

# Information Pack

## Unit-525

### Improving and Maintaining the Organisation's Environmental Performance



## INTRODUCTION

Organisations today find themselves operating in an environment that is quick changing. The process of analysing the implications of these changes and modifying the way that the organisation reacts to them is known as business strategy.

*'Strategy is the direction and scope of an organisation over the long term, which achieves advantage in a changing environment through its configuration of resources and competences'*

(Johnson et al, 2009)

While your role as a manager is unlikely to require you to make decisions at the strategic level, you may be asked to contribute to meetings where strategic concerns are being discussed. You may be asked to comment on pilot schemes, presentations, reports, or statistics that will affect strategy.

Small changes can make a big difference to the environmental impact of your workplace, but going 'green' doesn't just benefit the planet. An organisation which is serious about sustainability could improve its reputation with customers and save as much as 20% on its energy bills.

This information pack will explain environmental sustainability and the effects on organisations. It will break down strategic processes that will allow you to identify external factors within the environment that could have an impact on your organisation. This pack will also explore current legislative requirements and codes of practice can have an impact on an organisation and its strategic direction.

Organisations' activities and actions can have positive or negative consequences for their stakeholders, society and the environment. In order to take their ethical reputations seriously, organisations need to acknowledge these impacts, demonstrate their accountability through greater consultation, transparency and reporting, and put measures in place to enable them to become more socially responsible.

## GUIDANCE

This document is prepared to break the unit material down into bite size chunks. You will see the learning outcomes above treated in their own sections. Therein you will encounter the following structures:

### Purpose

Explains *why* you need to study the current section of material. Quite often learners are put off by material which does not initially seem to be relevant to a topic or profession. Once you understand the importance of new learning or theory you will embrace the concepts more readily.

### Theory

Conveys new material to you in a straightforward fashion. To support the treatments in this section you are strongly advised to follow the given hyperlinks, which may be useful documents or applications on the web.

### Example

The examples/worked examples are presented in a knowledge-building order. Make sure you follow them all through. If you are feeling confident then you might like to treat an example as a question, in which case cover it up and have a go yourself. Many of the examples given resemble assignment questions which will come your way, so follow them through diligently.

### Question

Questions should not be avoided if you are determined to learn. Please do take the time to tackle each of the given questions, in the order in which they are presented. The order is important, as further knowledge and confidence is built upon previous knowledge and confidence. As an Online Learner it is important that the answers to questions are immediately available to you. Contact your Unit Tutor if you need help.

### Challenge

You can really cement your new knowledge by undertaking the challenges. A challenge could be to download software and perform an exercise. An alternative challenge might involve a practical activity or other form of research.

### Video

Videos on the web can be very useful supplements to your distance learning efforts. Wherever an online video(s) will help you then it will be hyperlinked at the appropriate point.

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SAMPLE

## Defining Environmental Sustainability

Environmental sustainability is defined as responsible interaction with the environment to avoid depletion or degradation of natural resources and allow for long-term environmental quality. The practice of environmental sustainability helps to ensure that the needs of today's population are met without jeopardizing the ability of future generations to meet their needs.

When we look at the natural environment, we see that it has a rather remarkable ability to rejuvenate itself and sustain its viability. For example, when a tree falls, it decomposes, adding nutrients to the soil. These nutrients help sustain suitable conditions so future saplings can grow.

When nature is left alone, it has a tremendous ability to care for itself. However, when man enters the picture and uses many of the natural resources provided by the environment, things change. Human actions can deplete natural resources, and without the application of environmental sustainability methods, long-term viability can be compromised.

Carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) is the main man-made contributor to global warming. In recent years, government, business and industry have come to realise that drastic action must be taken to reduce global CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. Reports such as the Stern Review on the Economics of Climate Change bring this need into stark relief: doing nothing is not an option.

## The Threat of Climate Change

The latest estimates suggest that if global greenhouse gas emissions continue at their current rate, the planet's temperature could rise somewhere between 1.5% and 6% by 2100.

Even the smallest temperature increase can have marked effects on the weather, some of which are already being experienced, e.g.:

- less seasonal variation, with warmer winters and hotter summers
- an increase in extreme weather conditions, such as storms and heavy rainfall

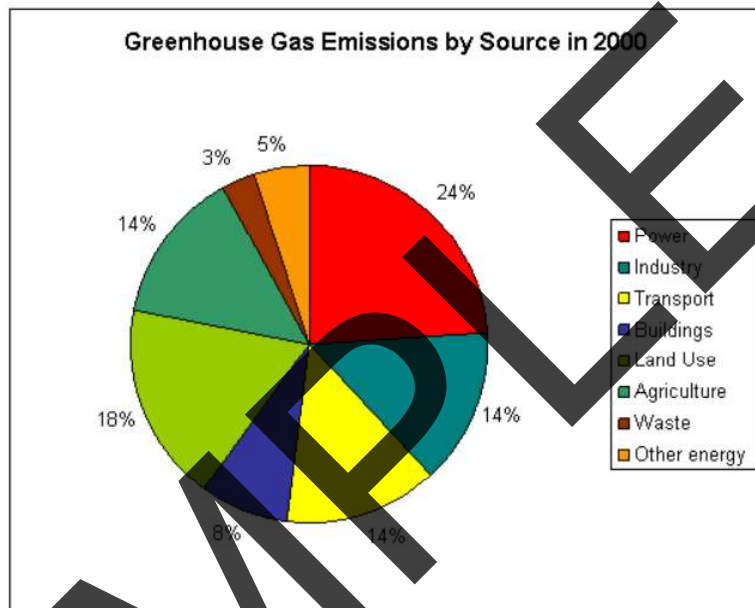
Such changes have already led to unprecedented problems with flooding, which has had a devastating impact on domestic households, businesses, and agriculture.

According to the Stern Review, the long-term prognosis is not good:

**'Climate change threatens the basic elements of life for people around the world – access to water, food production, health and use of land and the environment.'**

## Greenhouse Gas Emissions

When addressing the problem of climate change, it is important to understand where environmentally harmful emissions come from. The chart below shows the main sources of global greenhouse gas emissions, of which CO<sub>2</sub> is the biggest constituent part.



Source: The Stern Review Executive Summary, p. iv.

Despite having only 5% of the world's population, the US is responsible for around 25% of global CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. The UK, meanwhile, is responsible for approximately 13%. Around one half of the UK's emissions are generated by the industrial and commercial sectors. The Carbon Trust classifies these emissions into the following different types:

- **Direct emissions** that result from an organisation's operations, e.g. on-site combustion of fuels, and emissions caused by business travel and company vehicles.
- **Indirect emissions** throughout an organisation's supply chain, e.g. procurement of raw materials, gas and electricity supplies, and even employee commuting.

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