Unit 5: Into Action

Subunit 5.1: Taking the initiative

Learning goals

- Initiate processes that create value.
- Take up challenges.
- Act and work independently to achieve goals, stick to intentions and carry out planned tasks.

Definition

In the context of sustainable business practices, taking the initiative is a fundamental driver of progress toward a circular economy. It involves a structured approach to kickstarting processes that not only generate value for the organization but also contribute significantly to sustainability and circularity.

EntreComp's guidelines

EntreComp gives the following hint:

"Go for it."

How?

Initiating processes that create value means focusing on launching projects and activities that go beyond immediate gains and encompass broader sustainability objectives. This might entail developing innovative recycling processes, designing products with extended lifecycles, or pioneering solutions that reduce resource consumption. These initiatives are essential because they actively promote the principles of circular economy by minimizing waste, extending product utility, and conserving valuable resources.

Taking up challenges is an integral part of this proactive approach. Circular economy initiatives often entail addressing complex challenges such as designing products for easy disassembly, researching and adopting new materials that are environmentally friendly, or creating systems that prolong the

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lifespan of products. These challenges demand technical expertise, innovation, and a deep commitment to sustainable practices.

Acting and working independently in this context means taking personal and organizational responsibility for pursuing goals aligned with circular economy principles. This could involve reducing waste generation, enhancing resource efficiency, or adopting sustainable manufacturing processes. Independence and steadfast dedication to environmentally-conscious objectives are crucial for making tangible progress.

To excel in this domain, organizations and individuals can benefit from engaging with circular economy literature and studying real-world case studies to gain insights and inspiration for new initiatives. Additionally, attending workshops and training sessions focused on sustainable practices and design thinking can provide the technical knowledge and tools needed to tackle circular economy challenges effectively.

Competence step by step

- Initiate processes that create value.
- Take up challenges.
- Act and work independently to achieve goals, stick to intentions and carry out planned tasks

Methodologies and tools

To transition the Entrecomp framework into action for a circular economy model within the context of the THINK CirEco project, a methodology that incorporates circular economy principles into entrepreneurship is essential.

Assessment and Goal Setting

- Conduct a Sustainability Audit: Analyze current operations, products, and services to pinpoint areas where circular economy principles can be introduced or enhanced.
- Define Sustainability Objectives: Establish clear, actionable objectives that aim to reduce waste, increase product lifecycles, and improve resource efficiency, ensuring these targets are specific and time-bound.

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Design and Innovation

- Embrace Circular Design Principles: Utilize design thinking methodologies to create products and services that are durable, repairable, and recyclable.
- Explore Alternative Business Models: Investigate and experiment with models that facilitate product longevity, sharing, leasing, or recycling.

Implementation and Action

- Develop and Integrate Circular Processes: Incorporate sustainable material sourcing, efficient waste management, and recycling processes into operations.
- Initiate Pilot Projects: Test and refine circular economy concepts through small-scale implementation, learning and adapting from these experiences.

Monitoring and Evaluation

- Measure Progress: Implement metrics and indicators relevant to circular economy goals to monitor advancements and identify areas for improvement.
- Continuous Improvement: Regularly assess performance against objectives, making adjustments to strategies and practices based on feedback and results.

Tools Suggestions for the THINK CirEco Project

Circular Design Principles: Design Thinking Methodologies.

Business Model Innovation Techniques: Visual Mapping Tool.

Sustainability Assessment Methods:

- Environmental Impact Assessment Techniques.
- Resource Flow Analysis: Employ techniques to analyze the flows of materials and energy within operations to identify inefficiencies and opportunities for improvement.

Learning and Development Resources:

- Open Educational Resources (OER): Seek out freely available educational content online that covers topics related to circular economy, sustainability, and environmental stewardship.

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- Skill-Building Workshops: Engage in or organize workshops that focus on circular economy concepts, sustainable design practices, and innovative problem-solving.

Circular Economy application

THINK CirEco's methodology applies circular economy principles through the specific competence of accepting diversity, recognizing people's differences, developing emotional intelligence, actively listening, empowering others, working together, and expanding your network involves integrating social and collaborative aspects into sustainability efforts.

Practical activity: ***"The Circular Collaboration" Challenge***

Objective: to engage in a short, reflective exercise designed to simulate the thought process and considerations involved in working on circular economy initiatives. This activity aims to enhance understanding of collaboration, communication, and diversity in team settings.

Materials: Pen and paper or a digital device for note-taking.

Time: 20 minutes.

Methodology:

1.Imaginary Scenario Creation (5 minutes): Imagine you are part of a team tasked with designing a circular economy project aimed at reducing plastic waste in your community. Your team consists of individuals from diverse backgrounds, including environmental science, business, local government, and the community.

2. Role Identification (3 minutes): Quickly jot down the different roles or perspectives each team member might bring to the project. Consider how these diverse viewpoints could contribute to a more comprehensive and effective solution.

3. Collaboration Strategy (5 minutes): Reflect on how you would approach working with this diverse team. Write down strategies for ensuring effective communication, leveraging each member's strengths, and incorporating diverse ideas into the project planning process.

4. Challenge Identification (3 minutes): Identify potential challenges you might face while working with a diverse team on this project. Consider differences in opinions, communication styles, and decision-making processes.

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5. Solution and Reflection (4 minutes): For each challenge identified, propose a brief solution or method to overcome it, emphasizing collaboration and mutual respect. Reflect on how these strategies could foster a successful circular economy project and the importance of working with others to achieve sustainability goals.

Food for thoughts:

You will have a clearer understanding of the dynamics involved in collaborating on circular economy projects with diverse teams. This activity encourages thinking about the value of diverse perspectives, the necessity of effective communication, and the importance of empathy and flexibility in team settings. It's a practical exercise in recognizing the complexities and rewards of working with others towards a common goal of sustainability.

Learning materials suggestions

Barkley, E. F., Major, C. H., & Cross, K. P. (2014). Collaborative learning techniques: A handbook for college faculty. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, A Wiley Brand.

Chen, G., Webber, S. S., Bliese, P. D., Mathieu, J. E., Payne, S. C., Born, D. H., & Zaccaro, S. J. (2002). Simultaneous examination of the antecedents and consequences of efficacy beliefs at multiple levels of analysis. Human Performance, 15, 381-409.

DeChurch, L. A., & Haas, C. D. (2008). Examining team planning through an episodic lens: Effects of deliberate, contingency, and reactive planning on team effectiveness. Small Group Research, 39(5), 542-568.

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