

# Organizational disruption using sustainability programs

Cycle Innovation &  
Connaissance conference  
March 15, 2018

# SK

Using narrative to support sustainability strategies



“what the sustainability agenda does in its fullest sense,  
if it lives and breathes in your organization,  
it gives you that link with reality to say well actually  
this is what we are about,  
this is what we do,  
these are the things that we feel are right and  
this is an articulation of our values,  
this is an articulation of what we think is important...”

# Implementing a sustainability strategy is a disruption



# Building legitimacy

- Macro-level (business environment)
- Meso-level (business ecosystem)
- Micro-level (business)



# Building strategy as writing exercise



# Narrative is...







# Epic content





# The Sustainability Persona

- Is passionate
- Takes initiative
- Uses logic and passion vs. authority
- Is humble and inclusive
- Encourages dialogue

SK

- Right Livelihood vs. Lack of Purpose
- Order vs. Disorder
- Life vs. Death
- Cost of action vs. Risk of inaction

SK

# Right Livelihood vs. Lack of Purpose

About the sustainability work:

“...is just a need in our workforce to do something over and above just driving financial results”

“...was done because people were I think passionate about doing the right thing”

“When you work for a [large multinational] company...people just presume you are out there churning up the world’s resources and not caring...the fact that I am involved in making some proper changes and the fact that [we are] committed to it at the highest levels makes a very big difference.”

“...we write our policies afterwards, we do the practice first and then we find a policy to fit”

“...the policies really have been born out of issues...we have uncovered whilst sourcing products...if we know about it we can be open about it, we can talk about it. If we don't know about it...we can't defend our position and that is when it is difficult. So that is why we encourage all of our vendors to actually tell us if they have got particular issues.”

“...we have rules for things...your timber has to be compliant with timber policy and that would be a kind of rule that stops you buying non sustainable timber...”

“...it goes beyond reputational risk it is a question again about having a license to operate...”

“...this is an area of development and real potential...the next generation aren't going to want to work...for a big multinational...we are seeing a much more dynamic workforce that want to know what business are behaving in a responsible way. So [sustainability] is a critical part for hiring key talent and ensuring that we are really attracting and maintaining a very agile and committed workforce...”

“I think because we have always been quite honest about the difficulties, so when we have talked to Greenpeace or to whoever, we have said it is not the perfect system but it is the very best that is available...having those discussions with as many people as possible, so we talk to [everyone], the engagement is very very wide.”

“You can’t recommend a product as being green and wonderful unless you know everything about the supply chain because you could say this is a wonderful product but it could be manufactured in sweatshops or something along those lines so that then smacks the whole credibility of that particular product.”



## **Support is**

- Built internally through diffusion of persona
- Spread through narrative
- Dynamized by binaries that communicate a sense of urgency
- Built through strategic internal and external dialogue

# Isomorphism



- Narratives narrow which organizational actions make sense
- Shared meanings come from shared reality
- Bringing founding myths to organizational consciousness
- Re-committment to revitalized myth
- Re-mythologizing

Narrative is powerful



Thank you!

[melea.press@skema.edu](mailto:melea.press@skema.edu)