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## **STIMULATING EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT TOWARDS SUSTAINABILITY: SUSTAINABILITY HR COMPETENCY FRAMEWORK**

### *Abstract:*

The aim of the study is devoted to the need to actively involve employees in sustainability and corporate social responsibility (CSR) issues and in this way lead employees to the perception of their jobs as being meaningful. The study suggested tools for which HR practitioners can seamlessly assume the role of engaging the workforce towards sustainability.

### *Keywords:*

Employee engagement, human resource management, environmental sustainability.

### **Introduction**

Employee engagement is a critical factor in driving organizational sustainability initiatives, as engaged employees are more likely to contribute actively to environmentally responsible practices and support the integration of sustainability goals into everyday operations. As organizations increasingly prioritize sustainability as a core business objective, it becomes imperative for Human Resources (HR) personnel to adopt strategic approaches to stimulate employee engagement towards sustainability. One such approach gaining traction is the competence framework, which provides HR professionals with a structured framework for identifying, developing, and leveraging the competencies necessary to drive sustainability initiatives effectively [1]. The competence framework approach offers a systematic methodology for aligning employee skills, knowledge, and behaviours with sustainability goals, thereby fostering a culture of sustainability within the organization [1]. By leveraging this approach, HR personnel can play a pivotal role in cultivating a workforce that is not only aware of sustainability principles but also actively engaged in championing sustainable practices across various organizational functions. This study will explore the significance of stimulating employee engagement towards sustainability and examine how the competence framework approach can serve as a valuable tool for HR personnel in this endeavour. Through a comprehensive review of relevant literature and practical insights, this paper aims to shed light on the role of HR personnel in promoting employee engagement towards sustainability and highlight the competence framework approach as a strategic tool for achieving this objective. By enhancing our understanding of the intersection between employee engagement, sustainability, and HR management practices, we can pave the way for organizations to create a more sustainable future while simultaneously fostering a motivated and committed workforce.

### **Brief Review of Existing Literature**

Employee engagement is increasingly recognized as a critical factor in driving organizational sustainability initiatives. The Competency Framework Approach offers a structured methodology for identifying, developing, and leveraging the competencies necessary to drive sustainability efforts effectively within organizations. This review of existing literature aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the key findings and insights related to stimulating employee engagement towards sustainability through the Competency Framework Approach. Robertson & Barling [2] emphasized the role of HR personnel in integrating sustainability goals into HR practices and policies, highlighting the importance of aligning employee competencies with organizational sustainability objectives. Bakker et al. [3] highlighted the importance of tailoring engagement strategies to individual employee preferences and values, suggesting that competency frameworks can provide valuable insights into the specific skills and behaviors necessary for driving sustainability engagement. Kumar & Pansari [3] emphasized the role of communication and leadership competencies in fostering employee engagement towards sustainability, suggesting that competency frameworks can help identify gaps and areas for improvement in these critical areas. Jones & Soltis [5] conducted empirical research examining the impact of employee engagement on organizational sustainability outcomes, highlighting the need for robust measurement frameworks to assess the effectiveness of engagement initiatives. Deloitte [6] conducted a survey of HR leaders to explore the role of sustainability in driving employee engagement strategies, providing insights into the challenges and

opportunities associated with integrating sustainability goals into HR practices. In summary, existing literature underscores the importance of the Competency Framework Approach in stimulating employee engagement towards sustainability. By defining sustainability competencies, integrating sustainability into HR practices, tailoring engagement strategies, and measuring engagement outcomes, organizations can effectively leverage competency frameworks to drive sustainability initiatives and foster a culture of environmental stewardship and social responsibility among employees.

### The Competency Framework Model

A competency refers to a set of skills, knowledge, abilities, and expertise required to achieve proficiency in carrying out a specific task, activity, or job. The collection of competencies deemed essential for a specific role or human resources (HR) function is termed a competency model [7].

The below model represented in the table serves as a structure for performance management, analysis of skills gaps, and professional development. It serves as a blueprint for the ideal HR organization and professionals, providing organizations with a target to strive for when devising HR upskilling strategies. Each of the dimensions are discussed in detail with an expected behaviour from HR practitioners at different levels of professional trajectories.

Table 1 – Culture & Wellbeing HR Competency Model

<b>Culture and Wellbeing:</b> Shapes inclusive performance culture prioritizing wellbeing	
Behaviour	At Different Levels
<b>Inspires Commitment to Vision:</b> Drives commitment to organizations' vision and goals in a visible manner.	1) Occasionally engages employees to create commitment to the vision and mission of the business. 2) Continuously engages employees to create clarity on how their jobs contribute to the organizational vision and mission. 3) Consistently connects contributions to vision and mission and meaningfully translates impact at all levels of the organization.
<b>Shapes a Performance-Based Culture:</b> Defines, communicates and facilitates behavior changes that contribute to business success	1) Shows basic knowledge of organizational culture models and frameworks. 2) Shows robust understanding of desired organizational culture and how culture is shaped, influenced and measured. 3) Actively shapes, promotes & embeds desired organizational culture. Works with senior leaders to reinforce desired behavior.
<b>Champions Organizational Values:</b> Fosters accountability to act in accordance with organizational values	1) Occasionally holds self and others accountable to act in line with organizational values. 2) Regularly holds self and others accountable to act in line with organizational values. 3) Consistently holds self and others accountable to act in line with organizational values. Effectively deals with misaligned behavior.
<b>Creates an Inclusive Workplace:</b> Cultivates inclusivity by applying knowledge of DEIB.	1) Advocates the interests of overlooked individuals and groups. 2) Advocates the interests of overlooked individuals and groups and balances individual, group, and organizational interests. 3) In addition to the behaviors in level 2, also creates an environment where all stakeholders can feel safe and belong.
<b>Creates Environment of Wellbeing:</b> Balances wellbeing with organizational demands and productivity	1) Promotes employee wellbeing in an ad-hoc way. 2) Promotes wellbeing in a structured and consistent manner. 3) Proactively engages to create an environment where people can be well. 4) Provides access to services enhancing wellbeing where required.

Source: AIHR T-Shaped HR Competency Framework Developing the HR Skills of the Future, 2023.

In summary, The People Advocacy competency framework creates organizational cultures that prioritize the needs and well-being of individuals, fosters productivity, effectively manages change, and upholds ethical and sustainable practices within the organization. HR Managers at different level, must strive to immerse their functional activities with these attributes so that they can assist the organization in developing and fostering a holistic culture that is primarily people-centric and understands the core need for every employee's to be change agents in today's volatile and complex environment which the business carries out their day-to-day operations.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, the imperative for HR personnel to focus on engaging the workforce in sustainability efforts is underscored by empirical evidence and data-driven insights. In light of these empirical findings and data-driven insights, it is clear that HR personnel must prioritize engaging the workforce in sustainability efforts to achieve organizational objectives and create long-term value. By leveraging evidence-based approaches and aligning sustainability goals with

employee interests and values, HR professionals can drive meaningful change, foster a culture of sustainability, and ultimately contribute to sustainable business practices and societal well-being.

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