SUFABU

CASE STUDIES

GREEN METHODS, PROCEDURES AND PRACTICES

Co-funded by the European Union

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Introduction

Green companies, also often referred to as *sustainable businesses*, seek to balance their profit objective with the need to protect the planet's health. These companies integrate sustainability principles into all their activities, adopting practices that reduce the negative environmental impact globally and locally. The main objective of green businesses is to minimize their environmental impact while contributing to economic and social well-being [1].

As the threat of climate change and its devastating effects on our ecosystem become more acute, green businesses are focusing on strategies that allow them to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, a major cause of global warming. These companies not only adopt greener practices in their production processes but also engage in them but also create sustainability, such as renewable technologies, low-impact products and circular solutions, adoption. For many enterprises and workers today, the greening of workplaces can play a meaningful role in reducing carbon emissions.

The SUFABU project focuses on strengthening the core competencies of family entrepreneurs who have brought a new generation into the company's management or are involved in a generational discussion on business management regarding the introduction of green technologies or practices. Due to their size, SMEs, and especially family businesses, have fewer opportunities to start implementing green transformation activities. The project creates a comprehensive training system based on various publicly available training materials and provides them with the missing know-how.

The following case studies concern family businesses that have embarked on a green transition process. The case studies have been divided into three macro-categories:

- Greening process, methods and practices
- Greening input
- Greening workplaces

Many of the companies in the case studies have adopted measures belonging to more than one macro category. The choice to include them in the Greening process, methods and practices section is due to the fact that the main environmental sustainability measure adopted by the company falls into this category. This includes the following practices:

Energy Efficiency:

Energy efficiency involves using less energy to accomplish the same tasks, effectively reducing energy waste. This practice offers numerous advantages, including a decrease in greenhouse gas emissions, a reduction in reliance on energy imports, and a decrease in costs for both households and the overall economy.

Resource intensity:

Resource intensity is a measure of the resources (e.g. water, energy, materials) needed for the production, processing and disposal of a unit of good or service or for the completion of a process or activity; it is, therefore, a measure of resource use efficiency.

Waste management:

Waste management is the systematic process of collecting, disposing of, and controlling the various types of waste materials generated by businesses, individuals, or communities in an environmentally responsible and sustainable manner.

Green marketing/ labels

Green marketing is the set of marketing activities that start from the product's procurement to the product's delivery to the end user in a greener way. On the other hand, eco-labelling is one of the important tools for green marketing as it helps to differentiate green products from non-green products.

Sustainable business models

A sustainable business model empowers companies to take tangible steps towards sustainability across its three dimensions: environmental, economic, and social. This approach allows companies to systematically embed sustainability as a core principle in all areas of operation, ranging from establishing business goals to executing production activities. Examples include Circular Business, Sharing Economy, and Product-Service Systems within the Circular Economy.

Corporate social responsibility

Corporate social responsibility (CSR), also called corporate conscience, citizenship, social performance, or sustainable responsible business, is a form of corporate self-regulation integrated into a business model. CSR policy functions as a built-in, self-regulating mechanism whereby businesses monitor and ensure their active compliance with the spirit of the law, ethical standards, and international norms. The goal of CSR is to embrace responsibility for the company's actions and encourage a positive impact through its activities on the environment, consumers, employees, communities, stakeholders and all other members of the public sphere. Furthermore, CSR-focused businesses would proactively promote public interest by encouraging community growth and development and voluntarily eliminating practices that harm the public sphere, regardless of legality. CSR is the deliberate inclusion of public interest into corporate decision-making.

CASE STUDIES | ENERGY EFFICIENCY

1.1 Konstanta MF

Country: Ukraine	**Greening processes:** - Energy Efficiency - Resource intensity - Waste management **Greening input:** - Renewable energy - Sustainable raw materials - Sustainable consumption (e.g. energy use, waste management, food at work) **Greening outputs:** Offering greening services
Company size headcount: >500	**Company size turnover:** < €2m
Interviewed: Founder, successor (younger sibling)	**Industry:** Furniture manufacturing and Sale

Background

In 2001, a Ukrainian furniture factory KONSTANTA began its journey. Over the years, the factory underwent significant changes, particularly in its approach to sustainability. This case study explores how the factory transitioned to green energy and sustainable practices, the challenges it faced, and the lessons learned.

Sustainability transition

The factory's green transition began with a pragmatic approach to waste management. The factory generated industrial residue, such as wood, metal, and fabric scraps, which initially posed a financial and environmental challenge. Rather than discarding these materials, the factory found ways to recycle them, creating a dual benefit. The factory owner explained, *"First, it was about saving money… It was either throwing these wastes away or recycle them into materials to save money. We chose money. Who would have known how much this would impact us during the time of war, when the knowledge about greening practices quite literally saved this company from collapse?"* More on that later.

This recycling effort was not just a cost-saving measure; it also reduced the factory's environmental footprint. For instance, metal shavings left over from machining processes were sold as scrap metal, which was then melted down and reused. Similarly, fabric scraps were recycled into felt, used as

padding in mattresses, and wood waste was repurposed to heat water and buildings, eliminating the need for gas.

The decision to adopt more sustainable practices wasn't only about economics; it also had a profound impact on the factory's workforce. Before the green transition, littering was commonplace on the factory premises. The environment, filled with dust and industrial residue, wasn't visually appealing, leading some workers to casually discard empty bottles and other debris, seen as a “no biggie”. However, this behavior changed as the factory implemented green practices. The installation of recycling bins for plastic bottles and solar panels inspired a cultural shift among the workers.

> ***"After the bins were installed, the green transition influenced the behavior of the workers. They started littering much less, influenced by the appearance of solar panels and such"***

This shift in behavior extended beyond the workplace, as employees began to adopt greener habits in their daily lives. One example is Olesya, the founder’s sister and an accountant responsible for transportation and deliveries. Before the company implemented greening processes, she admitted that she never gave much thought to recycling. However, working in an environment where sustainability became a priority changed her perspective. “Now, instead of throwing things out, like plastic bottles, I bring them to the company grounds,” she said. This mindset shift also influenced her family. She now teaches her 11-year-old daughter to think twice before discarding items, instilling sustainable habits at an early age.

The factory also introduced energy-efficient practices, such as switching to LED lighting, which reduced energy consumption and material use. *"Ten years ago, we switched to LED lamps, which significantly reduced the amount of wiring needed and lowered our overall energy consumption,"* the owner shared.

The journey to sustainability wasn't without its challenges. The most significant hurdle came with the onset of the war in Ukraine. When the factory initially installed solar panels, it was a small experiment. However, the war brought widespread power outages, and the solar panels became a lifeline. *"We regretted not implementing this sooner and not seeking support from funds, as loans and grants stopped being available once the full-scale invasion began,"* the owner reflected.

Despite these challenges, the factory managed to keep operations running, relying solely on green energy during blackouts. Another challenge was the maintenance of green technologies, particularly the solar panels, which required constant monitoring, especially after sandstorms. Additionally, the quality of recycled materials, such as cloudier recycled cellophane, sometimes fell short of the standards for new materials. The financial aspect of the transition also posed a challenge. Installing solar panels was costly, with a payback period of up to five years. This required careful budgeting, as it impacted on the company's short-term finances. However, the factory owner believes that this investment was crucial for long-term independence and sustainability.

Financially, the factory saw benefits from its sustainable practices, such as recycling metal shavings into usable materials, which generated additional revenue and reduced raw material expenses. However, the owner noted a disconnect between their sustainability efforts and client interest. *"Currently, with global salary reductions and economic downturns, clients show less interest in environmental sustainability,"* the owner explained. In Europe, where the factory works with large companies like *XXXL Lutz*, there is little willingness to pay extra for ecological standards. The owner also observed a shift in consumer behavior, with many European buyers opting for cheaper, lower-quality products from China rather than eco-friendly European goods. This trend highlights a broader challenge in the market: while the factory is committed to sustainability, the demand for green products remains limited.

Learning points and actions to consider

Looking back, the factory owner identified several key takeaways. First, the importance of planning for sustainability from the outset was emphasized. For example, building designs should consider the optimal placement of solar panels. *"Not all roofs are suitable; they require the right slope and orientation,"* the owner advised. The owner stressed the need for greater energy independence. *"In the future, we believe that the independence of every business and enterprise should be connected to green energy. It gives additional freedom from certain gas-monopolized countries and improves the ecology of the planet,"* the owner concluded. When we asked him to give advice to other family businesses who want to see benefits of renewable energy, the owner gave us a bitter smile that didn't reach the eyes. He suggested that:

> ***"Spending time in a city like Kharkiv, without electricity and water for weeks and weeks, could demonstrate the advantages of solar panels, when you are the only powered building in the district. Makes you put things into perspective. Sadly, sustainability and renewable energy aren't always about love for the planet. Not today."***

Then, in a much lighter tone, he shared how neighboring business owners and workers from the same industrial district came to Konstanta to charge their phones and such. "It's good that Ukraine is very sunny and warm during summer. This solar energy really brings people together," he laughed.

Reflections

- How to adopt green practice effectively for a real impact on the company's business?
- In which direction is the market going?

1.2 Mårdskog & Lindkvist

Country: Sweden	**Greening processes:** Energy Efficiency **Greening Input:** Sustainable raw materials **Greening workplace**: Sustainable transport
Company size headcount: <250	**Company size turnover:** around €50m
Interviewed: Incumbent (senior generation) Successor (next generation)	**Industry:** Wholesale and Retail Trade

Background

Mårdskog & Lindkvist wasportat founded by Tage Mårdskog and Fredrik Lindkvist in Huskvarna, Sweden, in 1961. Before founding the business, Tage and his wife sold sausage at a kiosk, whereas Fredrik was working in the wholesale sector for baking products. In that period, Sweden was in great need of wholesalers, as there were only three major wholesalers in the whole country.

One of the wholesalers was from the region and invited Tage and Fredrik to start a new wholesale business to cover the increasing demands of the market. The two founders saw great growth potential from this opportunity and thus decided to accept the invitation and start their own business named after their respective family names. The two founders complemented each other well. Tage was a natural salesperson, while Fredrik was good at finance and accounting. Under their collaboration, they have grown their businesses rapidly from first using Tage's house as the warehouse to later building warehouses in Jönköping and Norrköping. The revenue has also grown from around six million SEK to approximately 700 million SEK today.

The business delivers various produce and products to their customers, mostly restaurants, in the southeastern part of Sweden, including Jönköping, Linköping, Norrköping, and Kalmar. Although it is challenging to enter larger cities such as Stockholm, Göteborg, and Malmö, where major wholesalers (with revenue of more than 60 billion SEK) dominate, Mårdskog & Lindkvist has a strong foothold in the southeastern area where the founding family has strong and long-lasting relationships with their customers. The firm has today around 150 employees (during the high season).

The business is now completely owned and managed by the Mårdskog family after Fredrik retired in 1976 and Tage bought out his shares, around one-third of the company shares. Meanwhile, Tage has started engaging his two sons, Reine and Thommy, into the business. Reine entered the business earlier than Thommy by working as a driver. Thommy entered the business after graduating from university and having worked outside the family business for a few years. As Thommy was more interested in taking over the leadership position than his brother, their parents decided to give Thommy more shares than Reine when they transferred the business to their children.

Later, when Reine retired, he split his shares with his two sons, Thomas and Andreas, both of whom are currently working in the business. Thommy has also engaged his son, Marcus, into the business. In March 2024, Thommy, the largest shareholder, transferred the CEO position to his nephew, Thomas, the second largest shareholder, while continuing to work as a senior manager in the firm. Andreas has only a minority share and works in a non-managerial position in the firm. Marcus does not have any shares yet, but he holds managerial responsibility in the firm.

Sustainability transition

Regulation and reporting

The family started several different sustainability practices around ten years ago when the local government, Jönköping Municipality, started promoting recycling and environmental certifications for businesses in the food sector. For instance, the government has required companies to report the use of different ingredients, such as paper, plastics, metals, and so on, they use in their operation more frequently—from an annual report to quarter reports—to have a better overview of the material usage in the region. Such frequent detailed tracing of material use benefits the company by reducing food waste and providing more accurate inventory management.

Demand for local produce

In addition to the government's requirement, the market has also demanded more local produce from the region. Although local producers account for a small portion of the firm's sales, they tend to have a price premium. As the family is well recognized and connected in the region, it is easy for

the family to collaborate with the local farms and sell local produce to the local restaurants. Family members and nonfamily employees can simply pick up the produce on their way to work since the amount of local produce (around a few kilograms per farm) is not so large that would otherwise have required lorries.

Energy efficiency

As the family firm has limited resources, the family is primarily concerned with operational efficiency. They pay particular attention to energy efficiency, especially regarding storage and delivery. For instance, when they built the new warehouses between 1988 and 1991, they ensured that the warehouse design incorporated energy recycling by using the heat from the freezers to warm the other parts of the buildings, reducing the energy demand. They have also installed an alarm system to closely monitor the temperature in the warehouse to ensure that the temperature is controlled at a specific level to control energy usage and preserve produce quality.

In addition, the family has invested in improving transportation efficiency. They have replaced the previously single-deck lorries with double-deck lorries to carry more loads in each delivery. This improves delivery speed and reduces the environmental footprint by reducing the number of deliveries per time. Moreover, the family has experimented with five new lorries fueled by biogas. Such lorries are not only more environmentally friendly than those fueled by fossil fuel but can also be an effective marketing tool to promote the sustainable image of the family firm.

In the future, the family plans to further improve their energy efficiency by installing solar panels on the warehouses to ensure that their energy source is more sustainable. As the roof of their current warehouses is not strong enough to bear the weight of the solar panels, they may need to wait for a few more years when they need to renovate the warehouses. In addition, the family plans to replace their current lorries with electrical ones when the price is much lower than they are now. The goal is to further minimize the environmental footprint of their transportation.

Learning points and actions to consider

When taking sustainable practice, the family should consider its impact on the life cycle of stakeholders. For instance, how could the family business provide better food to parents with new babies and patients in the hospital, children at schools, and other adults going to restaurants?

> ***"The first meal you get and the last meal you get in your life in Sweden comes from our market, which means that we have a responsibility for almost everybody in this country." (Marcus)***

It's important to consider how family business impacts society. The family has also highlighted the need to balance financial and social goals. Although sustainability is the right thing to do, it must also be cost-effective and not threaten the financial position of the family firm. Therefore, the family tends to follow rather than lead the market, as Thommy shares,

> ***"If you are a small company, you have to adjust to the reality. You can look at the others. You can see what they do. If it is good, you can do it as well." Hence, when the family has limited resources, they tend to follow the norm in the industry.***

However, when following the industry, it is important to consider multiple alternatives before taking on specific practice. For instance, the family could have looked for more options before they decided to invest in lorries fueled by biogas, which has become too expensive after a few years, such that the family has switched back to the lorries on fossil fuels. If the family had considered more options before making the investment, the sustainable practices might have been more lasting.

Reflections questions

- What will be the impact of the sustainable practices you adopt on society?
- How can I balance costs and the adoption of green practices for my company?

1.3 Delfy

Country: Czech Republic	**Greening processes:** Energy efficiency, waste management, Resource intensity **Greening input:** Renewable energy **Greening workplace:** Sustainable transport, Sustainable consumption **Greening outputs:** Offering green products, Offering greening services
Company size headcount: around <50	**Company size turnover:** around <€2 ml
Interviewed: Successor (next generation) Sibling Other family member	**Industry:** Trade, transport and construction

Background

Delfy was founded by Ing. Petr Chýle, in 1994, and therefore this year 2024 the company celebrates its 30th anniversary since its foundation. The company was managed by the father Petr for about 2-3 years. His older son Petr joined as an economist, then gradually the younger son Pavel joined as a sales representative, then the youngest son Michal as a branch manager and finally the daughter Lenka, who is an employee in the economic department.

The gradual handover of management and assets has been taking place since 2000, so at one point, the company was managed by three successors at once. Around 2022, the eldest brother left the company at his own request and there was a financial settlement, but now he works with the company as a contractor. The third generation (children aged between 2 and 18) continuously participate in company social activities - e.g., Pumpkin Patch with Delfy or Easter with Delfy - but they still have many years of study ahead of them, and only time will tell whether they will want to join the top management.

The company is a building materials wholesaler which supplies everything for construction - from materials for foundations (stone, sand, concrete), through bricks, paving, facade systems, thermal insulation, protective equipment, workwear, etc., to chimneys and roofs. The company currently operates 3 warehouses (in the towns of Most, Jiřetín and Litvínov). As Covid showed how dangerous it is to build a firm on only one pillar, the family is currently diversifying its portfolio.

Sustainability transition

At first glance, it might seem that running a building materials wholesaler does not exactly have green technology as a mainstay. However, the opposite is true. The family is constantly considering, evaluating, selecting and then implementing various green activities.

The first ones include the decision from around 2012 regarding photovoltaic power plants. At that time, it was a novelty with high state support, but untested, extremely expensive, financially demanding and no one had experience with their operation. Nevertheless, the family decided to invest (the company premises are family-owned) and built 3 photovoltaic power plants of 30 kW each. The family did not know back then that with this step they were embarking on the path of so-called energy independence, so important and valuable today. Now, in 2024, the family can see exactly when their consumption is high, when consumption peaks, and at what times of the working day the company needs more or less energy to run, and the family works effectively with this data. Pavel summarizes the situation as follows.

> ***"The task before us is to build another 10 kW, purchase storage for 50 MW and thus become almost self-sufficient and independent from external sources. In 2014-2016 we installed heat pumps everywhere, got rid of solid fuel boilers, hot water connections and gas boilers."***

Electromobility is also a big topic for the family. In addition to a fleet of cars and trucks, they have discussed purchasing electric forklifts and pallet jacks for warehouse and shop operations. They

currently own 2, but plan to gradually replace all of the existing vehicles. However, as electric trolley is not considered an electric vehicle, its purchase is not supported by any subsidy and the investment must therefore be economically calculated. Apart from the ecological benefits, Mr. Pavel also emphasizes employees' satisfaction - *"The trucks are quieter, without breakdowns, so we also support the elements of corporate culture in relation to the care of our employees".*

Another area in which the family-owned company is innovating is waste management. The construction and wholesale industry produces a relatively large amount of waste, which must be sorted and disposed of in some way. The family has therefore purchased lysing containers, which it uses to sort and dispose of waste in an environmentally friendly way, in accordance with current legislation. Instead of the bins or conventional containers being taken out every second or third day, the container is taken out only once a month. *"We have an arrangement with a local recycling company; this cooperation has been working for about five years now and it's great!"*, explains brother Pavel, adding:

> ***"We recently had an inspection from the Ministry of the Environment regarding waste management, and we got three A's from them, so the best thing is that we are a model of what it should probably look like. And again, we can appeal to the elements of social responsibility, corporate culture and sustainability, where we encourage our employees, customers, and suppliers to sort waste in a non-violent way."***
>
> *Pavel*

Indirectly related to this issue is the reduction of paper consumption, printer ink consumption and consequently the saving of electricity thanks to the implementation of automation of accounting and warehouse systems. An application for managing all documentation in electronic form in a company brings several major advantages that can increase efficiency, reduce costs, save time, improve work and make company processes more transparent. There is an increase in data security and protection, savings in storage space, easier sharing of documents and faster access to data needed for management decisions.

Currently, the family is researching what technologies and options exist for controlled ventilation with heat recovery that they would like to incorporate primarily in office buildings. The offices face both north and south, which means that on one side, the rooms are very hot with a constant need for air conditioning, while on the other side, the offices are cold and need to be heated permanently. The brothers are, therefore now commissioning a proposal to ensure that the heat from the south side goes to the north side and vice versa, including calculating the cost and return on investment.

"We expect to save a lot of energy but also avoid humidity in the interior or prevent pollen allergens and noise from the surrounding area. This issue is little talked about, but it would certainly be worth considering in schools in general, in public spaces and so on. At the same time, we anticipate that all of our properties that have a one-sided overheating problem would save energy costs, improve air quality, reduce the building's carbon footprint, and improve worker productivity and comfort with the introduction of heat recovery."

Pavel

The father and the siblings initially discuss all ideas for introducing ecological technologies or new methods. If a decision is made not to implement the idea, it is also discussed with the staff or external experts on the subject. Discussions are also held about the return on expected investments, forms of financing and the overall benefit to the company's goodwill, employee, customer and supplier satisfaction.

The ecological approach to business is not only a matter of social responsibility for the Chýle family but also a deeply rooted part of family values. It is through discussions that sustainable solutions can be found that respect the environment as well as the needs and expectations of family, employees and clients. Each step the family ultimately takes is evaluated with an eye to the future - knowing that this work is beneficial not only in the present but also for generations to come. The family's goal is not only to minimize its environmental footprint but also to inspire other corporate partners, clients and suppliers to take a responsible approach.

Learning points and actions to consider

The introduction of environmentally friendly solutions brings a wide range of benefits that are reflected both at the company level and in the wider context of society and the environment. These include reduced operating costs, improved reputation and competitiveness, brand visibility, reduced carbon footprint, optimized processes, increased employee satisfaction and motivation, improved company culture and working environment, business continuity and many more.

The key learnings from the implementation of green processes can be summarized into a few key areas that have helped Delphi on its journey towards a more sustainable business. These are:

- Don't be afraid of change and innovation - Often this requires letting go of old habits and opening up to modern, innovative solutions that have long-term benefits not only for the environment but also for the business and company growth.
- Allocate funds and other resources (including human ones), plan investments and evaluate their payback period.
- Learn from the best - attend trade fairs, follow trends and, continuously improve evaluate the actions of competitors.
- Gain the trust of employees, customers, suppliers and the people in the regions where you do business.
- Assess the situation in your industry to see if the investment under discussion makes sense for you in the future. And don't be afraid to start - even a small step is a step.
- Communicate implementation to your employees, educate them, and really invest in training programs that will give them the knowledge and skills needed to implement these green measures.
- Continuously assess risks and anticipate unexpected decisions, e.g. by the EU or national political representation
- Involve all family members in decision-making and provide ongoing education - for example, by taking inspiration from other family businesses. Ask for their feedback.

Reflections

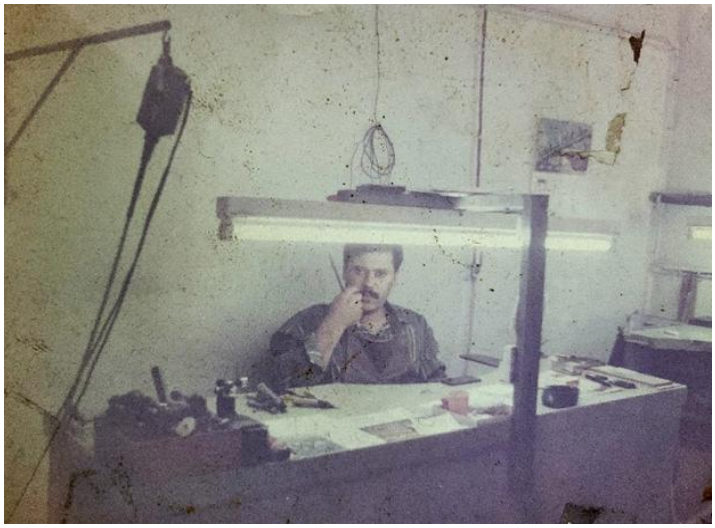
- What are your main reasons for switching to green technologies? What motivates you to make this move? Do you want to reduce costs, gain a competitive advantage, improve your image or contribute to environmental protection? How does this transition relate to your current corporate strategy and values? What long-term benefits do you expect from the transition to green technologies?
- What environmental goals do you want to achieve, and how will you measure them?
- What technologies or practices have the greatest potential to make a difference in your industry?
- What resources (financial, personnel, technical, knowledge, material) are you willing to invest in this change? How much financial resources do you have available for the implementation of green technologies? Do you have internal or external experts to help you with this transformation?
- What are the main obstacles you expect during the transition to green practices? How can you overcome these obstacles?
- How will you motivate, educate, and engage employees in the green transformation?
- How can you work with external partners and the community to support environmental goals? How do you plan to involve suppliers, business partners or the local community in your green transformation?
- What is your marketing strategy for communicating environmental change to customers and the public? What communication and media tools do you plan to use to inform customers and the wider public about your transition to green technologies? How will you measure the impact on brand perception after the implementation of green changes?
- Who exactly will be responsible for implementing the environmental changes, what will be their competencies, to which department will they be assigned, and how familiar will they be with the legislative requirements? How will you manage the intended changes?

1.4 A. Kimonas Jewellery Workshop

Country: Cyprus	**Greening processes:** Energy efficiency, waste management
Company size headcount: around <10	**Company size turnover:** around <€2 ml
Interviewed: Incumbent (senior generation) Successor (next generation)	**Industry:** Arts, Entertainment and Recreation; Manufacturing; Wholesale and Retail Trade

Background

Mr. Kimonas Angeli learned the art of jewelry crafting from a very young age. When he moved from Larnaca to Limassol and having already mastered the craftsmanship, Mr. Kimonas established his own jewelry workshop in 1985. At some point, A. Kimonas Jewellery Workshop employed around 25 employees, including both locals and professionals from Lebanon and Syria, who had also learned the craft back in their respective countries. Back then, approximately 90% of the business's workload involved working by hand and using only some, or no equipment. Furthermore, the company's turnover was mainly generated from wholesale trading. Finally, back in the day, the fulfilment of an order for a piece of jewelry was a demanding procedure. Once received an order, the technician had to create a mould for that particular order, following a series of time-consuming processes, until the final result was created. In many cases, carrying out orders and sales also included excessive paperwork and commuting. Nowadays, A. Kimonas Jewellery Workshop specializes in the creation and repair of jewellery, offering a variety of options for handmade and tailor-made pieces of jewellery. The family company now employs 4 individuals, including Mr. and Mrs Angeli, as well as their son Harris. Finally, the business now operates both through a brick-and-mortar and an electronic shop.



Sustainability transition

Besides the upgrade of equipment, other practices, both simple and more complex, have been integrated into the everyday activities of the business throughout the years. Specifically, in the last 15 years, the jewellery workshop of the Angeli family has introduced drastic changes, which have significantly improved the performance of the business, both financially and environmentally. Additionally, during the last few years, Mr. Kimonas's son Harris has joined the business and has introduced new ideas for the provision of new products and services, while also making his family venture a greener place. Recently, Mr. Harris has introduced 3D Design and Printing practices for the creation of jewelleries, which has already been a game-changer for the business. The examples for the green transition of the company vary.

A. Kimonas Jewellery Workshop in the 90's

Chemicals

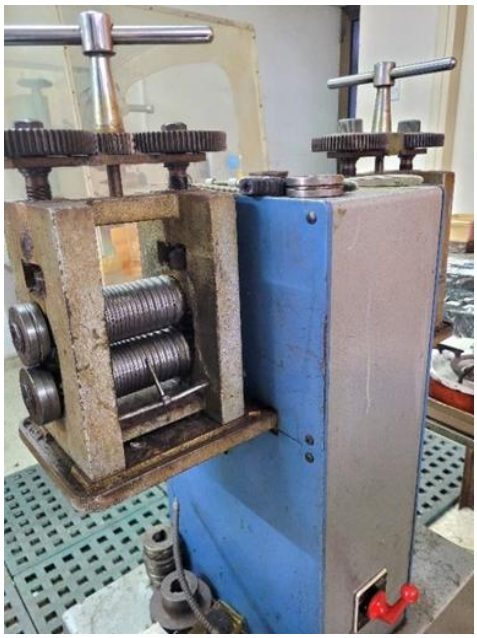
The first example involves chemical substances which are essential in the profession of a goldsmith. Throughout the years, harmful cleaning agents such as acid and borax, were modified to minimise their detrimental effects on human and environmental health. As Mr. Kimonas Angeli explained, the vast majority of these harmful cleaning agents and other substances were replaced with healthier and more environmentally friendly options. In addition, the business made a conscious decision to replace these chemicals with the most environmentally friendly options available, even though these options were more costly.

Machinery

Throughout the years and while new pieces of equipment in the jewelry sector were constantly released, the company did not always possess the financial flexibility to proceed with costly investments for state-of-the-art machinery. However, Mr. Kimonas knew that the business ought to remain competitive, in terms of new technologies and equipment. Consequently, in each case, the company kept upgrading its equipment with machines that would improve certain everyday processes, while also being affordable to the shop's budget. Moreover, the recent addition of 3D design and printing equipment from Mr. Harris Angeli has optimized certain processes and has broadened the commercial opportunities for the family business.

Based on the above, the overall equipment upgrade has led to a multitude of benefits:

- Safer and more environmentally friendly practices in everyday core activities of the business
- More time-efficient processes for the creation and reparation of jewelleries, resulting in a higher volume of production and fulfilled orders
- Significantly lower costs in energy etc.



A. Kimonas Jewellery Workshop has invested in costly, but more energy-efficient machinery

Digitalization

Another significant aspect of Mr. Harris Angeli's contribution to the green transition of the business involves a number of digitalization practices. First of all, the company has managed to minimise the use of paper in some cases or even going paperless in others. This was achieved by digitalizing many document-related administrative tasks, thus streamlining many processes which used to demand excessive use of paper (and time). Additionally, the company now operates an e-shop, which has managed to establish a strong online presence and has already attracted new customers and new orders, both from Cyprus and from abroad.

Other Practices

Along with the changes, the family also implemented some simpler, but equally important practices. The examples include the replacement of conventional light bulbs with LED lighting and recycling inside the premises of the company. Overall, the green transition of the company has been a collective effort from all family members in the Angeli family. Each person contributed through their own efforts towards a greener business.

Barriers along the way

According to both interviewees, the biggest challenges the company had to overcome were:

1. Financial constraints (added to the considerable investments of such family companies in security and other specialized equipment to safeguard their inventory).

2. Time needed to get accustomed to emerging technologies and equipment, while also being alert to always stay up to date (while getting accustomed to a relatively new piece of equipment, new practices, technologies and machines emerge at the same time).

The brick-and-mortar shop of A. Kimonas Jewellery Workshop nowadays

Learning points and actions to consider

What Mr. Kimonas would have done differently if he had the chance, would be to proceed with upgrading the company's machinery earlier and getting accustomed to the emerging technologies around jewellery-making from a younger age. Of course, this realization could be feasible, only if no financial, time and other constraints would have not existed. On the other hand, according to Mr. Harris Angeli, the younger generation can affect any organization, by introducing change (either small changes or more significant ones). However, age on its own cannot determine the intentions of an entrepreneur. In the end, it all comes down to the principles and ethics of each individual. Nowadays, environmental responsibility can also benefit a business in terms of resource efficiency and profitability. At the same time, a significant investment in time and money is needed to facilitate the green transition of a family SME. Overall, had he the opportunity, Mr. Harris Angeli would also implement the changes that took place in the company earlier, since they did have a multi-level positive impact. Finally, Mr. Harris Angeli stresses the importance of constant learning and training in family businesses, in order to keep up with new trends and technologies.

Reflections

- "What emerging trends and technologies can I adopt, which can benefit my enterprise financially while also contributing to the integration of more environmentally friendly practices?"
- "How can I obtain funding, which will help me introduce these new technologies ahead of my competition, without compromising the financial viability of my business?"

1.5 S & A Sofokleous Bakery

Country: Cyprus	**Greening processes:** Energy efficiency, waste management **Greening workplace:** Sustainable consumption
Company size headcount: around <10	**Company size turnover:** around <€2 ml
Interviewed: Incumbent (senior generation) Successor (next generation)	**Industry:** Wholesale and Retail Trade

Background

The story of "S & A Sofokleous Bakery" began in 2013, during the economic crisis in Cyprus, a time when many families were navigating significant challenges. Mr. Sofoklis, an experienced employee in a flour production company, and his wife, who worked in a pharmaceutical firm, shared a long-held dream of creating a family business. With a shared passion for baking, rooted in her years of experience in a bakery and his expertise with flour, they seized the opportunity to purchase a bakery for sale in Ypsonas. This leap of faith marked the start of their journey as entrepreneurs.

The early business years were anything but easy. Balancing long hours at the bakery with their existing jobs required immense effort and determination. They worked tirelessly, baking through the night and managing operations during the day. Their three children, despite their young age, pitched in whenever possible, especially during busy holiday periods, embodying the family spirit behind the business.

By 2014, the bakery had begun to thrive, allowing one of them to fully commit to running it. Over time, the family business grew stronger, with Mr. Sofoklis joining full-time in 2022. Today, the couple operate their family bakery along with their two youngest children. The younger generation has infused the business with fresh ideas and modern approaches, complementing its foundation of traditional quality and care.

Over the years, "S & A Sofokleous Bakery" has become a cherished part of the Ypsonas community, with loyal customers who feel like family. Dedicated to delivering high-quality bread, pastries, and cakes, the bakery remains a testament to resilience, family collaboration, and a commitment to excellence.

S & A Sofokleous Bakery in Limassol

Sustainability transition

Family Involvement & Governance

Family involvement has been central to shaping the sustainability journey of "S & A Sofokleous Bakery", reflecting a governance approach built on collaboration, open communication, and shared values. A turning point came when Michalis, the youngest son, joined the bakery, bringing with him a passion for environmental stewardship. His ideas for composting food scraps, donating unsold bread, and adopting eco-friendly packaging initially faced resistance from his parents due to concerns about costs and practicality. However, Michalis's persistence and commitment eventually convinced the family to embrace these changes. Parents Anna and Sofoklis demonstrated openness to the younger generation's perspectives, balancing their wisdom and experience with fresh insights from their children. This inclusive approach strengthened family bonds and aligned them on a common vision for the business.

The family's efforts extended beyond their internal operations. By modelling small but impactful changes, such as encouraging the use of reusable bags and promoting sustainable practices, they inspired their customers to adopt environmentally conscious habits. Although challenges like the upfront costs of energy-efficient equipment presented hurdles, the long-term benefits, both financial and environmental, proved the investments worthwhile.

The journey toward sustainability at "S & A Sofokleous Bakery" has been marked by steady, practical steps rather than sweeping transformations. While the bakery hasn't undertaken dramatic measures like installing solar panels or switching to electric delivery vehicles (constraints due to the

rented building and other factors), they've focused on achievable, impactful changes aligned with their family values and community ties.

Supporting Local Suppliers

The transition began with a close look at ingredient sourcing. Opting for locally sourced flour, fresh produce, Cyprus cheeses, and honey allowed the bakery to support local farmers while reducing the environmental impact of long-distance transportation. This approach not only strengthened relationships within the local economy but also aligned with the family's emphasis on quality and sustainability.

Energy Efficiency

Energy consumption in the bakery's operations presented challenges, particularly due to the high energy demands of ovens. However, the family invested in energy-efficient equipment to mitigate their impact. Additionally, ongoing efforts to conserve water and electricity across the business have become routine, showing that sustainability is embedded in their everyday practices.

The green transition process at the bakery exemplifies how a small, family-run business can integrate sustainable practices incrementally. Each step reflects their belief that even modest changes can contribute to a healthier planet while enhancing their connection with the local community.

Waste Management

Waste management was another significant focus. Improved planning minimized leftovers, while unsold items were donated to reduce food waste. Encouraging customers to bring reusable bags further reflected their commitment to reducing single-use plastics.

Some of the many products that the bakery has to offer

Learning points and actions to consider

The journey toward sustainability at “S & A Sofokleous Bakery” has been a gradual process, emphasizing the power of small, incremental changes. Rather than attempting an immediate overhaul, the family embraced a step-by-step approach, allowing them to implement sustainable practices effectively over time. Open family discussions and inclusive decision-making were instrumental in this process, fostering innovation and reinforcing the importance of teamwork.

The shift towards sustainability has brought the family closer together, strengthening bonds through shared efforts and meaningful conversations about improving the business. Their green initiatives have also enhanced the bakery's reputation within the Ypsonas community, earning the trust and appreciation of their customers. Knowing they are contributing positively to the environment has been a source of pride for the family and a key motivator in their efforts. Customer engagement has also played a pivotal role. By demonstrating their commitment to sustainability, the bakery inspired many customers to adopt eco-friendly habits, such as using reusable bags. This mutual reinforcement of values has deepened the connection between the bakery and its community.

While the journey has been largely rewarding, it was not without its challenges. The initial investment in energy-efficient equipment required time and effort to identify and implement the right solutions. However, these upfront costs have proven to be worthwhile in the long term, delivering both financial savings and environmental benefits.

Reflections

- “What are the pros and cons in introducing a certain green practice in my business? Are the associated risks overweighting the potential benefits for the company in the long-term?”
- “If yes, which measures could be implemented to mitigate these risks, allowing my company to thrive, while also becoming greener?”

CASE STUDIES | WASTE MANAGEMENT

2.1 KSL TRADING AB

Country: Sweden	**Greening processes:** Waste Management **Greening workplace**: Sustainable Consuption
Company size headcount: <50	**Company size turnover:** < Around 10m
Interviewed: Incumbent (senior generation) Successor (next generation)	**Industry:** Wholesale and Retail Trade; Repair of Motor Vehicles and Motorcycles

Background

KSL Trading AB was founded in 1997 and acquired by Peter Jonsson and another nonfamily owner in 2012, when they wanted to change their careers after working in the same sector of wood material since 1994. In 2014, Peter's son, Linus Jonsson, joined the firm in the sales function. Later in 2018, he bought out 50% of the shares from the nonfamily owner. After years of working together, Peter has now transferred the CEO role to Linus, who now has majority of ownership (51% of total shares), while continuing to work in the function of business development.

Peter and Linus are the main family members involved in the firm, whereas the other family members, including Peter's wife and two other sons, work in the education sector unrelated to the business. Under the leadership of Peter and Linus, the business has significantly increased in revenue from approximately 19 million SEK in 2012 to 107 million SEK in 2024. As a wholesaling company for wood materials, they work closely with customers and suppliers in their supply chain. Their customers are located mainly in Sweden, such as Norrebo Träindustri AB (another family firm in the region), and suppliers are from other European countries, such as Germany.

In addition to Peter and Linus as the main owners and managers, other nonfamily members are deeply involved in the business decision-making process. Specifically, the sustainability practices of KSL rely heavily on the nonfamily manager Helena Johanzon. She and Linus tend to identify sustainability projects together with the rest of the management team and then propose the projects to the board, where Peter, Linus, and two other nonfamily directors vote on the proposal. Although Peter and the other nonfamily directors are not as directly involved in implementing sustainability projects as Linus and Helena are, they both think that sustainability is something they have to do. This is particularly important for a wholesaling company like KSL, which tends to face pressure from both customers and suppliers, who need sustainability information for their own products/services. Therefore, the family has highlighted interorganizational collaboration with its customers and suppliers to introduce sustainability practices into its business model.

Peter Jonsson (right) and Linus Jonsson (left) at KSL Trading headquarters in Vagge

Sustainability transition

Reporting and certification

KSL's sustainability journey starts with introducing environmental reporting and certification, including tracking their greenhouse gas emission during their production process, obtaining the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certification for their products, and issuing the Environmental Product Declaration (EPD). Such information and certificates are increasingly required by suppliers and customers in the industry, such as Norrebo, to prove the sustainable nature of their products, such as furniture. If the family firm did not provide such information, it would run the "risk of losing major customers and suppliers to competitors" who can provide such information, as Linus has shared. Therefore, even if the family firm does not have the resources to track the environmental footprint of all its products, it concentrates on monitoring products for major customers/suppliers.

Members of the family firm have utilized all possible resources to develop their own enterprise resource planning (ERP) system to monitor the firm's environmental footprint. For example, Helena and her colleagues learned about all the reporting and certification procedures themselves. They have also exchanged experiences regarding best practices with their customers and suppliers. For instance, they often discuss and compare calculation methods for the scope of emissions with their customer, Norrebo. Additionally, they have started a collaboration with Jönköping International Business School through course engagement and internship programs to help collect data and integrate sustainability reporting into its ERP system.

Building a new warehouse

The company has started building a new warehouse with better design and infrastructure to expand its production capacity and better control its energy consumption. The current warehouse was built in the 1950s and thus has issues with limited capacity and insulation. When the new warehouse is completed in 2025, the family will install one more piece of machinery to increase its production capacity. Moreover, there will be a better collection system for wood dust after processing the wood material. By better recycling wood dust, the new warehouse helps the family reduce waste and even results in additional sales of the collected wood dust. Finally, the new warehouse will have a better insulation design to prevent energy loss. It will also switch to sensor lighting to optimize energy consumption.

Plan for the new warehouse

As KSL has international customers and suppliers, it is critical that they pay attention to following international rules and directives at the European Union level rather than merely following Swedish regulations. As such, the family emphasizes the need to continue its current cross-organizational collaboration. They pay particular attention to collecting data from their customers and suppliers and checking whether the data is relevant for their own sustainability reporting.

After relocating to the new warehouse, they will also explore other possibilities to further mitigate their environmental footprint. When the transition is settled, the family may look beyond controlling their energy consumption by searching for renewable energy sources. For example, they may consider installing solar panels at the new warehouse and switching to transportation companies that drive electric vehicles to transport their products.

Learning points and actions to consider

During the journey, members of KSL highlighted the important role of the *family, including the owners and CEO*, in driving the whole initiative, as Helena shared. If the family did not agree with these sustainability initiatives, it would be difficult for the operational team to engage employees in implementing these initiatives. After seeing the proactive engagement of the family, the top management team, and major customers and suppliers in the initiative, employees gradually become more engaged in implementing the practice.

Another key reflection lies in *responses to key stakeholders*. Linus highlighted that these sustainability practices are key to keeping the business alive and relevant to stakeholders. For family small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) such as KSL and Norrebo, which have limited resources, it is therefore important to carefully structure and organize their sustainability activities. Rather than spending resources on all sustainability topics, family SMEs should focus on the topics that are most relevant and important for their operations and major stakeholders, such as customers and suppliers.

When planning for future sustainability projects, members of KSL wonder how they can balance their own economic goals and the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations. Although they aim to continue developing their products and advance business revenues, they are also concerned that becoming a large business may increase the organizational bureaucracy and undermine their agility in responding to changes in customers' needs and the market.

Reflections

- What do family members and top management think about the green transition process to be initiated in the company?
- What will be the reaction of the company's stakeholders to the green transition process?

2.2 Orditura Paola di Grazzini Fausto e C. S.a.s.

Country: Italy	**Greening processes:** Waste Management
Company size headcount: >10	**Company size turnover:** < 2m
Interviewed: Incumbent (next generation) Sibling	**Industry:** Manufacturing

Background

The company Orditura Paola Di Grazzini Fausto Srl was founded in 1974 in Prato, a leading city in the textile sector, by Fausto's parents. The latter joined the company at the end of his high school studies when his father was close to retirement. Under Fausto's management, the company's objectives were redefined according to the market needs of the time and the family business specialised in fabric sampling. Fausto starts off on his own again, but the new production requires new space and qualified technical staff and the business is moved to a new building. As Fausto reports:

> ***"I started on my own, and the company grew with me."***
>
> *Fausto*

Today, the company has six employees. Sarina, Fausto's wife, is a non-participating partner and has her own company in the advertising business, and this makes her aware of the new market requirements, supporting Fausto in decision-making regarding the business with particular regard to digital and green innovations.

Sustainability transition

Three years ago, the company decided to start obtaining a series of environmental sustainability certifications. It was a non-trivial path, having been started when few companies were interested in this type of process. This choice, Fausto explains, arose from the need to meet new market requirements to enable the company's principals (who operate as subcontractors) to work according to the certification standards required in the textile sector today. Sabrina also points out that both of them have always been environmentally aware people and the possibility of reconciling

environmental concerns with the demands of suppliers to acquire sustainability certifications pushed them in this direction.

Fausto and Sabrina

The company has obtained the Global Recycle Standard (GRS); the standard of this certification recognises the importance of recycling for the growth of a sustainable production and consumption model, to encourage the reduction of resource consumption (virgin raw materials, water and energy) and increase the quality of recycled products. GRS provides for the issuance of a third-party verified environmental declaration that ensures the recycled material content of their products, both intermediate and finished, the maintenance of traceability throughout the entire production process, restrictions on the use of chemicals, and compliance with environmental and social criteria at all stages of the production chain, from the recycling of materials to the subsequent manufacturing stages, and the labelling of the finished product.

The company also obtains two other important certifications. The first is the Global Organic Textile Standard, which envisages the issue of a third-party verified environmental declaration certifying the content of natural fibres from organic farming in both intermediate and finished products, the maintenance of traceability throughout the entire production process, restrictions on the use of

chemical products, and compliance with environmental and social criteria at all stages of the production chain, from the harvesting of natural fibres in the field to the subsequent manufacturing stages, and the labelling of the finished product.

The second is the Responsible Wool Standard (RWS), a voluntary global standard that addresses the welfare of animals and the land they graze on. It is a *no mulesing* certification and for a product to be RWS-labelable, it must contain 100% RWS-certified wool.RWS certification guarantees that the wool comes from responsibly managed sheep farms, demonstrating compliance with the Five Freedoms for the Protection of animal welfare[1] . The RWS standard ensures the traceability of the entire production process from the livestock farm to the seller of the final business-to-business transaction, as all sites must be certified.

The costs involved in obtaining certification were not trivial and involved ongoing expenses as they have to be renewed annually. Before starting this process, Fausto dealt with other contractors and now has an intermediary to support them and help them with the certification bodies. The positive effects of this process can be seen more in the long term, Fausto explains, and today, there has been an increase in customer requests precisely because the company is one of the few in the area with these certifications.

Due to the type of machinery it uses, the company only uses 100% green hydroelectric energy, which has allowed it to obtain S4 certification. The company is also installing a photovoltaic system that will enable it to generate its electricity.

Learning points and actions to consider

To start a green transition process, it is important to understand the needs of the market and observe the behaviour of companies operating in the same sector, confronting them where this is possible.

For Fausto, investing in environmental sustainability is possible when there is a strong will on the part of a company and the economic possibility to invest. It is crucial to remember that these investments will have a return in the long run, not only in economic terms but also in terms of the company's reputation. As Fausto points out, in fact:

[1] freedom from hunger, thirst and malnutrition; freedom from environmental discomfort; freedom from pain, illness and injury; freedom from fear and stress; freedom to express normal behaviour.

"It's not just about enabling my company to make money but to make it evolve to stand out for excellence and quality"

Micro and small companies have more difficulty than medium-large companies in starting green transition processes because these involve high costs not only at an economic level but also an organisational and logistical level. It is important that, precisely because of these problems, there is collaboration between suppliers and subcontractors in strategic and economic terms. For example, Fausto points out, for obtaining a certificate we have previously received a willingness from one of our customers to participate in part of the costs. The collaboration must be bilateral. Presenting a fully certified supply chain is a very good business card for a large company. At the same time, for a small one it is an opportunity and a guarantee of excellence that makes it stand out from other companies that operate in the same sector and are not certified. Fausto says that

"being certified for the last couple of years is leading to an increase in requests from our customers because we have certain certifications."

Sabrina notes that investing in moving technology and machinery is important but not easy, especially if there is a lack of government incentives to support companies in this transition. According to both, there is still a lack of culture and information that can support companies in understanding these processes. But the further we go, Fausto argues, the more fundamental this path will be.

Both Sabrina and Fausto point out that there is still much to be done even at the state level, such as for the company's waste felts, which are classified as special waste at the regulatory level. This implies high disposal costs for the company for yarn that could be reintroduced into the production chain. Likewise, those companies that could use it have to spend money when they could have it for free.

Reflections

- What are the market needs and trends?
- Can I afford, both economically and organizationally, to go through a green transition process?

2.3 Satturn Holešov

Country: Czech Republic	**Greening processes:** Energy efficiency, waste management **Greening input:** Renewable input **Greening outputs:** Sustainable consumption
Company size headcount: around <50	**Company size turnover:** around <€2 ml
Interviewed: Incumbent (senior generation) Successor (next generation)	**Industry:** Water Supply; Sewerage, Waste Management and Remediation Activities

Background

SATTURN HOLEŠOV is a family-owned company based in the Zlín region, Czechia, operating on the market since 1992. The company's founder is Mr. Jaromír Tomšů Sr., one of the two managing directors. The second executive is his wife Renata. Their son Jaromír Tomšů Jr., who represents the second generation in the company, acts as a proxy. The son joined the company in 2023 after he finished his studies, and he currently owns 10% of the company, with the remaining 90% still in the hands of his father.

The company currently employs 17 employees and its main activity is electronic communications applied to projects in the field of environmental protection and renewable energy sources. The company has its own development department and is also involved in cybersecurity projects. For example, the majority of hospitals in the Pardubice Region operate on one of their software in the framework of security and crisis management. Similarly, their softwar is used by the Prague City Transport Company for the dispatching of tram traffic.

Both children have been with the company since their childhood, and the younger son Jaromír Jr. later decided to become actively involved within the company. He sees not only profit in the company's activities but also a social benefit.

Sustainability transition

Between 2008 and 2010 SATTURN HOLEŠOV participated in a research and development project for the Ministry of Industry and Trade of the Czech Republic called ''Decentralized Wastewater Treatment with telemetric measuring system for small municipalities''. This innovative project successfully passed the final opposition procedure and the first treatment plants as a system solution for small municipalities were introduced later, in 2018. In the meantime, the company's headquarters were renovated and on that occasion, a system for using rainwater to flush toilets was also introduced within the company building. As a result, the consumption of drinkable water was reduced by an incredible 70%.

The second of the ecological innovations that SATTURN HOLEŠOV introduced was a photovoltaic power plant. The electricity generated by the photovoltaic power plant covers a decisive part of SATTURN HOLEŠOV's electricity consumption to this day.

The third important step in the environmental process was the complete thermal insulation of the entire building. This was carried out as part of the aforementioned renovation of the building when the natural gas boilers were replaced with condensing boilers. Thanks to photovoltaics, the company was then able to introduce decentralized hot water heating in the building. Hot water is now distributed throughout the building to minimize transport distances from the hot water source to the point of consumption. The source of this process is still photovoltaics, as the boilers that heat the water are now also electric. During the day, the electricity for heating is taken from the sun, and in the evening no one is in the building, so there is essentially no need for hot water.

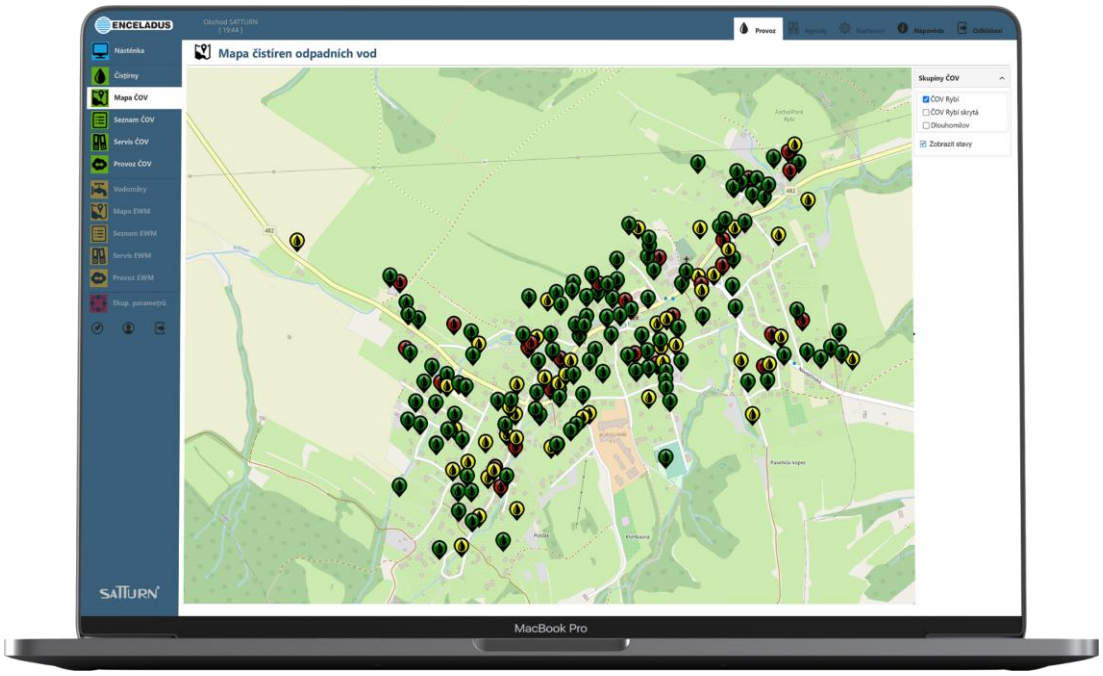
The very first photovoltaic power plant was built by SATTURN HOLEŠOV in 2009 on its own company premises. This was also the period when photovoltaics in general, were becoming more popular in the Czech Republic. And since it was already an electrical installation company at that time, it was more than appropriate to introduce this photovoltaic solution. In addition to the positive impact on the environment, this move made sense for SATTURN HOLEŠOV for another reason. The entire project was managed by Mr. Jaromír Sr. himself, and he and his colleagues had the opportunity to test and learn everything on their own construction site. He was therefore able to learn how to design, budget, build, and operate photovoltaic systems over a long period of time. At the time, this decision may have seemed like a business risk, but it later turned out to be a really worthwhile as around 2009-2012, the so-called "solar boom" in the Czech Republic took place, which saw a huge expansion of solar power plants in the country.

The environmental projects that SATTURN HOLEŠOV has been part of have also brought them many awards. One of the most important is the Magalhães Strait of Chile Award for Innovation and Discovery with Global Reach. Among other awards, SATTURN HOLEŠOV is the Czech Republic's Family Business of the Year for 2021 in the "Small Business" category. They are also the only company in the industry to be awarded the Czech Made Award for system telemetry for wastewater and domestic water treatment systems.

"I can declare from my own example that this is a sensible, sustainable way for the company, whether we are talking about using rainwater instead of drinking water or photovoltaics."

Jaromír Sr.

The owner of the company himself is concerned with the environment not only within the company but also in the context of the city of Holešov, where he serves as a counselor and chairman of the Energy Commission. Therefore, an energy community is now being formed in Holešov, which brings the city together with citizens and companies and will then offer communally shared electricity within this community. Mr. Jaromír Tomšů Sr. is responsible for everything related to ecological technologies or procedures. He mentions that because his company is not a large corporation and because he has the full support of his family, the decision-making process is not so demanding. He consults with his family in the evenings or on weekends about any big changes. No decision is made that the whole family doesn't know about.



Map of wastewater treatment plants

Learning points and actions to consider

All the ecological processes that SATTURN HOLEŠOV has implemented are evaluated very positively. Mr. Jaromír Tomšů Sr. mentions that if he is evaluating the purchase of solar panels retrospectively, the only thing he would have done differently is to build a bigger plant. However, he also adds that even with this amount, their small plant will cover the company's electricity consumption costs for the whole year. In the summer they produce energy and consume less, while in the winter, they do not produce energy but use the financial "reserves" from the summer. In the aggregate of the 12 months, they are still in the black as a company, thanks to selling surplus electricity to the grid.

When it comes to recommending the implementation of greener business changes to other companies, both representatives clearly recommend a change. Both agree that the key is to try to do what makes sense, is socially beneficial, and is sustainable in the long term. In conclusion, the owner of the company, Jaromír Sr., adds the 500-year-old saying of the sailor Magalhães: *"You cannot discover new oceans unless you have the courage to take your eyes off the shore."*

Reflecting on what to consider before implementing green practices, he also adds that not everything can always be viewed economically. Even SATTURN HOLEŠOV went out on a limb from an economic perspective at the beginning of its business, when photovoltaic power plants were not so common. But now it has no regrets. Thanks to this decision, they are not dependent on an

external electricity supplier at the moment and can cover any shortfall in the drinking water supply. The company is, therefore not only benefiting society more by adopting greener practices but has also strengthened its energy and resource security with these systems. Photovoltaics and rainwater harvesting provide them with everything they need to run the facility where the company is based.

The main advice from the Tomšů family is not to be afraid to go into decisions where we are not quite able to estimate their long-term impact. When Mr. Tomšů introduced a rainwater harvesting system in their own family garden, many neighbors were tapping their foreheads. Today, thanks to the price of water and sewerage charges, they are looking at the whole problem very differently.

As a company that has photovoltaics and wastewater management in its portfolio of products and services, SATTURN HOLEŠOV recommends thinking about a greener business conceptually. This means to look away from what is modern today but to address this issue in the light of the evolution of time and technology, in the context of the company's values and its future growth. For this type of investment, it is not possible to look 5 years into the future, but rather 30 years or more. It is also important to communicate everything correctly to employees and motivate them to be more environmentally friendly.

Reflections

- What impact will the green transition have on my company?

2.4 Niki's Sweets

Country: Cyprus	**Greening processes:** Waste management **Greening outputs:** Sustainable consumption
Company size headcount: around <50	**Company size turnover:** around <€2 ml
Interviewed: Incumbent (senior generation) Successor (next generation)	**Industry:** Accommodation and Food Service Activities; Wholesale and Retail Trade

Background

Mrs Niki's project started in 1986 in a small workshop in the village of Agros, in the mountainous district of Limassol, Cyprus. The general idea behind Mrs. Niki's venture was to utilise any residues from fruits and nuts that the family consumed, in order to produce traditional sweets, thus creating something out of nothing and avoiding unnecessary waste. Initially, the raw materials for preparing these sweets included residues from cherries, quinces, citrons, apples, watermelons and walnuts. As years passed by, the demand from locals and passersby steadily increased, due to the high-quality and taste of the delights. This eventually led to the registration of the venture as a company (Niki Agathocleous Ltd) in 1989 and the expansion of the workshop into a larger space in 1992. In 1996, the company continued to enrich the variety of its offered products, including new kinds of traditional delights and marmalades and kept employing more staff to keep up with the ever-growing demand and new needs and trends. In 2003, another expansion came as a result of Niki's Sweets success, through the establishment of a big factory and a physical shop.

The facilities of Niki's Sweets family business in Agros village

Niki's Sweets is operated by Mrs. Niki Agathocleous herself, with the active involvement of three of her sons: Christos, Marinos and Constantinos. Mrs. Niki's three sons have always been "involved" in the family business. In other words, while they were growing up, the business was also growing with them. Christos, Marinos, and Constantinos started contributing to the family business from a very young age. Christos recalls himself and his brothers helping their mother by labelling jars and preparing the paper boxes to be later used for storing and selling the company's products. Nowadays Christos, who has studied to become a Food Technologist, handles several managerial and technical aspects of the venture along with Mrs. Niki.

On the other hand, Marinos is involved in the sales department of the company, including managing the shop and other communication/ public relations operations. Finally, Constantinos, who has an academic background in Leadership and Management, contributes to the family business through both managerial and sales operations.

The company is accredited with the HACCP health system and ISO 22000 certifications and it is now one of the most famous enterprises in the production of traditional delights in Cyprus. The venture also exports its products in other countries, such as France, England, the USA, Egypt, Australia, and Japan.

Mrs. Niki Agathocleous and her son Christos, who lead the managerial aspects of the family business

Sustainability transition

Niki's Sweets has prioritised circular practices for the prevention of excessive waste from day one. However, throughout the years, Mrs. Agathocleous has integrated a number of new creative ways to achieve her goal of zero waste, with the help of other family members.

Composting

Approximately ten years ago, the family business introduced composting as a practice to avoid waste, using fruit peels, pits, and other residues from the raw materials that are used to produce traditional sweets. The company assumes a considerable cost for collecting, transferring and treating a huge volume of fruit byproducts in their own space, in order for them not to be wasted. The cost is even higher if one estimates other opportunity costs, such as the management's and staff members' time dedicated to this process. This investment is a conscious decision of the family, which derives from their strong sense for environmental sustainability and stewardship. Finally, the created compost is used as a fertilizer in fields with trees from which the company receives the fruits for its products. This is a classic example of how circular practices can greatly benefit a business.

The peels from the fruits will be used for composting or feeding animals from nearby farms

Repurposing Fruit Residues

In addition, fruit peels and other residues were offered for feeding the animals of the family and the animals of a nearby farm. This has been a practice from Mrs. Niki's side from day one. As she stated, "some residues from specific fruits have been proven to be highly nutritious for animals. So, why wouldn't we take advantage of that, while also avoiding unnecessary waste?".

Furthermore, 4 years ago, the company started offering a large volume of fruit pits to a local collaborator for the extraction of a special oil, which is later used for medicinal purposes and the production of cosmetics.

Recycling

For 10 years now, a huge volume of waste is recycled, in collaboration with local authorities. The company made all necessary arrangements in order to collect and sort all recyclable materials, thus saving a considerable amount of waste.

Another recycling practice involves the water that is used in the company's facilities. Due to the high salinity of water in the mountainous area of Agros, the water used for the preparation of the products comes after getting processed by a deionizer. Instead of being disposed, the residue water is used for cleaning and other everyday activities in the factory's facilities.

Conclusion

Overall, according to estimations from the interviewees, approximately 95% of waste is somehow treated through composting, feeding, processing pits for oil and recycling. Only the remaining 5% goes to waste, referring to residues and rubbish which cannot be treated or processed in any way. Needless to say, Niki's Sweets is now considered one of the most efficient enterprises in waste prevention on the island.

The interior of Niki's Sweets shop, offering an extensive variety of Cypriot traditional sweets and other delights

Learning points and actions to consider

Both Mrs. Niki and her son Christos provided some concrete actions that an entrepreneurs can implement in order to facilitate the green transition process inside their business:

- Such drastic changes are never easy for an SME family business. When entrepreneurs estimate the cost of initial investment to introduce green practices, usually they get discouraged, as sometimes there is no guaranteed financial return on these investments. However, when formulating a long-term strategy for the same business, it is evident that these green practices can potentially have significant benefits for the financial viability of the business and the environmental well-being.
- According to the interviewees, the family business could implement even more measures and processes for the protection of the environment. What hinders those efforts are the particularities of the location in which the company operates. The Agros village is considered a distant community from any urban center. This generates a series of difficulties for the proper treatment and processing of waste. In the interviewees' own words: "Urban areas provide more opportunities to collaborate with other entities and integrate new practices". Nonetheless, the family business has managed to thrive, even under these circumstances, both in terms of the business' success and, equally importantly in our case, in the integration and promotion of green practices for the minimization of waste.

Reflections

- "In the case of production/ manufacturing family businesses, how can the raw materials and byproducts of these materials be used for other purposes, in order to prevent unnecessary waste?"
- "How can other local actors in my community help me realize my goals through a green transition process?"

CASE STUDIES | SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS

3.1 Viticultores De Mesa

Country: Spain	**Greening processes:** Sustainable farming **Greening input:** Environmental health and ecosystem preservation **Greening outputs:** Offering greening products
Company size headcount: >10	**Company size turnover:** < €2m
Interviewed: Incumbent (senior generation) Successor (next generation)	**Industry:** Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing

Background

The Mesa family is one of the most known families in Chiclana de la Frontera, a small town in the south of Spain not only famous for its beautiful beaches but also as a home of one of the most traditional grapes in Spain – *"palomino"*. The Mesa family have been in the business of grape farming for decades, going back at least four generations. Today, the family owns and manages several vineyards in the area. They are also associates of the local cooperative winery where they supply their cultivated grapes.

In a region where small family-run farms are common, the Mesa family faces challenges. One challenge is related to the fact that for smaller growers like them it is hard to compete with larger national and international companies. But there is another challenge that has been threatening their business – climate change.

In the current conditions, the Mesa family believes that sustainability in farming is not just a buzzword - it's a commitment to the earth and future generations. The farming sector is becoming increasingly aware of environmental issues, and the viticulture industry is also stepping up, embracing sustainable and green practices.

Sustainability transition

Sustainable farming practices

The Mesa family vineyard has changed and adapted over centuries of family-owned grape-growing, always trying to adapt to the changing conditions. With climate change now having visible effects - like unpredictable rainfall and droughts that impact the local farming landscapes, the Mesa family faces the tough task of protecting their family business while adapting to these impacts.

For the Mesa family, saving their family vineyard isn't just about keeping the business running, it's also about preserving their family heritage, caring for the land, and building a sustainable future for the next generations. These challenges have motivated them to adopt eco-friendly practices that reduce climate risks and make the vineyard stronger. Their story shows the resilience needed to keep family traditions alive in a changing world. Here's a look at some of the key practices they've adopted.

Water management and conservation

One of the most significant challenges the Mesa family faces is the changing rainfall and drought patterns in their region, where intense rain has become more common. This means that a lot of that much-needed water ends up running off quickly instead of soaking into the soil where it's needed. To counter this, the Mesa family has introduced terraces with a slight incline across their vineyards. This terrace layout controls the movement of water, allowing it to soak into the soil gradually and providing the grapes with much-needed moisture. The design also minimizes soil erosion and prevents potential landslides by ensuring excess water can run off without damaging the vineyard.

> ***"Water conservation has been a big focus for us, especially with the effects of climate change becoming more obvious in the region we live in". (Angel Mesa Mariscal, 3rd generation)***

Protecting and enhancing biodiversity of the vineyards

The Mesa family has also focused on enhancing biodiversity within the vineyard to promote a healthier ecosystem. Planting cover crops between vine rows is one of their primary strategies. These crops not only enrich the soil and prevent erosion but also serve as habitats for beneficial insects and wildlife, creating a more balanced vineyard ecosystem. This approach, they believe, not only strengthens the vines but also contributes to a more nuanced and complex wine flavor profile.

They also put a lot of care into pruning and canopy management based on the vineyard's natural resources - how much water, sunlight, and nutrients are available. This thoughtful, resource-aware approach to canopy and pruning management supports the vineyard's long-term sustainability.

> ***"For us, supporting biodiversity means helping the vineyard thrive as a whole, with every plant, insect, grape and us, humans, working together". (Angel Mesa Mariscal)***

Ethical viticulture approach

The Mesa family vineyard follows an ethical approach that respects both their family heritage and caring for the environment. They combine traditional methods passed down through generations with sustainable practices, making sure the traditional practices are honored while new approaches are embraced to protect the land for the future. Their connection to the land runs deep, and they believe in maintaining its health for the future.

> ***"Caring for the land is at the heart of everything we do".***
>
> *All Mesa generations*

Perspectives from multiple generations

The Mesa family's commitment to their vineyard has only grown stronger over the generations. Each family member brings a unique perspective, but they all share the same core belief: that caring for the land is at the heart of everything they do. They don't cling to the past, they know that climate change and market pressures are real challenges, and they're ready to meet them with a blend of tradition and innovation.

The Mesa family's story is a true testament to the respect for nature, power of adaptation and the strength of family.

Reflections

- How can our family's values and traditions shape our approach to sustainability, and what steps can we take to adapt those values to modern environmental challenges like climate change?
- What role can each generation play in our green transition, and how can we learn from each other?

3.2 Plojhar

Country: Czech Republic	**Greening processes:** Energy Efficiency, Resource intensity, Waste management, green marketing/ labels, Sustainable business models **Greening input:** Renewable energy, Sustainable raw materials **Greening outputs:** Offering greening products
Company size headcount: >250	**Company size turnover:** Around €10 m
Interviewed: Incumbent (senior generation) Successor (next generation)	**Industry:** Manufacturing

Background

The paper has been Plojhar's business for more than 130 years. The founder of the company was František Ployhar (*1864), who trained as a bookbinder and gained experience, as was customary at the time, on the German French border. He founded the company Knihařství Ployhar on 4 September 1888 in České Budějovice and since then the company has been passed on from generation to generation. At that time, books were considered a work of art and their production was an exceptional craftsmanship. In the book factory of the Ployhar company, for example, leather-bound books were produced, as well as gilded books.

As the company grew, its direction changed according to market and customer needs. At the beginning of the 20th century, production was expanded to include cartonage, i.e. the production of cardboard packaging. The company survived the Great Depression of the 1930s thanks to the tenacity and imagination of its owner. However, another blow followed - the Nazi occupation. Although the company had no resources to spare, Bohumil Ployhar took on five more girls to save them from total deployment in the German Reich. As a great nationalist, he refused to work for the Wehrmacht, and so he gradually lost workers and material rations until only 4 family members and

one bookbinder remained in the company. Nevertheless, Bohumil remained a visionary and dreamed of starting a large-scale production of luxurious hand-edged letter papers in gift boxes and photo albums after the war. Indeed, after World War II, the company's focus was expanded to include a retail stationery section. In the 1950s, the Plojhar family lost the right to own their business due to the rise of communism in the country. The Plojhar company was forcibly affiliated to a production cooperative and the owners of the company became ordinary employees. In 1990, during the period of restitution, the company returned to the hands of the Plojhar family, but not for free - Bohumil Plojhar Sr. had to buy out the company. Subsequently, he expanded the company's scope to include papermaking and focused production mainly on custom-made cardboard.

In 1998, the current managing director of the company, Mr. Bohumil Plojhar Jr., the son of Mr. Bohumil Plojhar Sr., joined the company and was hired as a driver. For several years he delivered metrial or finished products to customers. As the future owner of the company, he really started from scratch and got to know how the company works, from production, through logistics and warehouses and finally the management of the company.

In 2004, the company was handed over to the Plojhar brothers, Bohumil Jr. (*1963) and Petr (*1970) Plojhar. Mr. Bohumil moved up to the position of store manager, where he served until 2019. His brother Petr left the company in 2017, and Mr. Bohumil hired an outside employee to help manage the business in 2019. However, he was not satisfied with his work, so he took over the management himself in 2023. At the moment, the company is in the process of handing over to the next generation. The CEO of the company is Mr. Bohumil's son, the representative of the 5th generation, Mr. Jakub Plojhar, who is dedicated to modernizing the company and turning the factory stores into exceptional places where shopping is an experience. The second representative of the 5th generation Plojhar family in the company is Jakub's older brother Jan (*1987), who joined the company in 2016 as a systems manager.

Sustainability transition

Organic products and their distribution

Mr. Bohumil, the current managing director and owner of the company, made Plojhar an ecologically oriented company. He has always been close to ecology, but combining this approach with business has not always been easy.

The first idea he came up with as an innovator was to move their own car transport, which the company still has today, in a greener direction. At the time, they were offering compressed natural gas, CNG, cars. Although this mode of transport was not yet fully established in the country at that time, Mr. Plojhar decided to convert all transport to CNG. Due to the lower withholding tax compared to petrol or diesel, the ecological and especially the economic outlook of this change was very positive at that time. Even though the conversion of special cars to CNG was higher and the coverage of filling stations was not ideal, the lower fuel price enabled the company to be in the black in terms of transportation costs over a period of 4-5 years. Over time, Plojhar also procured its own filling station and now they are compressing the natural gas themselves which they then inject into the cars.

The company's second eco-friendly venture is roofs covered with photovoltaic panels. The first solar power plant was built by the Plojhar family in 2016 and currently has a capacity of 90 KW. The company prides itself on the quality and sustainability of its products and is certified by the FSC (Forest Stewardship Council), an international certification mark that guarantees consumers that the material the company processes comes from sustainably managed forests. Most of the materials Plojhar works with have this certification. Plojhar recycles all the paper it uses in the production of carton packaging or paper products to the maximum, and the cardboard the company uses for carton packaging, for example, is also sustainable; it can be recycled up to 22 times. Thus, the life cycle of Plojhar products does not end with throwing them in the bin. Plojhar chooses a more sustainable path with every decision, big or small. They have also opted for more sustainable materials when expanding the production area and, for example, have wooden structures instead of steel trusses in the warehouse halls. In addition, some of the walls of the halls are not made of brick but are made of pressed straw boards. This confirms their beliefs and gives space to alternative materials, as opposed to conventional concrete and iron.

The fact that Plojhar is not a large corporation played a role in all decisions. Thus, the company could not afford to make ecological decisions that would not be economically beneficial. Another element that influenced decision-making was the amount of bureaucracy associated with non-routine business processes. Both Plojhar's representatives - father and son - agree that bureaucracy is a major obstacle for entrepreneurs, and not only in the area of environmental processes in companies. They describe the bureaucratic procedures in the Czech Republic as ''the biggest obstacle to the economy in our country'' and both confirm that it is the bureaucracy that they have struggled with the most in the course of their business. Mr. Bohumil is responsible for everything related to ecological technologies or practices. He proposed the decisions on greener practices himself and since they all corresponded with the overall company setup, their implementation was without any problems from the decision-making point of view. This is also due to the fact that both generations share green values and see sustainability as an important part of their work.

The biggest positive is the economic perspective. Plojhar was one of the first companies to introduce CNG transport. Today, they own four trucks, one van, and four CNG passenger vehicles, which cover up to 95% of their traffic. Thus, they are significantly relieving the environment from combustion gases and ash and other toxic gases. From an economic point of view, for example, the trucks save between half and 1/3 of the annual operating costs, i.e. between 200-300.000 CZK (equiv. to 7.800 - 11.800 EUR) per year per vehicle. The aforementioned in-house CNG filling station helps significantly in this respect. The other vehicles that the Plojhars are now planning to order will also run on CNG for even greater economic and environmental benefits. In the future, Plojhar plans to introduce other innovative technologies that contribute to improving the environment and remain a green company in the long term. All the environmental practices in place are considered beneficial by both Plojhar representatives.

Learning points and actions to consider

Both representatives of the Plojhar family agree that for them, sustainable business is a matter of conviction and interest rather than a PR activity. What is most important for them in the transformation process is to communicate these steps clearly and comprehensibly to the company's management and then to all employees so that everyone is on the same page.

Mr Bohumil recommends that companies wishing to start with ecological processes should prepare themselves for complications associated with dealing with state authorities. From their point of view, each of the officials he has met interprets the law differently, making it difficult to deal with their views.

Mr Jakub confirms from experience that it is necessary to calculate these investments in advance, but it is even more important to approach innovative green solutions in such a way that they make sense for the company in terms of value, not just in economic terms. He therefore recommends asking questions such as 'Do we want to do this? Do we have the resources and capacity? Does it make sense to us?' and not just be 'pushed' into this decision by legislation or the idea that it will bring some profit to the company. In his view, the motivation in this respect must be much greater than the return.

In the future, Plojhar plans to introduce other innovative technologies that contribute to improving the environment and remain a green company in the long term

Reflections

- How can I effectively communicate the transition process within my company?
- Do we want to do this? Do we have the resources and capabilities? Does it make sense for us?

LEARNING POINTS AND ACTIONS TO CONSIDER

LEARNING POINTS AND ACTIONS TO CONSIDER FROM THE CASE STUDIES

The green transition is a challenge, but also a great opportunity for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), which can benefit in terms of sustainability, innovation and competitiveness. Below, you will find learning points and concrete actions that SMEs can consider addressing the social impact and opportunities of the green transition.

Understand the importance of sustainability in business strategy

Learning points:

- The green transition is not only an environmental necessity, but also a strategic opportunity that can improve the long-term competitiveness of SMEs.
- Integrating sustainability into the corporate mission can attract customers, investors and environmentally sensitive talent.

Actions to consider:

- Review corporate vision and values to include sustainability goals.
- Establish a clear roadmap for the transition to low-carbon business models.

Investing in green technologies with a measurable economic return

Learning points:

- Adopting green technologies (such as renewable energy, energy efficiency and automation) can significantly reduce operating costs while improving environmental impact.
- SMEs should evaluate investments in terms of economic return and long-term cost reduction, also taking into account available tax incentives and financing.

Actions to consider:

- Assess the energy saving potential and operational efficiency of technologies such as photovoltaic systems, energy-efficient heating and cooling systems and automation.
- Monitor and analyse the economic benefits (reduced costs, increased productivity) of adopting green solutions.
- Consider the complete life cycle of the investment, including return on investment (ROI) and environmental impact.

Adopting a gradual approach to the green transition

Learning points:

- SMEs need to approach the green transition gradually, planning a path that does not impose excessive burdens in terms of upfront investment.
- A gradual approach allows SMEs to better balance short-term costs with long-term economic benefits.

Actions to consider:

- Create a green transition plan with short, medium and long-term goals.
- Start with low-cost changes (e.g. energy efficiency improvement, waste reduction) and plan more significant investments later.
- Monitor results in terms of savings and operational improvements to justify further green investments.

Selection of the most suitable green practices according to the sector and available resources

Learning points:

- Each sector has its own peculiarities, and green solutions must be chosen according to the type of business and company resources.
- For SMEs in the manufacturing sector, for example, solutions such as energy efficiency, process automation and improved production techniques may be a priority, while for those in the service sector, it may be more relevant to reduce the carbon footprint related to travel and the use of space

Actions to consider:

- Adopt sector-specific solutions: Identify the green practices that offer the greatest impact in relation to your type of business (e.g. energy management systems for industry, reducing plastic use for retail).
- Involve suppliers and partners: Work with suppliers who share the same sustainability goals to optimize green practices throughout the supply chain.
- Leverage technology solutions: For SMEs with limited resources, low-cost technology solutions such as digitizing business processes and adopting efficiency management software can be a first step.

Collaborate with other SMEs and industry players

Learning points:

- Collaboration between SMEs, industry associations, local authorities and suppliers can accelerate the green transition, reducing implementation costs and optimising processes.
- Alliances can generate economies of scale, expand innovation capacity and help reduce the overall costs of the green transition.

Actions to consider:

- Participate in collaborative initiatives, such as research projects or collective purchasing groups for green technologies.
- Explore possible partnerships with other SMEs or large companies to develop shared sustainable solutions.
- Participating in sectoral initiatives that promote sustainability, e.g. through consortia or associations

Adopt corporate social responsibility (CSR) practices

Learning points:

- CSR allows SMEs to align themselves with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and meet the expectations of an increasingly ethical and environmentally conscious customer base.
- A strong commitment to CSR can improve reputation and consumer trust.

Actions to consider:

- Initiate social responsibility initiatives involving the local community, ethical employee management and transparency in business practices.
- Clearly communicate green initiatives and environmental policies through marketing and advertising.

Involve family and employees and create a sustainable corporate culture

Learning points:

- The green transition requires the involvement of everyone in the company, as SMEs depend on people to implement change.
- A strong internal commitment to sustainability creates a more collaborative and innovative working environment.

Actions to consider:

- Organize regular training on sustainability and available green tools.
- Incentivize employees to come up with innovative ideas to reduce environmental impact.

Take advantage of public incentives and environmental policies

Learning points:

- The European Union, local and national governments offer numerous financial and tax incentives for SMEs that embark on sustainability and green innovation paths.
- Having access to research and development funds can reduce the upfront costs of adopting sustainable technologies.

Actions to consider:

- Monitor funding opportunities, such as European calls for proposals, national and regional funds, energy efficiency tax credits and subsidies for adopting green technologies
- Work with experienced consultants to access funding opportunities and support

Promoting the circular economy and materials management

Learning points:

- SMEs can benefit from circular economy models, reducing waste and creating new value streams by reusing and recycling materials.
- The circular economy can create business opportunities related to the recycling, repair and remanufacturing of products and materials.

Actions to consider:

- Create a waste reduction strategy in the company, promoting reuse of materials and design of durable products.
- Explore business opportunities in the area of recovery and recycling of used materials.

Create alliances and collaborations with other SMEs and stakeholders

Learning points:

- SMEs can benefit from collaborations with other companies, associations and local authorities to implement joint sustainability projects, reduce costs and increase innovation.
- Alliances can also facilitate access to resources, knowledge and wider markets.

Actions to consider:

- Participate in local or sectoral networks and initiatives to promote sustainability.
- Collaborate with other SMEs or large companies in the search for shared innovative solutions.

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