

[Research Report by CSR Committee (2023FY)]

Methods to Enhance Associated Empathy and to Improve the Behaviors of Corporate Employees to Promote Sustainability Business Management

April 2024

Executive Summary

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Introduction

(1) Issues that Await Solution Regarding Sustainability Targets on Environment and Society

Environmental issues including climate change, natural disasters and pandemic diseases have come to generate systemic risk for corporations that may ruin the basis of their business operations. In the area of social matters, potential risks regarding international human rights or geopolitical conflicts arising from international disputes may arise at any time.

(2) Trends of Rules and Regulations on Sustainability Targets

Public rules and regulations are now becoming more stringent on sustainability issues. The International Sustainability Standards Board (ISSB) issued its sustainability disclosure standards in 2023. The European Union (EU) put its Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD) into effect in 2024. In Japan, a new disclosure rule on corporate sustainability information was set as mandatory for the Securities Report in 2023.

(3) Requirements for Corporations to Undertake Sustainability Targets

It is said that one of the major current expectations for corporations is to incorporate such activities to solve environmental and social targets into all of their business operations in the near future. In this context, this report defines “Sustainability Business Management”¹ as the action in which a corporation incorporates sustainability targets into its corporate business framework with initiatives and is committed to solve the targets,

¹ This definition does have a certain range in meaning, and therefore, is a concept of multiple stages. It covers the programs from enhancement of a positive mindset of employees to participate with honor in corporate activities of sustainability business management, or development of employees’ positive actions to achieve the goals based on the corporate business strategies.

not only in terms of compliance to regulations or passive reaction to observe related rules, but with idea that the sustainability targets are the matter of the whole corporation both for exploring business opportunities and controlling potential business risk.

This concept shares a similar view with the approach to "synchronize" social sustainability with corporate sustainability shown in the report by the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI), "ITO Review 3.0 (ITO Review SX Edition)," made public in August 2022.

(4) The Approach to Perform "Sustainability Business Management" and the Significance to Improve Behaviors of Employees

The essential process for a corporation to tackle sustainability targets that lead to both exploration of business opportunities and management of potential risks needs to introduce fundamental programs for sustainability business management and to encourage employees to consider sustainability targets and to adjust their activities accordingly in their daily business operations or decision making. In this process, sharing the common view for sustainability targets between the top management and the employees and encouraging improved behaviors does constitute the critical point at issue.

(5) Research Procedure of this Report

First of all, a questionnaire survey regarding the ideas and conditions of behaviors of employees was carried out with the focus on the middle management, who are considered to be the key action group in implementing corporate operations. Secondly, another research procedure was tried to extract popular approaches for measures to promote sustainability business management and to encourage behavior changes of employees through interview research to corporations that had promoted advanced programs.

On top of that, proposals to promote sustainability business management were put together to enhance corporate employees to accelerate their associated empathy and behavior improvement for sustainability business management.

Chapter 1: Research on the Ideas and Behaviors of Corporate Employees Regarding Sustainability Business Management

(1) The Current Ideas and Behaviors of Corporate Employees Based on the Questionnaire Survey

The results of the questionnaire survey² for corporate employees regarding sustainability business management by the CSR Committee suggests the following points.

[Major Suggestions]

a) The group of employees that are interested in sustainability business management of corporations

i) The situation of Employees on Associated Empathy and Improved Behaviors of them for corporate sustainability business management

- The middle management tends to have more specific interest in sustainable management. More than 40% of that group value the traditional business idea of “concurring merits for three sides, or self, counterpart and society³”.
- About 20% of them were “highly empathetic or positive in making real actions,” while 46% of them replied they were “empathetic or positive in making actions where possible.”

ii) The ideas and behaviors of the middle management that were “highly empathetic or positive in making real actions actually” or “empathetic or positive in making actions where possible” regarding programs for sustainable business management

- Many in middle management seem to have dealt with related activities in daily operations, including paying attention to sustainability targets in daily decision

² This survey was conducted in December of 2023 for employees of corporations that have 1000 or more employees. In the survey, the middle management is divided into two groups. One is the group of those interested in sustainability business management (about 100 people) and the other is made up of the others (about 200 people). For comparison, employees in their 20's were surveyed by being divided into the same two groups of the same numbers respectively.

³ Japanese traditional business theory among a trader group based in the Oumi district.

making, or providing suggestions to their associates for sustainability targets in daily communication.

iii) Effects of the corporate promotion of sustainability business management on the middle management that were “highly empathetic or positive in making real actions” or “empathetic or positive in making actions where possible.”

- A high percentage of the middle management answered that they understood the aim and necessity to introduce sustainability business management, or they had come to comprehend the direction of business operations.

iv) Programs that are likely to have an effect to enhance further actions for sustainability targets for the middle management of “highly empathetic or positive in making real actions” or “empathetic or positive in making actions where possible.”

- The following programs were proposed by a high percentage of the middle management.
 - Designating key performance indicators (KPI) or establishing an in-house evaluation system for promoting sustainable business management.
 - Reorganizing middle-term business plans, business strategy or material topics with the viewpoint of sustainability targets.

v) Reasons for Not Participating in Real Actions for Sustainability Targets

- A high percentage of the middle management shared the following points as hurdles.
 - Sustainability policies were not suitable for the real condition of current businesses.
 - A higher priority of the corporation was set for short-term profits or cost reduction.
 - Jobs for daily operations took most of the working time.
- Most of the younger generation between 20 and 30 years old replied they had difficulty finding concrete steps for sustainability targets.

b) The Group of Employees that are Not Interested in Corporate Sustainability Business Management

i) Reasons for Not having interest in Sustainability Business Management

- The following points were raised by a rather high percentage of responders:
 - The idea of sustainability business management seemed to have nothing to do with their jobs.
 - They had no idea regarding concrete steps for sustainability targets.

(2) The Viewpoints of the Middle Management Based on the Results of Questionnaire Survey

Considering the middle management of a corporation faces various kinds of pressing requirements, it is not an easy task for them to integrate tackling jobs to sustainability targets with controlling works of business risks or to exploring business opportunities regarding sustainability targets. In order to help the middle management overcome those challenges, corporations are asked to introduce appropriate measures to develop wider interests, to encourage more empathy and to change the behaviors of employees, in addition to establishing basic visions and ideas to explain the corporate business strategies.

Chapter 2: Basic Policies and Concrete Programs for Promoting Corporate Sustainability Business Management

An interview survey⁴ was conducted for 14 corporations that have developed their

⁴ This interview survey was conducted from Oct. 2023 to Jan. 2024. Corporations surveyed were as follows:

framework measures for sustainability business management.

The major findings from the interview survey, after discussing the results in the CSR committee meetings and comparing them with beforementioned questionnaire survey results, are as follows:

(1) Three Major Framework Measures to Promote Sustainability Business Management

Three Major Framework Measures

- A:** Measures of the whole corporation or of the top management and the head administration division in order to establish basic management structure for sustainability business management.
- B:** Measures for all employees who handle daily operation of sustainability business management to encourage them to hold more empathy and to change their behaviors.
- C:** Measures for the middle management to promote sustainability business management by connecting basic management structure and actual operations.

The first framework measure and the second framework measure are expected to be

a) Individual interview

ASAHI KASEI Corporation, OMRON Corporation, Kao Corporation, Starbucks Coffee Japan, Limited, NISSAN Motor CO., LTD., Fujitsu Limited, Bridgestone Corporation, Sumitomo Mitsui Trust Holdings, Inc., Mitsubishi Corporation

b) Presentation at the committee meetings

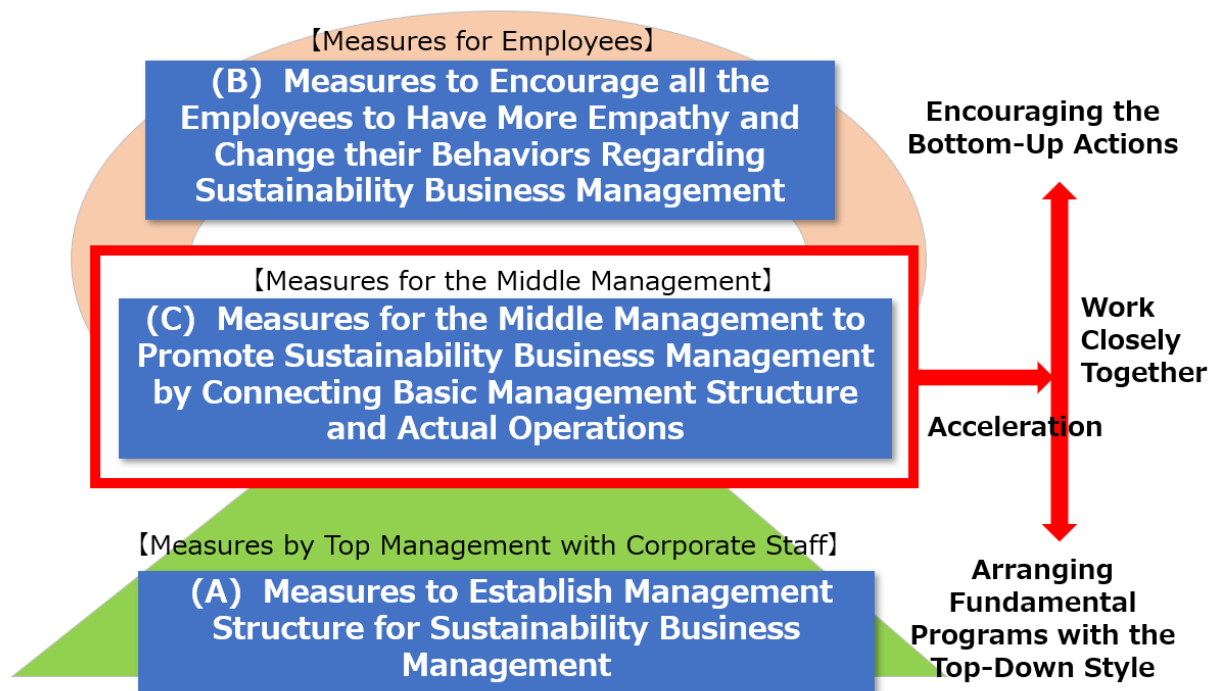
NTT DATA Group Corporation, Sekisui House, Ltd., SONY GROUP CORPORATION, MARUI GROUP CO., LTD., Unilever Japan Holdings G.K.

put into use in a parallel manner as the combined programs composed of both the top-down style arrangement of fundamental direction and the bottom-up style facilitation of related activities. Making use of the third framework measure will further upgrade the level of sustainability business management of a corporation by motivating the middle management. Additionally, the three framework measures will not work sufficiently without enough support from the top management.

It is not prerequisite to utilize all three framework measures. When designing the ways to improve the actions of sustainability business management, the framework measures should be examined and selected based on the situation of current sustainability business management, traditional corporate culture, or possible time frame to institute the methods.

Chart-1

Three Major Framework Measures to Promote Sustainability Business Management



(A) Measures to Establish Basic Management Structure for Sustainability Business Management

i) Understanding the expectation of stakeholders through engagements with them and reflecting it into corporate decision making

Implementing sustainability business management requires the top executives to perceive sustainability targets and the related condition of their own corporations sufficiently by collecting up-to-date information on the surrounding environment and by engaging with stakeholders to understand the transition of society in short and long-term time frames and the expectation toward their own corporations. In this process, it is an important element for the top executives to arrange their in-house system to reflect the information from the engagement onto the feedback cycle of their business management.

ii) Clarifying the relationship between sustainability targets and corporate principles or purposes, by incorporating sustainability targets into a long-term corporate vision or strategies

An impressive case in the interviews was the process to integrate into its corporate business strategies as a basic direction, the corporate purposes or principles, long-term scenario of future businesses, or selected material topics among essential management targets. A corporate business strategy is the practical standard for daily actions or decision making of employees, and this is why it is difficult to make sustainability business management a guideline for employees to proceed with their daily actions without clear linkage between sustainability targets and the corporate business strategy.

iii) Establishing a corporate system to enhance collaboration between business sections or joint projects with other corporations or entities

Dealing with sustainability targets requires the establishment of a corporate system to handle the relevant issues through cross-sectional adjustment processes in the corporation. In addition, it is important to create a corporate system to arrange discussions with higher rank managers in a smooth manner, from a business unit or a local division to the headquarters office or from the middle management to top executives, for an issue that will require a large investment.

Regarding an issue that only one corporation cannot easily solve by itself, creating a new framework of cooperation with other corporations or entities may work as an important solution.

iv) Setting a coordinated goal that bridges the gap of plural targets of different time frames

Many actions to cope with sustainability targets require immediate investment and should be planned on the basis that they will require a medium or long-term time frame before making real profits. While undertaking these actions, important suggestions are to evaluate and understand both the planned direction and the current status, and to establish key performance indicators (KPIs) to monitor the outcome of planned actions. In these processes, it is advised to consider the KPIs from multiple aspects as well as to make efforts to enhance acceptance of the planned direction by a wide range of employees.

v) Improving the in-house human resource management system that covers personnel evaluation and compensation

It is necessary for a corporation to incorporate individual performance for sustainability targets into the personnel evaluation system to enhance the level of related actions. Considering that the introduction of the system for all employees is not easy, some cases in the interviews attracted special attention, those were; to introduce specific

evaluation rules to selected sections, e.g., headquarters section, or to start with a designated part of compensation, e.g., the year-end bonus. In promoting these processes, programs to set up a related corporate culture or climate are also recommended.

vi) Check of the achieved progress, positive disclosure and engagements with stakeholders

Essential points in promoting sustainability business management are 1) to establish a fundamental system of PDCA for planning the next revised programs, by checking the progress of the programs to deal with material topics through appropriate discussions with stakeholders, 2) to disclose the achievements periodically, and 3) to engage with stakeholders to share common understanding on the corporate business direction. Further effective measures are to improve the contents of the story of continuous value creation and to increase opportunities for engagements with institutional investors.

(B) Measures to Encourage all Employees to Have More Empathy and to Change their Behaviors regarding Sustainability Business Management

i) Encouraging associated empathy for sustainability business management

The first necessary step to generate changes in behaviors of employees is to enhance their knowledge, to support appreciation and to develop associated empathy for sustainability business management.

There are three major key elements to develop associated empathy of employees. These are;

#1) to have appreciation for sustainability targets that are becoming more

complex and critical, and understand the necessity that they should be solved by society.

- #2) to understand the need that the corporation one works for should cope with sustainability targets.
- #3) to agree to the corporate principles, purposes, long-term visions, material topics or material topics, which construct the basis to promote sustainability business management.

It is important to continuously disseminate the intention of top executives to challenge sustainability targets. The corporate strategy should be linked consistently to principles or purposes first of all, and should be communicated with employees at every opportunity, which will lead to the understanding that all employees should act in their daily work based on sustainability business management policies. Setting opportunities for dual-directional interactive dialogues would also work to enhance this understanding.

ii) Advocating changes in behaviors

When encouraging corporate employees to convert their associated empathy into real actions, it is essential that corporations arrange a working environment in which employees recognize concrete actions that they are asked to perform, by indicating the ways to integrate sustainability targets into business activities according to job functions, post ranks or the business area of the section. Examples found in the interviews include a case in which a corporation disseminated the solid idea that existing projects, if proper, did work as the activity for sustainability business management, or another case in which a corporation held workshop meetings to reconfirm both corporate purposes and individual guiding principles to enhance pursuant actual behaviors. Other interesting examples of effective measures were to establish philanthropy programs that invite employees to join, or to encourage employees to apply for an award program that honored good actions for sustainability business management and was praised by the top management, which should be effective in elevating employees' pride and motivation and to foster bottom-up movement. Another approach to form a project team to solve sustainability targets by inviting internal members should be effective in creating a

corporate culture to move forward with sharing a sense of unity in the corporation.

iii) Supporting employees to tackle confronting sustainability targets at issue

Many employees may set their priority at a low level for the actions regarding sustainability targets, for which they cannot easily acknowledge the exact outcomes. It is therefore significant for a corporation to support the employees of business sections who are pressed to gain profits in a short period of time, e.g., with the following methods.

- establishing the axis of determination criteria or the range of business time frames as clearly as possible.
- presenting a picture of the pathway from each activity for sustainability targets toward business opportunities in the middle and long-term future as a model case.
- Expressing a message that praises actions for sustainability targets.

It may also be important to utilize leading public networks outside of the corporation.

iv) Visualizing and sharing the outcomes

In evaluating the outcome of behaviors, there are two elements that should be considered. One is the way to measure or visualize the outcomes with specific indexes including KPIs, and another is the way to share the image of the outcome with employees through top messages or articles of in-house networks. Regarding the former way of visualizing with index, while universal measures are not established yet, the important idea is the step-by-step method or starting with a survey of impacts and analyzing the relations between financial figures and non-financial figures, and then, proceeding further by brushing up the measures through trial and error with feedback information from stakeholders.

(C) Measures for the Middle Management to Promote Sustainability Business Management by Connecting Basic Management Structure and Actual Operations

i) Providing opportunities for discussion between the middle management and the top management to increase common understanding

The most basic step to promote sustainability business management is to understand the concept of the corporate principles or purposes, future visions, material topics or business strategies, all of which constitute the foundation for promoting sustainability business management. The next significant element for the middle management is to grasp the idea of top executives and to reduce the difference between them. Many corporations explained this kind of process to arrange opportunities to discuss periodically and to set up a corporate mechanism to inspire positive communication between them.

ii) Constructing processes to materialize the corporate principles or strategies for sustainable management in each business section

One important role of the middle management is to incorporate the corporate vision or management strategies into real operation of their sections in charge. A practical idea to enhance this process is to introduce related guidelines or rules for the whole corporation. An example of this method was to implement corporate-wide projects to establish key performance indicators for evaluating outcomes and to formulate a middle-term concrete action plan. Another case was to hold workshop meetings for a small portion of the middle management with members of the headquarters office.

iii) Introducing the process to evaluate the performance of each business section by its outcomes to promote sustainable business management

There are two methods to reflect the evaluation of the performance of a business

section by its outcomes to promote sustainability business management onto the total performance of the business section. One is to adopt the designated index or framework for evaluation of all the sectors, and another is to devise special indicators for each section. An example of the former case is to specify a corporate-wide philanthropic index for evaluating all the sections. Another example of the latter case is to evaluate the performance based on the special action plan for each business section that was formulated in accordance with the corporate strategy or material topics.

iv) Encouraging the middle management to share their successes and difficulties with each other

It is important to arrange the corporate culture for the middle management to mutually share their experiences of achievements and difficulties or to cooperate to overcome new challenges. Examples of these processes found in the interviews were to arrange meetings to discuss the next projects with other colleagues or with executive members, or to facilitate opportunities to exchange information or knowhow between the middle management of different branches in a corporation or of different companies in the same local area. Another choice should be to encourage others to join social networks or events planned by entities outside of the corporation.

v) Supporting the middle management to develop associated empathy and actual change in behaviors for sustainable business management within their section in charge

Interesting cases were found in the interviews to promote steady improvement of sustainability business management. One was a program in which a corporation provides coaching for the middle management at first, and then, makes the members disseminate the concept with all employees. Another was a program to compile and distribute a set of tools for explaining the corporate principles to their associates. In these cases, the integrated reports will work as a useful vehicle since they contain concise information about the total image and current progresses of the sustainability business

management.

(2) Commitment by the Top Management as the Condition so that the three Major Framework Measures Produce Anticipated Results

It is critical for the executives and the top management to repeatedly deliver messages of commitment to promote sustainability business management with determined resolution. The most practical way to perform the process is to keep discussing sustainability business management among the top executive members and to direct ongoing projects or additional programs by themselves. One typical way to exhibit the commitment of the top executives is to preside over a project to renew and disseminate its corporate strategies. On the other hand, opportunities for engagements with stakeholders do work efficiently to motivate the executive members.

Chapter 3: Proposals to Develop Associated Empathy and Change of Actions by Employees for Promoting Corporate Sustainability Business Management

It is recommended that corporations make use of the step-by-step approach to implement programs for sustainability business management, while taking into account the current status and business circumstances of the corporation and introducing the approach with trial and error in the middle and long-term timeframe. The major goal of this approach is that the concept of sustainability business management will be accepted not only by the headquarters section in charge of its promotion but also by business operation sections, and that the corporate employees take sustainability topics as the targets of themselves and act accordingly by themselves.

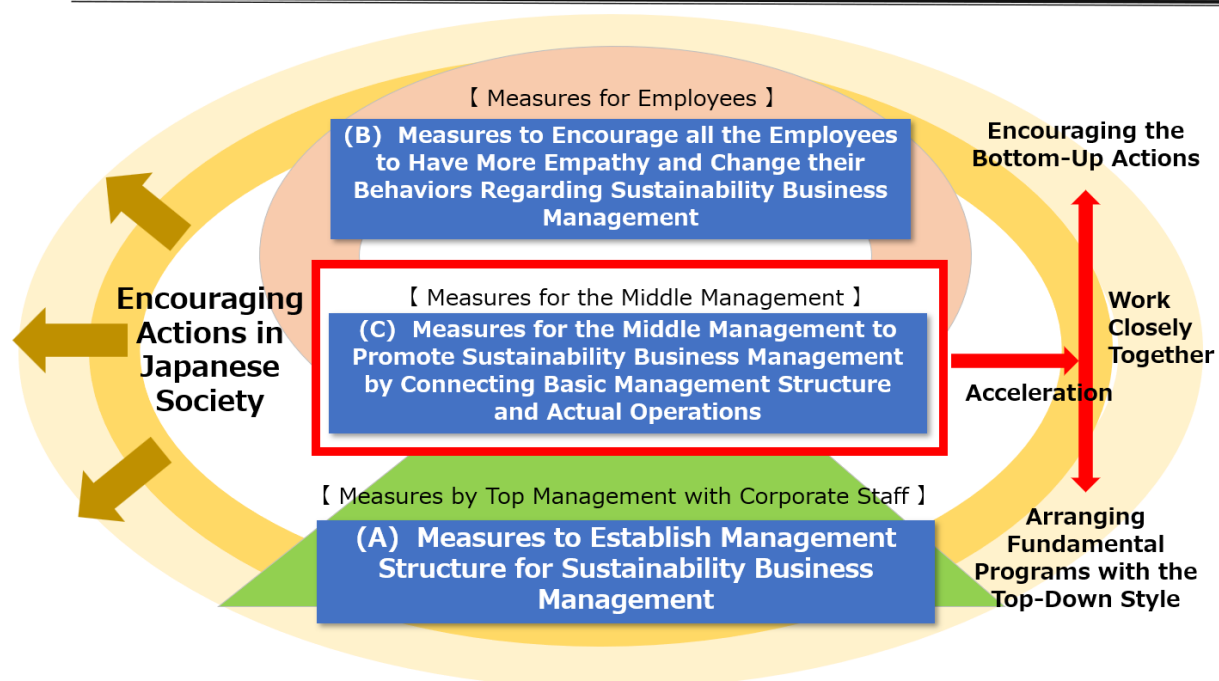
The process of achieving the goal will generate momentum for "rotating the cycle" of

creating new business opportunities, acquiring talented people, and receiving a good reputation from stakeholders, and also, lead to continuous value creation of a corporation. This is why it is important to accelerate to implement the three major framework measures in parallel, which are, 1) arranging fundamental program in a top-down manner, 2) encouraging practical activities with a bottom-up style, and 3) motivating the middle management. In addition, it is significant for society to cultivate a trend to promote sustainability business management by not only corporations but also the government, business associations and academia to upgrade the thinking of every citizen who constitutes an important part of Japanese society.

The following points are proposed to corporations and related stakeholders in order to accelerate associated empathy and behavior improvement of employees that lead to better corporate sustainability business management.

Chart-2

**Background Idea of the Major Framework Measures
to Promote Sustainability Business Management**



(1) Proposals to Corporations

(a) Enhancing Associated Empathy and Behavior Improvement of Employees through a combination of Top-down and Bottom-up Programs Based on the Leadership of the Top Management

It is the role of the top management to take the lead in forwarding basic policies of sustainability business management. In this process, the implementing side members and the supervising side members within the top management should cooperate with each other. As the first stage to enhance associated empathy, a top-down approach to make employees understood and persuaded is needed. As the next process to improve behaviors of employees, the essential element is to develop a corporate culture to boost positive actions of employees by trusting their intention, guiding their motivation and appreciating or praising their behavior.

The top management is expected to assume the role of accelerating the momentum to develop sustainability business management through timely intervention, or support the move by choosing a top-down manner, bottom-up manner or horizontal-extension manner depending on the situation. Actions of the top management for enhancing individual initiative and inner motivation are also effective to promote expansion of bottom-up actions or continuous movement of employees.

(b) Developing Sustainability Business Management of the Whole Corporation by Enhancing Behavior Improvement of the Middle Management as the Key Player

Middle management is the position that takes the role to materialize the corporate principles or strategies into concrete business projects in each business section. Without this process of materialization that links anticipated actions to each business section or its function, employees would improve their actions. Deep understanding by the middle management of the business direction of the top management is a key factor in proper decision making by the middle management to earn short-term profits while envisioning middle and long-term returns.

In order to accelerate improvement of behaviors of employees, it is, therefore, important to increase opportunities for communication to share the ideas of the top management with the middle management, and to devise in-house rules to take the performances of middle management in materializing the corporate principles or strategies into account of the evaluation of the section. Support programs are also recommended to share experiences of challenges or troubles among the middle management.

(c) Updating In-house System to Evaluate Performances or to Devise Indicators According to the Current Condition of Achievement while Arranging a Corporate Environment for Promoting Sustainability Business Management

An established corporate culture to welcome employees' proposals for various issues and to allow flexible work styles is an important factor in arranging an environment for employees to extend positive and self-directed actions. Another idea for vitalizing the corporate environment is to increase employment of new people who relate to the corporate purpose. Appropriate measures to upgrade the in-house management structure may vary depending on the business field and scale, or geographical areas of business transactions. However, it is required for a corporation to organize a fundamental management structure in order to achieve reenforced collaboration between its business sectors over the boundaries, or to establish suitable sections in charge to take roles to tackle new targets or to arrange engagements with stakeholders. This kind of management structure should be organized based on the condition of each corporation. A typical rule is that the special section in charge of sustainability business management leads a series of related activities at an early stage, and then, the system is transformed into the decentralized type at the next stage when business operation sections develop respective actions for sustainability business management sufficiently.

Measuring the outcomes of programs to enhance associated empathy and improve behaviors is critical for evaluating the effects of promoting sustainability business management, which will also be beneficial for advancing business performance. It is desirable to promote further actions by reflecting the results of existing projects into the next programs through developing appropriate indexes and measuring the real effects of existing projects. This process would be

upgraded through conducting employee surveys, or by visualizing the relationship between financial figures and non-financial conditions.

(2) Proposals to Stakeholders

(a) The Government's Action to Enhance Further Development of Corporate Competitiveness that would be Generated from Sustainability Business Management by Arranging Well Balanced Policies of Regulations and Incentives in Appropriate Coordination with Private Sector

The Japanese government is asked to improve the business environment that constructs the basis of continuous growth and international competitiveness for Japanese corporations through introducing incentives or regulations at appropriate occasions together with close checking of the related rules around the world. The business environment should not solely be organized by the activities of each corporation or by employees' motivation.

The government has a lot of roles to perform in the current social tide when corporations try to enhance associated empathy and improvement in behaviors of employees as well as to advance their competitiveness. The policies expected of the government are to explore the best policy mix between introducing legal regulations and encouraging individual corporate actions, and are to develop existing support programs furthermore, while checking the result of both policies and harmonizing them with overseas programs or international standards.

At the same time, the government is required to establish and promote elaborate policies for sustainability business management based on the real condition of the corporate businesses. These policies include collaborated policy making between the government and private sectors, arrangement of standards for performance evaluation or information disclosure, or incorporation of sustainability factors in government procurement rules. This is because the wide introduction of sustainability business management among corporations needs implementation in the value chains in Japanese society.

(b) Actions of All the Players in Japanese Society to Generate the Circumstances to Promote Sustainability Business Management

Some research reports show that Japanese society maintains a lower level of risk on sustainability targets than other developed societies. This is why various parties in Japanese society should now move to act at the same time to upgrade their level of risk on the sustainability targets, to develop the appropriate conscience for sustainability business management in Japan, and to encourage consumers or employees to make efforts to contribute to construct a sustainable society.

One of the major programs to deal with these targets is to introduce and develop educational courses in school programs on the fundamental background of sustainability targets. That will lead to cultivating awareness and initiatives for problems involved and to encourage students to be self-directed promoters of sustainability business management in business society.

Corporate employees are expected to join in related activities positively because they are the leading players in the modern economy and society. They are advised to participate in the activities of corporate programs for sustainability or become members of social programs outside of the corporate operations.

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