

GREEN BPM

Intro: Why should we talk about sustainability in business?

According to Luis Fernandez (2012, p. 41), the industrial revolution could be defined as a complex process, where by introducing technical and organisational innovations in the production chain, the acceleration and self-sustained growth of the industrial production was possible, giving place to a modern and urbanized society and, in the long term, a continuous economic growth.

McDonough and Braungart (2002, p. 21-22) pointed out that as soon as industrialisation emerged, other institutions also took shape to assist in creating employment opportunities for the different social classes, thus favouring the economic growth. Through technological advances, the standardisation of processes facilitated the supply of economic products, public transport, the distribution of services such as water distribution, sanitation services, the collection of waste, etc. Under this new paradigm, the most marginalised social classes were able to gain access to a comfortable life. It is indisputable that the industrial revolution has generated considerable progress in terms of societal well-being and life quality. The trade-off of these benefits was not immediately discernable. But nowadays, the reality is difficult to ignore. Taking as a reference the data catalogue offered by the World Bank Group, it can be observed that throughout all these years, a breakdown occurred in the man-nature relationship, where deforestation, CO2 emissions, air pollution, the no-longer availability of fresh water and the extinction of species, among other things, reflect the careless use of available resources.

As Wautelet (2018, p. 18) states in his research, from its origins, the industrial revolution has been based on a linear model of production and consumption, better known as “take-make-dispose”: where resources are taken from nature, followed by the manufacture of products, sales and consumption, to finally be disposed in landfills or incinerated. This economic model was based on two strong assumptions: resources are unlimited, and resources are readily available. From the described situation above, it can be affirmed that industrial and technological development resulted in enormous economic growth that propelled general welfare. But it is necessary to accept that the basic assumptions of the industrial revolution are no longer valid in the current global context, and thus, as Herman Daly points out in his work “Toward a Steady-State Economy” (1973) as does the Club of Rome’s “The Limits to Growth” (1972), it is necessary to dissolve the conception of “trade off” existing between the ideas of economic growth and environmental consciousness as contradictory elements.

In recent years, the talk about ecology, sustainability and green processes seems to have become a trend. These terms involve not only issues of ethical nature. Corporations have noticed the instability of the conventional economic model that is constantly exposed to risks and no longer suffices to act in a flexible and agile way. It is necessary to think about changes that incorporate sustainable aspects which contribute to the environment and the wellness of societies to defy the arising economic damage.

Literature

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