ST.15

Consider key management issues for implementation

Requires dialogue

The aim of this activity is to start putting in place some management practices that can facilitate the implementation of eco-innovation within the company.

INPUT

- Approval from the CEO to proceed with the eco-innovation implementation activities from the activity *ST.14 Pitch the new business strategy to the CEO.*

OUTPUTS

Management practices and culture that will support the eco-innovation implementation activities. These outputs are not specifically used elsewhere in the process but are important to ensure the success of the eco-innovation implementation activities.

This activity is different to the others in that it is an on-going process that aims to make the management practices, company culture, and ways of working more conducive to the implementation of eco-innovation. Below a number of management practices are suggested that can help with this.

HOW TO GO ABOUT IT

- *Embedding eco-innovation into the company culture* – When trying to implement major changes within a company, such as introducing eco-innovation, having a supportive company culture can greatly ease and accelerate the implementation of the changes. Conversely, a company culture that is resistant to eco-innovation can make it extremely difficult to make any progress. 'Change management' is the field of research that provides support to practitioners who are implementing change within a company so if you are not familiar with this topic then see the 'Background information' of this activity for further guidance.

- *Managing eco-innovation research and development alongside routine operations* – Research suggests that trying to manage radical innovation activities, such as eco-innovation, alongside the routine, day-to-day operations of a company can be challenging. For staff working on eco-innovation activities there is often a conflict between the responsibilities they have for day-to-day operations and the contributions they are expected to make to the eco-innovation activities.

- This has led to suggestions that eco-innovation should be separated from the day-to-day operations of the company. However, this is often not practical in small companies, and

may also mean that the outputs of a research project are not supported or adopted within the rest of the organization. Finding the right solution to this conflict will depend on the specific situation. A compromise solution may be to ask staff working on the project for eco-innovation to dedicate specific days of the week to their eco-innovation activities. The key is then ensuring that this is enforced, both by the staff and by their colleagues. Other simple measures such as having separate email addresses for people for when they are working on eco-innovation activities, and even a separate desk or work area, can all help to maintain the separation between eco-innovation and routine activities.

Template of Management Issues

Culture	Message and communications
Practices and setting	Competences
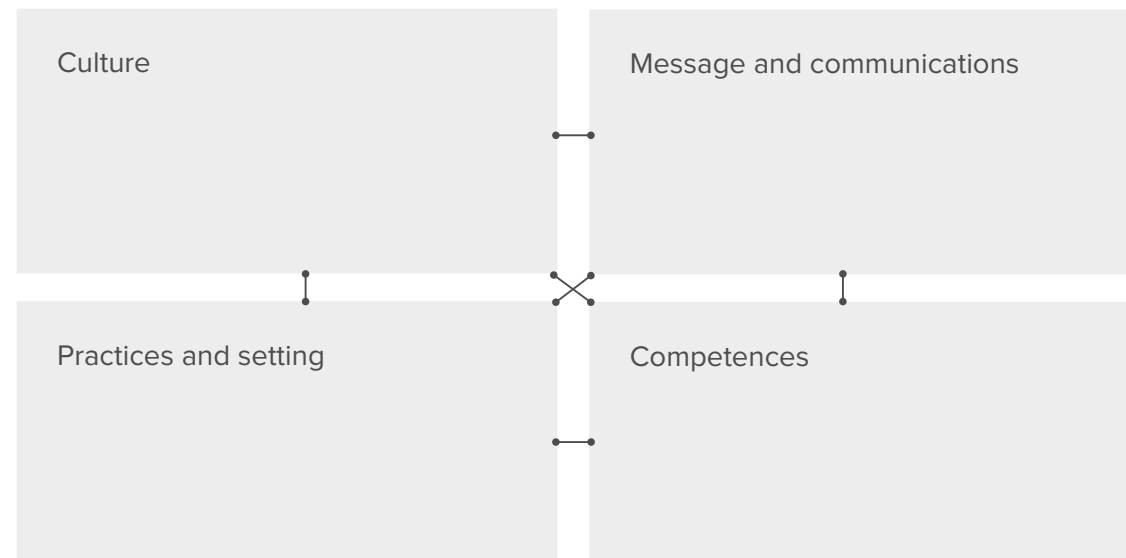
Management issues

Culture

What cultural traits or values of the company can support, ease and accelerate the implementation of the changes proposed?

What is making it difficult to progress?

Message and communications

What is the most important message that now needs to be spread around the company for the success of eco-innovation?

Who are the people managing the communication?

How can we promote a conversation about the message within the company?

Practices and setting

What practices and activities can be establish so to make it easy for employees working on eco-innovation to achieve their goals?

What practical solutions regarding space, time, or resources can help them focus on eco-innovation activities?

Competences

What knowledge and skills are needed? How could those be adreessed?

ST.15 Consider key management issues for implementation

- *Making use of opportunities for internal communication* – It is important to think about the message that is communicated to employees about the company's plans and objectives for implementing eco-innovation. In all cases, it is important that the Senior Management Team is seen to support eco-innovation. Company newsletters, bulletin boards and general meetings are all opportunities for senior management to explain why the company has chosen to implement eco-innovation and the likely benefit for the company and for employees. Internal communication can also be used to address specific concerns or problems. Remember also, that internal communication should be a two-way flow, so try to identify opportunities for employees to express their views, concerns and ideas throughout the process.

- *Enhance the sustainability knowledge and skills of the workforce* – eco-innovation requires a variety of knowledge and skills such as life cycle thinking, product environmental assessment, green marketing, awareness of gender issues and gender equality etc. These skills and knowledge may not be present in the existing workforce. As the Service Provider you will often be required to fill these knowledge and skill gaps for the company in the short term, but this is not a scalable, long-term solution. You should therefore try to work with the company to identify where knowledge and skill gaps exist and develop a plan for addressing these gaps. In certain circumstances this may require the recruitment of new staff that possess those skills, but training of existing employees will generally be the more cost-effective and efficient approach.

- *Empowering employees through a flat organizational structure* – a number of companies have found that restructuring the management hierarchy and at the same time encouraging employees to be more autonomous and pro-active in managing their own performance can lead to improved productivity, innovation and employee satisfaction. This approach is built on the assumptions that most employees: want to be part of a successful company; understand how they can contribute to that success; and have the right knowledge and expertise to do their job effectively. If this is correct, then allowing employees to take responsibility for their work results in better performance, whilst also reducing the need for managers who may frustrate their subordinates by 'interfering' or being overly prescriptive in their guidance. One example of this approach is Google, who, amongst other policies aimed at empowerment, allow the employees to spend 20% of their time on projects that they consider interesting or potential valuable (He, 2013). In another example, the computer games developer, Valve, has created a completely flat organizational structure, with no managers other than the CEO. The employee handbook describes how the company operates without the presence of managers (Valve, 2012). Whilst neither of these examples may be directly transferrable to the context within the company, they do provide some inspiration for how a company can reorganize itself to ensure that its gets the best from its employees and allows them to make full use of their innovation potential – an important issue for eco-innovation.

LEARNING CASE STUDY OF MANAGEMENT ISSUES

Culture

- *Cultural split between operational staff (predominantly female) and Senior Management Team (all male) may make implementation of family-friendly policies more challenging*
- *Do not yet have a culture of innovation*
- *Could run a workshop involving operational staff and Senior Management Team to discuss the current culture of the company and identify ways to improve the culture for innovation*

Message and communications

- *Operational staff need to understand what the new business strategy is, why the change was needed and why 'business as usual' would have eventually led to the collapse of the company*
- *Need this message to be communicated by CEO and have opportunity to ask questions*
- *Could ask CEO to present new strategy to company in one meeting and then offer follow-up meetings in small groups to those who would like to discuss it further*

Practices and setting

- *Create an eco-innovation noticeboard to explain the current activities being worked on and the results achieved*
- *Provide staff working on eco-innovation projects with a badge or different colour uniform to wear when they are working on a research project so that colleagues know not to disturb them with 'normal' tasks.*
- *Ask for volunteers to become 'eco-innovation champions' within the company who will participate in projects and help communicate activities and results to colleagues*

Competences

- *Provide training to key staff on how to facilitate brainstorming sessions to support the introduction of a culture of innovation*
- *Provide 'eco-innovation champions' with basic training on sustainability and the eco-innovation process so that they can understand the process and aims.*

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

References and resources

Management considerations:

- Burnes, B., (2004). Managing Change. London, Pearson Education UK.

- He, L., (2013). Google's Secrets Of Innovation: Empowering Its Employees [Online]. Available from: http://www.forbes.com/sites/laurahe/2013/03/29/googles-secrets-of-innovation-empowering-its-employees/

- Valve, (2012). Valve hand book for new employees [Online]. Available from: http://assets.sbnation.com/assets/1074301/Valve_Handbook_LowRes.pdf

- Hayes, J., 2014. The theory and practice of change management. Palgrave Macmillan.

Gender equality and gender issues:

- UN Women, 2014. World Survey on Gender Equality and Sustainable Development. Available from: http://www.unwomen.org/~/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2014/unwomen_surveyreport_advance_16oct.pdf

- Global Gender Office, 2013. Environment and Gender Index (EGI). Available from: http://genderandenvironment.org/egi/

- UN Environment, 2016. Global Gender and Environment Outlook 2016.Available from: http://web.unep.org/ggeo.