

Subunit 5.2: Planning & Management

Learning goals

- Set long-, medium- and short-term goals.
- Define priorities and action plans.
- Adapt to unforeseen changes.

Definition

In the field of sustainable business practices, effective planning and management are indispensable cornerstones for realizing the principles of a circular economy. This process encompasses a series of strategic steps aimed at initiating processes that not only create value but also contribute to a more sustainable and environmentally responsible future.

EntreComp's guidelines

EntreComp gives the following hint:

"Prioritise, organise and follow up."

How?

One of the foundational aspects of planning and management is the establishment of clear and well-defined goals. These goals must span across different time horizons, encompassing long-term, medium-term, and short-term objectives. When applied to the context of the circular economy, these objectives should be intrinsically linked to the principles of sustainability. This includes goals such as achieving zero waste targets, reducing the carbon footprint, and minimizing resource consumption. These objectives serve as guiding stars, directing organizational efforts towards the overarching aim of circularity.

Defining priorities and action plans is another pivotal facet of this process. It entails a meticulous examination of circular economy strategies and the formulation of concrete steps to prioritize and implement them. These strategies may include resource-efficient manufacturing, the establishment of closed-loop supply chains, or the integration of sustainable product design principles. These

priorities serve as a roadmap, delineating the course of action to be taken in alignment with circular economy goals.

However, the landscape of sustainability is constantly evolving, marked by unforeseen changes. Effective planning and management must be adaptable and responsive to these shifts. This includes staying abreast of new technologies that enhance sustainability, adapting to regulatory changes that impact environmental practices, and aligning with shifting consumer preferences that increasingly favor sustainable products. Adaptability is the keystone that ensures an organization remains resilient and relevant within the dynamic context of sustainable business practices.

To facilitate this process, tools like life cycle assessment (LCA) are invaluable. LCA aids in informed decision-making by assessing the environmental impact of products or processes throughout their entire life cycle. It serves as a compass for setting meaningful and data-driven sustainability goals.

Moreover, it's imperative to engage in regular reviews and adjustments of business plans. This ongoing evaluation ensures that an organization's strategies remain aligned with the latest developments in sustainability practices. Sustainability is a continuous journey, and organizations must be prepared to pivot and adapt their plans as new insights and technologies emerge.

Competence step by step

- **Setting Goals:** Establish objectives that integrate circular economy principles, like zero waste targets or milestones for reducing the carbon footprint.
- **Defining Priorities and Action Plans:** Plan actions that prioritize circular economy strategies, such as resource-efficient manufacturing or closed-loop supply chains.
- **Adapting to Unforeseen Changes:** Be ready to adapt to new technologies, regulatory changes, or shifts in consumer preferences towards sustainable products.
- **Tips:** Use tools like life cycle assessment (LCA) to inform goal-setting. Regularly review and adjust business plans to align with the latest in sustainability practices.

Methodologies and tools

Methodologies for Planning and Management in the Circular Economy are:

1. Setting Goals

Objective: Establish clear, measurable, and achievable goals that align with circular economy principles, such as achieving zero waste or reducing the carbon footprint by a specific percentage.

2. Defining Priorities and Action Plans

Objective: Develop detailed action plans that prioritize circular economy strategies, focusing on areas such as resource-efficient manufacturing processes and creating closed-loop supply chains.

3. Adapting to Unforeseen Changes

Objective: Establish a flexible approach that allows for quick adaptation to new technologies, regulatory changes, or shifts in consumer preferences.

Tools for Planning and Management

1. Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) Tools.
2. Project Management Tools.

Circular Economy application

In order to initiate the process that creates value, follow these steps:

1. Define Goals

Objective: Set specific, measurable, and time-bound sustainability goals that reflect circular economy principles, such as achieving a certain percentage of recycled content in products, reducing overall waste by a specific amount, or decreasing the carbon footprint of operations.

2. Plan and Organize

Objective: Develop a detailed plan that outlines the steps needed to achieve the defined goals, including resource allocation, timelines, and responsibilities.

3. Develop Sustainable Business Plans

Objective: Create business plans that are economically viable and environmentally sustainable, ensuring that circular economy principles are integrated into the core business strategy.

4. Define Priorities

Objective: Identify which actions or projects should be prioritized to efficiently move towards the sustainability goals, considering the potential impact and resource requirements.

5. Monitor Progress

Objective: Regularly track and assess the progress towards sustainability goals, using predefined key performance indicators (KPIs) relevant to circular economy objectives.

6. Be Flexible and Adapt to Changes

Objective: Maintain flexibility to adapt strategies and plans in response to new technologies, market trends, regulatory changes, and other external factors.

Practical activity: Circular Economy Goal-Setting Exercise

Objective: This activity aims to enhance individual planning and management skills through the process of setting personal sustainability goals that align with circular economy principles. It encourages reflection on how one can contribute to a more sustainable world through mindful planning and goal-setting.

Materials:

- Pen and paper or a digital device for note-taking.
- Access to any personal or professional goals you have previously set (optional).

Time: 20 minutes.

Methodology:

1. Reflection on Current Practices (5 minutes): Take a moment to reflect on your current daily habits or professional practices that relate to consumption, waste, and sustainability. Note any areas where improvements could be made to align more closely with circular economy principles, such as reducing waste, increasing resource efficiency, or promoting recycling and reuse.
2. Learning About Circular Economy Principles (3 minutes): Briefly review key circular economy principles if needed. Focus on designing out waste and pollution, keeping products and materials in use, and regenerating natural systems. Keep these principles in mind as you proceed with the exercise.
3. Goal-Setting (7 minutes) Based on your reflection, set one or two personal or professional sustainability goals that incorporate circular economy principles. Ensure your goals are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound (SMART). For example, a goal could be to reduce personal plastic use by 50% within six months by switching to reusable containers and avoiding single-use plastics.
4. Action Plan Drafting (4 minutes): Draft a brief action plan for achieving your set goals. Include specific steps you will take, resources you might need, and how you will track your progress. Consider potential challenges and think about how you could overcome them.

5. Reflection and Commitment (1 minute): Reflect on the importance of individual actions in contributing to broader sustainability and circular economy goals. Commit to reviewing and adjusting your goals and action plan regularly to adapt to new insights or changes in circumstances.

Food for Thought:

Reflect on how setting personal or professional sustainability goals can influence broader environmental outcomes. Consider the ripple effect that individual actions can have in promoting a circular economy. Think about how the skills and mindset developed through this exercise can be applied to larger projects or initiatives within your community or organization. How can planning and management skills contribute to systemic change towards sustainability?

Learning materials suggestions

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