



World Business Council for  
Sustainable Development

## Executive Brief

February 2004

# I Capacity Building

## Context

Within companies, the concept of sustainable development is shifting toward the strategic center of their operations, intensifying external scrutiny and pushing them to clearly and openly demonstrate their practices. A sound, integrated practice can sharpen even the most successful company's competitive edge but is difficult to achieve. While many have begun to tackle these issues, few can claim that the gap between policy and practice has closed.

Most companies have adopted sustainable development norms and principles but now need to manage and stimulate change across their company's operations. Sustainable development needs to move out of its specialist box into the mainstream and into the heart of organizations. This requires building skills and understanding in order to integrate sustainable development across business operations, sectors, countries and issues.

## Capacity Building

- **Creates networks and stimulates dialogue** providing a sounding board for key concerns and perspectives
- **Reduces risk** through sharing experiences and anticipating change
- Supports **learning and innovation** from new approaches
- Sources a set of **leading-edge examples** that illustrate success (and failure)
- **Closes gap between policy and practice**, making sustainable development a reality
- Builds **sustainable development capacity** among future business leaders
- Identifies sustainable development **synergies across job functions**
- **Attracts, retains and motivates talent**, helping employees achieve personal and professional goals
- Allows a company to manage **change**, enhance **reputation** and remain **competitive**
- Demonstrates sustainable development commitments and ensures that **companies are "walking the talk"**

## The Way Forward

A brief look at WBCSD member companies' current capacity building programs indicates that despite good practice in the environmental arena, sustainable development is not getting the comprehensive attention that it deserves. Companies have identified the capabilities required around environmental integration such as life-cycle analysis or impact assessment, but not incorporated this thinking into a wider strategy. Not only our members but NGOs, consultants, UN agencies and governments are grappling with the question – how to develop the necessary skills and expertise to implement sustainable development practices?

## The WBCSD's Role

The Capacity Building program has been established as a way of changing attitudes, acquiring knowledge and building skills within the private sector on the business case for sustainable development. The aim of the program is to help our member companies manage change and increase their ability to respond to the sustainable development agenda. It creates new 'multipliers and accelerators' which ensure that the business case for sustainable development reaches the widest possible audience and produces results in the real world.

Three objectives underpin the WBCSD's approach:

- 1 Translate the policy outputs of the WBCSD into user friendly material
- 2 Improve sustainability attitudes, knowledge and skills
- 3 Support companies in managing change toward sustainable development practices

The program extends outward through WBCSD member companies, regional BCSDs and partner organizations, reaching future business leaders, in the form of the Young Managers Team.

## The Capacity Building work program consists of 3 clusters of services

### 1 Sharing experience

*Learning from experience and strengthening the business case through dialogue and demonstrating business progress*

### 2 Building skills

*Developing managers with the leadership skills and capabilities to implement sustainable development practices.*

### 3 Developing tools

*Reaching a wider audience through e-learning and face-to-face materials that can be tailored to a company's needs*

## Moving On

In the future we plan to broaden the range of products and partnerships to make material as useful as possible and to monitor its success. On going work will include the testing of Chronos, learning modules and functional briefs with workshops, translations and marketing taking place where necessary. We will also continue to assess gaps and explore new partnerships.

# 1

## Learning by Sharing® (LbS)

Set up in 1998, LbS is a seminar program held at WBCSD meetings and beyond to explore sustainable development topics and share ideas and experiences in an informal and 'off the record' setting. The project has evolved from an awareness-raising program to more pragmatic 'hands-on' sessions on integrating the economic, social and environmental aspects of sustainable development into planning and operations.

This program goes to the heart of the WBCSD by pooling business knowledge to help companies overcome hurdles and develop effective strategies which can be then used to catalyze change in the broader business community.

### Case Studies

Case studies illustrate how companies have integrated sustainable development into their business activities, either independently or with stakeholders. These specific projects, and learning processes are intended to demonstrate business progress and inspire others to contribute actively to sustainable development.

The WBCSD provides a range of good practice learning opportunities such as an online case study database with over 100 examples and a case study framework to help companies in documenting their own sustainability activities.

[www.wbcds.org/web/casestudy.htm](http://www.wbcds.org/web/casestudy.htm)

### Stakeholder Dialogues

Consulting stakeholders can create economic and social value through collaborative problem solving and help companies gauge attitudes and value differences. Such consultation ensures better business alignment with stakeholder and employee expectations, thus securing a 'license to operate'.

The WBCSD has to date organized, convened, or hosted approximately 100 dialogue events covering the full range WBCSD projects at locations around the globe. Our stakeholder dialogue toolkit shares our experiences in structuring and processing dialogue meetings.

# 4

# 2

## Regional Initiative



A central focus of the WBCSD is working with developing and emerging economies to share best practices on economic, environmental and social management and bring valuable local and regional perspectives into our activities. The Leadership and Learning program provides skills development opportunities alongside regional tours to share WBCSD messages and materials with a wider group of business people.

### Young Managers Team (YMT)

The YMT is designed to give tomorrow's business movers the new skills and leadership experience they need to respond to the social and environmental challenges they will face in the future. It provides a learning experience and networking opportunity for the team members as well as for the companies they represent.

YMT 2002 brought fresh perspectives to dialogues with non-business stakeholders at the Johannesburg Summit, whereas YMT 2003 focused on the water agenda, exploring the value of water and opportunities for business. Alongside a number of dialogues, the group has produced an education tool and a set of water principles that businesses are encouraged to adhere to.



### 3 Chronos®

The WBCSD partnered with the University of Cambridge Programme for Industry (CPI) to produce CHONOS®, an electronic tutorial on the business case for sustainable development. It has been designed to equip employees with the knowledge they need to deliver on corporate priorities. Available in English and Spanish, Chronos is an interactive tool with illustrations, cartoons, quizzes and dilemma exercises to encourage sustainable thinking and action. If you are interested in moving sustainable development out of its specialist box and into the mainstream, visit [www.sdchronos.org](http://www.sdchronos.org).



#### Functional briefs

CPI and the WBCSD are also developing a series of briefings for functional managers on sustainable development. The briefs are designed to operate as a stand-alone information guide for professionals in specific line functions, and, secondarily, to assist sustainable development executives in increasing awareness of sustainability issues across their organizations.

#### Learning modules

Created for face-to-face learning, our modules highlight WBCSD projects in action. Off the shelf toolkits, the draft modules include background briefings, presentations and activities, for company representatives to deliver training internally.

Topics include: Eco-efficiency, Corporate Social Responsibility, Energy and Climate, Water and Codes of Conduct.



#### Program structure and resources

##### Members

26 members including regional network representatives sit on the Advisory Board to steer direction and critique ongoing work

##### Partnerships

The WBCSD works closely with a range of partners to deliver its Capacity Building program, including the Cambridge Programme for Industry

##### Program manager

Katherine Madden, [madden@wbcsd.org](mailto:madden@wbcsd.org)

##### Secretariat staff

include Danielle Carpenter, Margaret Flaherty, Katherine Madden and Laura Sanders

##### Website

[www.wbcsd.org](http://www.wbcsd.org)