

Case Study

Sustainable Brands: San Diego

Bard MBA in Sustainability | PPWA

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Case Study: Ross Video – Internal Resistance to Sustainability Initiatives

Context:

Ross Video is a mid-sized media equipment manufacturing company known for its innovative products, but its sustainability efforts are lagging behind industry standards. Recently, the company has been losing clients who are prioritizing suppliers with strong environmental credentials. The CEO decides to launch an internal initiative to align operations with sustainability principles, aiming to reduce waste, lower emissions, and improve energy efficiency.

However, the initiative has been met with resistance from key department heads. They argue that sustainability will increase costs and disrupt operations, especially in manufacturing and supply chain processes. The CEO is concerned about the company's competitiveness but doesn't know how to address the internal pushback while making the business case for sustainability.

Your Task:

You and your group are sustainability consultants hired by Ross Video to identify the key competencies needed to overcome this resistance and successfully implement the sustainability initiative. Use the analysis framework provided to structure your solution.

Analysis Framework

1. **Step 1: Identify the Core Challenge (5 minutes)**
 - a. Discuss and answer the following prompts:
 - What is the main barrier preventing Ross Video from implementing its sustainability initiative?
 - Is it financial (cost concerns)?
 - Is it operational (fear of disruption)?
 - Is it cultural (lack of understanding or buy-in)?
 - Why is this a problem for the company? (Consider client loss, reputation, and competitiveness.)
2. **Step 2: Competency Identification (10 minutes)**
 - a. Review the list of core sustainability competencies below. As a group, identify the 2-3 competencies that are most important to address Ross Video's challenge. Discuss why these competencies are needed and how they would be applied.

3. **Core Competencies:**

- **Systems Thinking:** Understanding how the sustainability initiative impacts different parts of the company (e.g., production, supply chain, marketing).
- **Stakeholder Engagement:** Engaging resistant department heads and other internal stakeholders to gain buy-in.
- **Financial Acumen:** Building a business case that demonstrates cost savings, efficiency gains, or new revenue streams from sustainability.
- **Change Management:** Facilitating the transition to more sustainable practices without disrupting core operations.
- **Communication & Influence:** Persuading stakeholders by framing sustainability as a competitive advantage and addressing their concerns.

4. **Optional Prompts for Discussion:**

- Which departments are most resistant, and how can stakeholder engagement help bring them on board?
- How could financial acumen be used to demonstrate the business case for sustainability?
- Where might systems thinking help identify positive operational impacts across the company?

5. **Step 3: Action Plan (10 minutes)**

- a. Based on the competencies you selected, develop 2-3 actionable steps that Ross Video should take to overcome internal resistance and implement the sustainability initiative. These actions should directly leverage the competencies identified in Step 2.

6. **Optional Discussion Prompts:**

- How will you engage the resistant department heads? (e.g., one-on-one meetings, workshops, collaborative planning sessions)
- What financial metrics or data will you use to build a convincing business case? (e.g., savings from energy efficiency, return on investment from sustainable products)
- What change management strategies can you use to minimize operational disruptions? (e.g., phased implementation, pilot programs, training and support)

7. **Step 4: Presentation (2-3 minutes per group)** Each group presents their findings:

- **Core Challenge:** What is the main challenge?
- **Key Competencies:** Which competencies are most important and why?
- **Action Plan:** What steps will the company take, and how do these leverage the identified competencies?