quality, and stewardship of resources and sensitivity to their impacts. Still others are taking even bolder steps and greater investment such as hybrid company vehicles, solar energy and wind installations, among others.

Regarding the literature that we can find on these topics, we find that there is research on green marketing (Peattie, 1992), accounting (Owen, 1992), and management (McDonagh and

Prothero, 1997). However, gaps still exist in the Human Resource Management literature on the aspects of environmental management or what is better known as Green HRM. More recent research attempting to close the gap is an informative guide on the emergent literature, its scope and coverage, and a process model and research agenda in this field which examines and draws together the human resources aspects of environmental management and map the terrain in this field, it details a model of the HR processes involved in Green HRM, and finally proposes a research agenda to guide future research in the field of Green HRM conducted by Renwick.²

It is important to emphasize that human resource managers are well positioned to play an instrumental role in helping their organization achieve its goals of becoming a socially and environmentally responsible firm – one which reduces the negative and enhances the positive impacts on society and the environment. This goal, which is called *corporate social responsibility (CSR)*, for many businesses today it is seen as a key driver of financial performance and can be influential in obtaining that objective. While there is considerable guidance to firms who wish to be the best place to work and or firms who seek to manage their employee relationships in a socially responsible way, there is a dearth of information for the HR manager who sees the importance of embedding their firm's CSR values throughout the organization, who wish to assist the executive team in integrating CSR into the company's DNA.³

There is emerging evidence that if effectively implemented, CSR can have significant impact in motivating, developing and retaining staff. For example, Novo Nordisk, a high-value pharmaceutical company in Denmark that focuses on corporate social responsibility, launched

² D Renwick, M Robertson. Green HRM: A review, process model, and research agenda. University of Sheffield Management School . UK. (2008)

³ Strandberg, C., CSR and HR Management Issue Brief and Roadmap. Industry Canada. Canada. May 2009.

their *Values in Action* program, which aligns their business objectives with sustainable development principles, and after this program was launched, they saw a 5% drop in staff turnover. (Skinner, 2002).

Globally, HR leaders are developing and implementing incentive and appraisal systems that reflect sustainability as well as hiring personnel that embody these values. For example, research by The Conference Board reveals that 50% of global managers report their companies do, or plan to, include corporate citizenship as a performance evaluation category. Additionally, 68% of respondents cite the link between corporate citizenship and performance appraisal as “increasingly important.” (Lockwood, 2004). Research shows that the critical success factors for implementing these practices include having an overarching vision that includes them, having senior management and board level commitment, engaged staff and the provision of skills, tools and incentives. Clearly, staff participation and buy-in to delivering on the company’s aspirations is central to success in this area. ⁴

A labor market trend that is predicted to foster the connection between human resources and environmental practices in organizations is the “Facebook” generation, seeking to work for companies aligned with their values and the baby-boomer employees who want to earn a living while giving back, who wants their work to have more meaning. Between the Facebook and baby-boomers, current and future employees will be increasingly more demanding of their employers on this dimension. Either way, HR leadership will be increasingly focused on the engagement of a new values-based ethic amongst employees, resulting in a focus on the internal brand and relationship values.

⁴ supra

Puerto Rico has taken a slower pace when implementing environmental or green practices. Larger multinational companies have begun to work with certain infrastructure projects such as installation of solar panels for energy reduction as in the case of Cooperativa de Seguros Múltiples in Hato Rey as well as the Colegio de Ingenieros which have installed solar panels in several of their facilities on the island. Recently, Caribbean Business launched a project called *Green Economy Project* where they announce that “*The Green Economy is all about sales, savings and revenues. Join the supply chains of multinational companies looking for green vendors. Find merger partners in Puerto Rico and overseas. Sell your products and services. Discover product lines to distribute in the local market. Lower your stubborn electricity cost and save tons of money in water, waste, purchasing and logistics.*”⁵ Some hotels have also taken the “Eco” route and “sell” their hotel experience as an environmentally-friendly way to vacation as in the case of Luquillo Sunrise Beach Inn. Their webpage says: “*The GREEN room is a 2 bedroom vacation unit with a near carbon free footprint. We plan on providing a hands-on and fun experience while educating travelers about sustainable tourism and energy saving living practices while enjoying beautiful sunny Puerto Rico.*” Yet another of the efforts that are being developed in Puerto Rico is the Puerto Rico Green Energy Fund. The “Puerto Rico Green Energy Incentives Act” of 2010 created the Green Energy Fund (GEF) to increase green energy production and promote sustainability in Puerto Rico. Through the GEF, the Government of Puerto Rico will co-invest up to \$290 million in the development of renewable energy projects on the island. Starting July 1, 2011, \$20 million will be allocated to the GEF; funding then escalates to \$40 million by fiscal year 2017. These incentives definitely assist businesses that want to invest in larger energy projects.

⁵ <http://greeneconomyproject.blogspot.com/2011/07/green-economy-project-by-caribbean.html>

However, we still find that there are many other steps that can be taken to foster sustainability and help the environment yet are not being implemented or promoted on the island.

There is a global trend towards assessing the social and environmental impact of business decisions will result in more organizations incorporating environmentally-friendly or green practices in their business strategies. We need champions in organizations and businesses to push these decisions. We would expect human resources professionals to be these champions. As noted by Susan Meisinger, President and CEO of the Society for Human Resource Management. “As these practices increase, HR professionals will play a larger role in CSR programs, from strategy to implementation.” (CSRwire, 2007.) As noted earlier, green practices are seen as important to employee loyalty, morale, retention, recruitment and productivity, important HR responsibilities and important business drivers in the firm.

DATA

After researching the literature regarding Puerto Rico’s role in greening the workplace, we found that there is a lack of information other than the governmental incentives that are being made available and some individual company efforts. Because we lack the knowledge of what Puerto Rico businesses are doing regarding environmentally-friendly practices in the workplace, we carried out an initial exploratory study in order to place us at a starting point in order to carry out further research from here on. In order to do this, the following questions were presented to our participants:

- **Is “green” behavior and initiatives included are part of the performance objectives?**
- **Are there employee rewards in place to encourage “green” behaviors in the organizations?**

- **Has the company established metrics and accountability targets for environmental issues such as energy use, water usage, etc.?**
- **What are the human resources initiatives that the organization has considered implementing?**
- **What is the importance of establishing “green” initiatives?**
- **What departments are responsible for “green” initiatives?**
- **What is the status of incorporating “green” initiatives in your workplace?**
- **What areas of the organization do your answers represent?**
- **How many employees are there in your organization?**
- **What type of industry are you representing?**

A sample of 483 individuals was randomly selected by an outside email sample to complete the *Greening the Workplace* survey over a period of three weeks. The sample was based on a selection of random business population in Puerto Rico. All participants were provided with a custom-designed Web survey so that they could complete the survey online. A response rate of 16% was achieved. All respondents were employed either full time or part time. The businesses represented in this study belong to a variety of industries including consulting firms, education, food services, health services, entertainment, among others. The companies ranged from those less than 25 employees to those over 1000.

FINDINGS AND RESULTS

From the results of the survey, we found that in general, that people were aware of the concept of “green” initiatives. In addition, companies represented by the respondents had implemented some of initiatives. However, of the many actions that could be implemented, the actions taken tended to be at the lower end of the green continuum.

The responses of each of the questions presented on the survey are presented individually in Table format.

Table I.

Question 1. Is "green" behavior and initiatives included are part of performance objectives?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	55.8%	43
No	44.2%	34
<i>answered question</i>		77
<i>skipped question</i>		0

As we can see in Table I, a 55.8% of the population indicated that green behavior and initiatives are part of performance objectives. However, because of the importance of green performance objectives, we would have expected a greater percentage response.

This is not so because the environmental and sustainability initiatives are too often viewed as something noble to do for the planet but no something that is a responsibility of all individuals. As long as this attitude prevails, going green will always be seen as something nice to do when there is spare time and money. It is leadership's responsibility to frame sustainability as the business issue that it is. Employees need to understand the strategic case for pursuing sustainability, the threats associated with ignoring it, and the opportunities it presents for

Table II

Question 2. Are there employee rewards in place to encourage "green" behaviors in the organization?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	23.4%	18
No	76.6%	59
<i>answered question</i>		77
<i>skipped question</i>		0

It is interesting to compare this answer compared with the answer to Question 1. While the individuals are indicating that green behaviors are part of their performance objectives, we find that there are no reward programs in place as incentives for those who are doing the right thing. It is important for organizations to make the link between an initiative and each person's job and this is the case for any performance goal. The organization must help employees explicitly map out their inputs, outputs, and key activities and then assess them against the organization's sustainability framework. This will enable employees to see their impacts and opportunities for improvement. Unless this occurs, taking care of our environment will not be embraced as a priority in every employee's life.

Table III

Question 3. Has the company established metrics and accountability targets for environmental issues such as energy use, water usage, etc.?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	31.2%	24
No	68.8%	53
<i>answered question</i>		77
<i>skipped question</i>		0

The answers to this question are directly linked to Question 2. The companies have not established links for reward purposes in 76.6% of the participants in this question, because the companies have not established metrics for internal purposes (68.8%). As part of compensation basics, employee rewards must be linked to organizational goals and if this is not the case, there will not be any rewards for employees and therefore, no motivation to take action.

Table IV

Question 4. The organization has implemented or is considering implementing the following human resources initiatives:

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Using the web or teleconference to cut down travel costs	39.4%	28
Is reducing printing by posting documents/information online	76.1%	54
Promotes reduction of paper usage	76.1%	54
Has employee training programs on "green" practices	12.7%	9
Green newsletters or other green communications	19.7%	14
Using green initiatives in the recruitment and selection process	12.7%	9
Wellness programs around proper nutrition, fitness and healthy living	39.4%	28
Recruiting employees with "green" skills and experience	7.0%	5
Promoting recycling, composting and purchasing of recycled products in the organization	70.4%	50
Recruiting employees with "green" skills and experience	5.6%	4
Promoting recycling, composting and purchasing of recycled products in the home	31.0%	22
Has implemented physical adaptations to improve or "green" the workplace (i.e. providing recycling trash cans, automated illumination, environmentally-friendly products, etc.)	53.5%	38
answered question		71
skipped question		6

This question was intended to identify the initiatives that are most outstanding and implemented in Puerto Rican organizations. We found that the area that was most prominent was that related to reduction of paper, document usage and recycling. This is possible because for many years, the word “recycle” has been basically a synonym of environmental protection in Puerto Rico. Even today, for many people, recycling is equivalent to green practices in the workplace.

Table V

Question 5. What is the importance of establishing "green" initiatives?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Attract and retain top talent	13.0%	10
Sustainability	36.4%	28
Competitiveness	24.7%	19
Promote social responsibility	89.6%	69
Corporate image	50.6%	39
Other	13.0%	10
answered question		77
skipped question		0

For those who are “tree-huggers” the answer to the question of “what is the importance of

establishing green initiatives” would be obvious: to take care and protect our planet. But for businesses, the obvious is not always the answer. This is the case in our study. An 89.6% of the respondents indicated that the importance of establishing green initiatives was to promote social responsibility, followed by 50.6% of the respondents that indicated that the importance was for corporate image. Therefore, many of the companies may be missing out on the other benefits that implementing green initiatives can bring to the organization.

Table VI

Question 6. What departments are responsible for "green" initiatives?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Operations	46.8%	36
Human Resources	66.2%	51
Communications	27.3%	21
Engineering	29.9%	23
Strategic Planning	37.7%	29
Environmental Safety and Health	53.2%	41
Facilities Management	37.7%	29
Corporate	32.5%	25
Administration	59.7%	46
Other	13.0%	10
<i>answered question</i>		77
<i>skipped question</i>		0

The focus of our research is precisely the role of human resources in greening the workplace. When asking the question of what department or departments are responsible for the implementation of these initiatives, we find that Human Resources tops the list as the driving force for green initiatives in an organization with a 66.2%, followed by Administration with 59.7%, Environmental Safety and Health with 53.2% and Operations with 46.8%.

Table VII

Question 7. What is the status of incorporating "green" initiatives in your workplace?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
No plans to implement	25.3%	19
Plans to implement in the next 12 months	12.0%	9
Plans to implement in more than 12 months	6.7%	5
Currently in place	37.3%	28
Unsure	25.3%	19
<i>answered question</i>		75
<i>skipped question</i>		2

Of the companies represented in this survey and regarding the green initiatives that had been asked in a previous question, we found that 37.3% of these companies had already implemented green initiatives and were currently in place. In addition, 25.3% were unsure when the initiatives would be implemented and another 25.3% responded that there were no plans to implement for a total of 50.6% of the respondents.

Some employees will care enough to go out of their way to behave “be environmental”. Others will not and this organization will have to make this easier or automatic. This requires making the environmental part of the organization's structures, policies, and business systems. This is the ultimate form of integration; the point at which the sustainable option becomes the normal way of doing business. This is not the case of Puerto Rico, however. We find in our responses that only a 37.3% of the participants have made this part of their daily operations while another 50.6% do not know when they will make it part of do not have plans to make it part of the operation. The remaining 18.7% have indicated they have plans a year or more from now.

The remaining three questions involve the demographics of the respondents. Here we find that a 69.3% of those that answered the survey represent their entire organization. The other 17.3% represented a department and the remaining percentage represented a subsidiary, plant of other portion of the business. However, the majority of the respondents were individuals that have the control of what their organization can do to implement green initiatives.

The total amount of employees that are represented in these organizations range from those less than 25 employees to those over 1000 employees with 29% and 21% respectively.

The industries represented in the survey were: manufacturing, retail, financial services, high technology, consulting and professional services, healthcare, telecommunications and others. Details can be found on Tables VIII, IX and X, respectively.

Table VIII

Question 8. What area of the organization do your answers represent?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Entire organization	69.3%	52
My department only	17.3%	13
Subsidiary	1.3%	1
Plant wide	5.3%	4
Other	12.0%	9
<i>answered question</i>		75
<i>skipped question</i>		2

Table IX

Question 9. How many employees are there in your organization?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
1-25	38.2%	29
26-50	5.3%	4
51-200	15.8%	12
201-500	6.6%	5
500-1000	7.9%	6
over 1000	27.6%	21
<i>answered question</i>		76
<i>skipped question</i>		1

Table X

Question 10. What type of industry are you representing?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Manufacturing	10.4%	8
Retail	15.6%	12
Financial Services	6.5%	5
High Technology	2.6%	2
Consulting and Professional Services	15.6%	12
Educational Services	22.1%	17
Healthcare	5.2%	4
Association and Memberships Organizations	0.0%	0
Media and Information	0.0%	0
Telecommunications	0.0%	0
Other	31.2%	24
answered question		77
skipped question		0

LIMITATIONS

This study has several limitations. First, the data was collected using a Web-based survey and sent to a random sample of individuals. Although 483 companies were surveyed, only a 16% response was obtained. Second, since the sample size is small and crosses a number of industries therefore it does not necessarily reflect what companies in other industries may be doing which were not represented in the survey. Thirdly, the data collected is subject to self-reporting bias – each individual was asked to assess its performance in areas and there is always the possibility of initiatives in place that the respondents was not aware of.

Nevertheless the author believes that the data does provide some insight into the implementation of greening the workplace. First, it was found that there is something happening in Puerto Rico, even if it is to a lesser extent that what is desirable. Businesses are interested and doing *something*. What they are doing is very limited and seems to be strongly influenced by its effect on the bottom line. There is an awareness of social responsibility but it may be that this is connected to competitive pressures and sales. Secondly it confirms that these decisions are being

made by the owners or managers. Thirdly it seems that it is necessary to educate businesses as well as the general population further as to the real meaning of “green” initiatives and greening the workplace.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

After reviewing the different aspects of greening the workplace and exploring what is being done in Puerto Rico, we find that it would be important to hold managers accountable for results related to sustainability by incorporating these expectations into their plans, metrics, and performance reviews. Equally important would be to re-evaluate individual job descriptions and incorporate into them duties related to the environmental and sustainability. As long as employees believe sustainability is something "extra" to do, something on top of the already full plate of duties they're juggling, meaningful change is unlikely.

The ideal scenario would be for companies to establish environmental responsibility policies and practices. Companies would then be encouraging employees to be more environmentally friendly in the workplace and make it a top practice for their organizations. Organizations could be encouraging their employees to perform activities such as making double-sided photocopies, powering down computers after a few minutes of inactivity, using energy-efficient bulbs for desk lamps, ensuring blinds are lowered in the summer to conserve energy, among other simple everyday practices. Organizations could also demonstrate their commitment to environmental responsibility by including their environmental responsibility efforts in their organizations’ newsletters and/or publications and as part of their organizations’ stated goals and mission/vision.

Human Resources Management within the organization is beginning to look at the changes needed to adapt to the needs of the environment. This adaptation requires that the company as a whole change its mission and vision and acquire a whole new set of skills called environmental sustainability and greening of the workplace. These skills greatly influence the processes within the area of human resources management.

From this survey, we see that respondents understand that human resources management has been the driving force for green initiatives to take place in organizations. However, these initiatives are mainly limited to paper reduction and recycling and there is no relationship between performance objectives and rewards to further motivate and incentivize additional initiatives and practices.

Human Resources management in organizations could be of much greater influence in contributing to the “greening” of companies in the following areas:

1. Recruitment and staffing
2. Training and development
3. Employee and labor relations
4. Compensation and benefits
5. Occupational health, safety and security
6. Organizational design and development
7. Strategic planning

All of these areas tend to be highly paper intensive and even when paper reduction is one of the initiatives that have been implemented, when processes are still largely paper-intensive, this initiative may be difficult to implement. However, green approaches can actually rid the HR department of paper reliance. All necessary paperwork can be completed through web-based

systems, eliminating the need for paper applications, onboarding documents, performance reviews and much more.

Although our survey demonstrated the reasons why individuals and businesses consider greening the workforce in Puerto Rico, what they are not aware of is that while there are obvious cost and efficiency benefits in adopting a green approach to conduct business, less obvious yet extremely vital benefits also occur. According to Earthshare.org, a recent poll on green employment by MonsterTRAK.com found that 80 percent of young professionals are interested in securing a job that has a positive impact on the environment, and 92% would be more inclined to work for a company that is environmentally-friendly. What does this mean for a business that is environmentally conscious? It would mean that there will be a larger applicant pool to choose quality candidates from. Top talent is quick to relate to a company that values the same values they hold. Sustainability is too important to the survival of our planet and our economy to risk poor implementation. Sustainability, after all, isn't something extra people should do; it should be the new standard for the way things are.

In today's global marketplace, businesses are operating in more international locations, and therefore, a greater emphasis is being made on the effect of business operations on other countries. Global government has also increased pressure on international businesses to create more green jobs through greener measures. Far from simply reacting to major events in the business climate, economy and labor market, HR professionals should proactively participate in how their company's business operations impact the world, and in this particular case, the global environment.

Despite the absence of a 'strong' sustainability perspective, we believe that human resources management, due to the core functions it undertakes, has the potential to be a leader in

the corporate environmental movement. It would be suggested, however, that this leadership role is not occurring. Even worse, there is an unsettling suggestion that human resources may in fact constitute an obstacle in the process of greening the workplace as it should be. Based on the findings of the survey, we could argue that human resources management has not played a significant role in helping implement green initiatives other than those of recycling and paper reduction. But environmental sustainability is much more than this and requires a greater effort and commitment from the organization and its employees.

Further research is therefore needed to explore how the environmental agenda could influence human resources functions or even more importantly, if the human resources function will take a lead in creating more environmentally-friendly practices and processes in Puerto Rico. The questions that human resources could consider in future research are:

- Will Human Resources Management play a strategic role in developing sustainable principals and how?
- Can our employees internalize the organization's sustainable development principles?
- Do our employees understand what the mission to be environmentally-friendly means?
- Are our employees, supervisors, managers and contractors evaluated and rewarded for their environmental practices?
- Do we understand that our workplace is a key learning site for environmental values and actions?
- Have we integrated content on the environment into our leadership development

programs?

As Fineman (1997: 37) states: "the environment 'belongs' to everyone, its damage is quintessentially a matter of broad-consensual moral concern and organizational actors are as

culpable as anyone else". We urge human resources managers to reconsider the implications of what their passive position on the environment could mean, given their important role for shaping people's behaviour in organisations and beyond.⁶

REFERENCES

- Bebbington, J. and Gray, R. (2001). An account of sustainability: Failure, success and a reconceptualization. *Critical Perspectives on Accounting*, 12: 557-587.
- CSRwire. (2007) Corporate Social Responsibility: A Pilot Study. SHRM: Alexandria, VA.
- Davies, G. & Smith, H. (2007 March). HR goes green. *People Management Magazine*, 26
- Dick and Burns. (2011 March) *Green IT in Small Business Proceedings of the Southern Association for Information Systems Conference, Atlanta, GA, USA*. 65
- Dobson, A. (1999). *Fairness and futurity: Essays on environmental sustainability and social justice*, (pp. 21-45). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Dryzek, J. S. (1997). *The politics of the earth: Environmental discourses*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Elkington, J. (1997). *Cannibals with forks: The triple bottom line of 21st century business*. Oxford: Capstone.
- Fineman, S.(1997). Constructing the green manager. *British Journal of Management*, 8: 31 - 38.
- Glade, B. (2008). Human resources: CSR and business sustainability – HR's leadership role. *Management*, October: 51-52.
- Gladwin, T. N., Kennelly, J. J. & Krause, T. (1995). Shifting paradigms for sustainable development: Implications for management theory and research. *Academy of Management Review*, 20(4): 874-907.

⁶ Fineman, S.(1997). Constructing the green manager. *British Journal of Management*, 8: 31 -38

- Gray, R. and Bebbington, J. (2001). *Accounting for the Environment*. London: Sage.
- Hart, S. (1995). A natural-resource-based view of the firm. *Academy of Management Review*, 20(4): 986 -1014.
- Hawken, P. (1992). *The ecology of commerce: A declaration of sustainability*. New York: Harper Business.
- Jackson, S., Renwick, D., Jabbour, C., and Muller-Camen, M. State of the Art and Future Directions for Green Human Resource Management. Introduction to the Special Issue.
- Jacobs, M. (1999). Sustainable development as a contested concept. In A. Dobson. (Ed.). *Fairness and futurity: Essays on environmental sustainability and social justice*, (pp. 21 - 45). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Laughlin, R. (1991). Environmental disturbances and organizational transitions and transformations: Some alternative models. *Organization Studies*, 12(2): 209-232.
- Lockwood, K. (2011 January). Environmental Sustainability and EHS Professional Responsibility, Paper presented at *Seventh International Environmental Management Leadership Symposium*, Budapest, Hungary.
- Connolly, J. McDonagh, P. Polonsky, M.J. and Prothero, A. (2007) 'Green Marketing and Green Consumers: Exploring the Myths' In: *International Handbook on Environmental Technology Management*. Edward Elgar: Murdoch University, AU.
- Milne, M.J., Kearins, K. & Walton, S. (2006). Creating adventures in wonderland: The journey metaphor and environmental sustainability. *Organization*, 13(6): 801-839.
- Milne, M.J., Tregidga, H. & Walton, S. (2008). Words of action: The centrist and pragmatic discourse of sustainable development reporting. Paper accepted for presentation at the *2008 Academy of Management Annual Meeting*, Anaheim, California, 8-13 August.
- Owen, D. Recent developments in European social and environmental reporting and auditing practice – A critical evaluation and tentative prognosis. Research Paper Series International Centre for Corporate Social Responsibility. Nottingham University: UK.
- Peattie, K. (1995) *Environmental Marketing Management: Meeting the Green Challenge*. Pitman Publishing: England.
- Prasad, P. and Elmes, M. (2005). In the name of the practical: Unearthing the hegemony of pragmatics in the discourse of environmental management. *Journal of Management Studies*, 42(4): 845-867.
- Purser, R. E., Park, C. & Montuori, A. (1999). Limits to anthropocentrism: Toward an ecocentric organizational paradigm? *Academy of Management Review*, 20: 1053-1090.

Renwick, D., Redman, T., and Maguire, S., (2008 April) Green HRM: A review, process model, and research agenda, Discussion Paper No 2008.01

Sachs, W. (1999). Sustainable development and the crisis of nature: On the political anatomy of an oxymoron. In F. Fischer & M. Hajer. (Eds.). *Living with nature: Environmental politics as cultural discourse*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Sarkis, J. (2006). *Greening the Supply Chain*. New York: Greenleaf.

Shrivastava, P. (1994). CASTRATED environment: GREENING organizational studies. *Organization Studies*, 15(5): 705-726.

SHRM Survey Brief: Green Workplace. (2007).

W. Skinner, (2004) Summer drought patterns in Canada and the relationship to global sea surface temperatures. *J. Clim.*, 17, 2866–2880.

Starik, M. and Rands, G. (1995). Weaving an integrated web: Multilevel and multisystem perspectives of ecologically sustainable organizations. *Academy of Management Review*, 20(4): 908 -935.

Strandberg, C. (2009 May), The Role of Human Resource Management in Corporate Social Responsibility: Issue Brief and Roadmap.

Toten, M. (2011 July) *Workplace Info* .

Unerman, J., Bebbington, J. & O'Dwyer, B. (2007). *Sustainability Accounting and Accountability*. London: Routledge.

Wackernagel, M. & Rees, W. (1996). *Our ecological footprint: Reducing human impact on the earth*. Canada: New Society.

Wehrmeyer, W. (1996) *Greening People: Human Resources and Environmental Management*. Greenleaf Publishing: United Kingdom.

Welford, R. (1997). *Hijacking environmentalism: Corporate responses to sustainable development*. London: Earthscan

