

Sustainability: Going the green way

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The four key speakers on the first day of the Environomics seminar agreed on a single theme — involve people and invest in technology for the good of the business and the planet.



“Environomics is a term to describe the belief and practice of incorporating sustainable principles into business practices.”

These were the words with which Mr. Jagrat Mankad, Head, Corporate Technical and Energy Services, rang the opening bell for the seminar on ‘Environomics: Greener Footprint; Sustainable Growth’ held at Gyanodaya on June 5 and 6, 2013.

Environomics, according to Mr. Mankad, is the willingness to adopt the process of becoming a partner with the environment. “It makes good sense for companies to take care of the environment because adopting green practices reduces utility costs, reduces the environmental impact of the business, which in turn reduces the liabilities on the business. Also, eco-friendly companies are viewed as responsible and innovative in the eyes of the stakeholders,” he added.

The Aditya Birla Group’s sustainability initiatives are noteworthy for an Indian company. “In the 2011-12 fiscal, the Aditya Birla Group has saved substantial amounts of energy which is equivalent to 300,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide emission. The Group’s energy conservation activities have resulted in a step sustainable growth. Savings to the tune of \$16 million per annum has been received by way of energy conservation activities,” Mr. Mankad said.

Despite these efforts, there is still a long way to go for the Aditya Birla Group before it can be called a sustainable business, Mr. Mankad said, while urging people to work together and support and promote environomics to enhance the Group's competitiveness.

People power



Mr. Jagdish Ramaswamy, President, Corporate World Class Manufacturing, started his talk with a more personal appeal — calling on employees to make sustainability a practice at work and at home, by preventing food waste.

"This year's Environment Day theme is about reducing our 'foodprint'," he said, adding, "around 1.3 billion tonnes of food is wasted, which can feed around 870 million hungry people. All this needs to be taken into consideration while we discuss economics and sustainability for business. As citizens of this world, we also have a responsibility to reduce food waste. So, wherever you can, please influence this change — serve Mother Earth and the 20,000 children who go hungry every year by stopping food waste."

Expanding on the definition of sustainability, Mr. Ramaswamy said, "It is important for us to recognise that sustainability does not only mean doing good business and making money. It also means taking care of the people around us."

Drawing a connection between excellence and the sustainability, Mr. Ramaswamy added that no matter how many processes and cost-efficiencies are introduced and no matter how customer-centric the Group becomes, excellence cannot be achieved unless it starts with people, that is, unless people decide to bring in the change. "To me, the core of

sustainability is the individual. Sustainability has to become an integral part of business excellence. We shouldn't be doing it because somebody is forcing us, but because whatever we save today will benefit our children and their children," he added.

Mr. Ramaswamy ended his speech with a guiding principle for every person in the gathering, saying: "Every time you make a business decision, make sustainability a part of your decision-making tool. If we do that, we will definitely move forward. And it will not happen merely by having processes. We need to put people in it too."

Creating green technologies



The lifestyle choices of people and their impact on the environment was one of the points made by Mr. **Biswajit Basu**, Joint Executive President, Aditya Birla Science and Technology Company (ABSTC). He began by talking about the great challenges that sustainability faces from both industrial emissions and increasing consumption and what the Aditya Birla Group needs to do to become a more sustainable business.

The Group, he said, must focus on making the renewable energy platform a big commercial success. "The team at ABSTC is working closely with businesses to help them adopt green technologies, and convert hazardous waste into non-hazardous waste. We are also collaborating with laboratories and universities to develop, among other things, a low-cost solar aluminium refractor for solar thermal energy and solar pumps for rural projects. Sustainability is a key driver at ABSTC and around 20 per cent of our projects are to do with sustainability," Mr. Basu added.

Protecting the Earth

Continuing with the theme of how people are central to sustainability, **Mr. Roger D'Souza**, CEO, ABSTC, and Chief Technology Officer of the Aditya Birla Group, gave certain action items for the attendees. "One of the observations I have made here today is that there are very few women in this gathering, which is troubling," he said. "And when we talk about protecting our Earth now for our children tomorrow, I will tell you that women will work passionately, much more than many men, to make that happen. So, an action item is to involve more women in such gatherings."



Urging the attendees to harness technology to benefit the business and the Earth, he said: "Today, we have the education and the ability to come up with technologies that can not only enhance business, but also make it less polluting."

Mr D'Souza also spurred the gathering to take up a challenge: "I want to set a challenge for the Aditya Birla Group. We are a very big manufacturing Group, the biggest utility users, biggest consumers, polluters, etc. The challenge, therefore, is to improve the environment for us."

Before concluding his speech, Mr. D'Souza added a 'little award' to his list of action items — a plaque — to be given to the employees who work together on finding ways that will not only help the Group run a sustainable business and leave behind a greener, better planet for our future generations.