



SUSTAINABLE HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT IN THE POSTAL SECTOR – EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

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Abstract: The postal sector has a leading position and many innovations in global corporate sustainability. Thanks to the success of the Environmental Measurement and Monitoring System (EMMS), the sector is considered a pioneer in carbon management. In order to maintain this position, the program must extend and align its program and goals with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). 19 postal companies, as program stakeholders, launched the next phase of the program - The Sustainability Measurement and Management System (SMMS). In response, many postal companies have already set strategies and started working on topics that support sustainable development goals. The paper presents best practices of postal companies in meeting the sustainable development goals.

Keywords: postal sector sustainability, sustainable development goals, sustainable human resources management, employee engagement

Introduction

Sustainability aimed at meeting current needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs is a current topic of the 21st century. The sustainability concept, based on three pillars, economic, environmental and social, is also relevant for companies operating in the postal sector. The sustainability strategy is an important part of the development strategy of many postal companies. Today, the strategic development goals of postal companies are not only concerned with environmental issues, but also pay attention to the sustainable human resources management. Employee health and safety, decent work, training and employee development are an important part of the sustainable development of postal companies.

Sustainability in the postal sector

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015, provides a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future. At its heart are the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are an urgent call for action by all countries - developed and developing - in a global partnership. They recognize that ending poverty and other deprivations must go hand-

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in-hand with strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality, and spur economic growth – all while tackling climate change and working to preserve our oceans and forests [1].

The postal sector has a leading position and many innovations in the field of global corporate sustainability. Thanks to the success of the Environmental Measurement and Monitoring System (EMMS), the sector is considered a pioneer in carbon management. However, the message of the stakeholders is clear: in order to maintain this position, the program needs to extend and align its program goals with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) [2].

IPC's Environmental Measurement and Monitoring System (EMMS) programme is a sector-wide initiative acting to mitigate the postal industry's contribution to global warming. It takes a collaborative approach to reducing carbon emissions and improving carbon management. The EMMS programme was developed in 2008 in response to stakeholder and CEO requests for the postal sector to minimise its carbon footprint. This was a result of concerns regarding the contribution of the sector to greenhouse gas emissions. The EMMS programme is a global initiative, consisting of 19 participants from four regions – Africa, Asia-Pacific, Europe and North America: An Post (Ireland), Australian Postal Corp (Australia), Austrian Post (Austria), bpost (Belgium), Correos (Spain), CTT Portugal Post (Portugal), Deutsche Post DHL Group (Germany), Le Groupe La Poste (France), New Zealand Post Group (New Zealand), POST Luxembourg (Luxembourg), Poste Italiane (Italy), Posten Norge (Norway), Posti (Finland), PostNL (The Netherlands), PostNord (Denmark & Sweden), Royal Mail Group (United Kingdom), South African Post Office (South Africa), Swiss Post (Switzerland), United States Postal Service (United States).

The original EMMS targets were set in 2009 following a pilot in 2008. The original 20 participants of the programme collectively set ambitious targets to be achieved by 2020, compared to the 2008 baseline:

- To reduce combined carbon emissions from own operations by 20% – achieved in 2014.
- To achieve a score of at least 90% in carbon management proficiency – achieved in 2018.

Both targets were met before the 2020 target year. In 2014, the group achieved its carbon emissions target, six years ahead of schedule. As of 2018, the group has reduced annual Scope 1 and 2 emissions by 27% compared with 2008. Participants collectively agreed on a delivery efficiency target, measuring the carbon emissions associated with each delivery, and also expanding the scope to include outsourced transport:

- To achieve a 20% reduction in Scope 1, 2 and 3 (from own operations and outsourced transport) carbon emissions per letter mail and per parcel by 2025, from a 2013 baseline year [3].

Sustainability Measurement and Management System (SMMS)

The global sustainability agenda has evolved significantly since the launch of the EMMS programme in 2008. Developments such as the Paris Agreement and the setting of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) demonstrated an appetite for international cooperation. Following ten years of reporting on carbon emissions and carbon management, the group now launch to the next phase of the programme – the Sustainability Monitoring and Measurement System (SMMS). In response, many postal companies have already set strategies and begun working on themes that further the aims of the SDGs. Together,

stakeholders and participants identified the following five SDGs that are most relevant to the postal sector:

- SDG 8 - Decent work and economic growth
- SDG 9 - Industry, innovation and infrastructure
- SDG 11 - Sustainable cities and communities
- SDG 12 - Responsible consumption and production
- SDG 13 - Climate action

Each SDG has several sub-targets. The participants agreed on seven operational areas on which to focus their future programme:

- **Health and safety**
Decent work and economic growth (SDG 8)
- **Learning and development**
Decent work and economic growth (SDG 8)
- **Resource efficiency**
Industry, innovation and infrastructure (SDG 9)
- **Climate change**
Climate action (SDG 13)
- **Air quality**
Sustainable cities and communities (SDG 11)
- **Circular economy**
Sustainable cities and communities (SDG 11)
- **Sustainable procurement**
Responsible consumption and production (SDG 12) [4].

Sustainable human resources management – employee engagement

Employees of postal companies have been actively engaged in meeting the sustainability goals defined in the sustainability strategies of individual postal operators. Employee interest in these activities is increasing significantly (Figure 1). They receive training, engage in sustainability projects solved, promote sustainability awareness [4].



Fig.1 Employee engagement of postal companies on the SMMS program [4]

Deutsche Post DHL Group (DPDHL) has launched a training programme for its over half a million employees to accelerate a cultural change within the company and support the goal of becoming a zero-emissions logistics company by 2050. The aim of the programme "Mission 2050" is to educate employees on the overall context of climate change, understand the Group's climate protection strategy and actively contribute to achieving the target. By 2025, DPDHL Group plans to train 80% of its employees as Certified GoGreen Specialists. The curriculum is modular to account for different roles, working environments and knowledge levels. The foundation module is the same for everyone; it conveys basic

knowledge about climate change, the Group's climate protection strategy, the Group-wide climate protection programme GoGreen and concrete actions everyone can take to reduce their carbon footprint. There are additional, advanced modules for different divisions and functions, which provide employees with specific knowledge on how to be more carbon efficient in their roles. The vision the Group pursues with the educational employee programme is to build a GoGreen Specialist culture where employees are inspired to adopt a GoGreen mindset and are capable of supporting the achievement of Mission 2050 [4].

Poste Italiane empowering people through sustainability insights. In 2017, Poste Italiane's corporate Mobility Management unit produced an e-book entitled *Perché muoversi in modo sostenibile?* (i.e. Why should we opt for a sustainable mobility?). This e-book illustrates a series of best practices and economic advantages linked to more environmentally sustainable lifestyles, aimed at promoting greater awareness and sustainable mobility amongst Poste Italiane's employees. The e-book is free and colleagues are encouraged to share these insights with their communities, thereby empowering a greater number of people to make more sustainable mobility choices. In 2018, a second edition of the e-book is due to be released. This knowledge sharing builds on Poste Italiane's 150-year history and aligns its reputation with progress, innovation and care for the community. Poste Italiane has introduced the 'Poste Pedala' (Post & Ride) initiative to encourage not only bicycle commuting for employees at its head office in Rome, but also the further use of the bicycle in their urban mobility. The initiative promotes sustainable mobility using an existing mobility portal on the company's intranet site. The portal is integrated with a mobile app to calculate distances travelled and rank participating employees, encouraging friendly competition. It is estimated that the initiative could save around 54.1 tonnes of CO₂ emissions per year [3].

As one of Finland's biggest employers, Posti can have a positive influence on the local sustainability agenda and act as an example to others. As a large company, Posti plays an important role in promoting environmentally-friendly logistics. The company has a target to reduce emissions by 30% by 2020. In the autumn of 2018, Posti organised "Climate workout", a climate-themed training week, in cooperation with the Helsinki Environmental Services Authority (HSY). During the week, staff received simple and inspiring advice via various digital channels on climate-friendly everyday activities for mobility, food, living and consumption. Employees across the company participated in the training both in-person at Posti's headquarters and remotely. During the week, employees were informed about electric and gas vehicles, renewable fuels, and were able to test Posti's electric scooters and bikes. There was also a small pop-up shop for cycling supplies in the lobby. Over 2,000 Posti employees took part in the training week [4].

With over 30,000 employees, PostNord is one of the Nordic region's largest employers and plays a major role in key social functions in the region. PostNord aims to offer an attractive, stimulating workplace, to develop employee commitment levels, and safeguard employee health. The company also strives for gender equality, with a long-term target for the underrepresented gender to make up 40% of managerial positions. The PostNord Driver Academy project operates in collaboration with the Swedish Public Employment Service and with the support of the Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth. The purpose of the project is to build a model for achieving self-sufficiency in drivers, while providing stable employment for disadvantaged groups. The Academy aims to recruit long-term unemployed and recent immigrants. Women are a group the company is specifically trying to recruit. In parallel, working closely with trainee drivers, the company is investing in an app-based Swedish language course called Lingio. The course is focusing on the language used in transport and logistics and is intended to help both recent arrivals and native speakers to improve their language skills. Lingio will eventually be made available to other companies across the country. The Driver Academy opened in October 2018, initially training 13 drivers

in the city of Örebro. The scheme is being rolled out to ten other locations across Sweden. Eight pupils will complete their driving training in Umeå in September 2019 and later in the Autumn, 11 new drivers will begin their training in Sundsvall. Initial feedback has been positive [4].

In October 2017, bpost entered into an innovative €300m revolving credit facility (RCF) agreement with a variable interest rate that reflects the organisation's sustainability performance. The loan, the first of its kind in Belgium, is structured so that there is a correlation between bpost's sustainability score (evaluated by an independent third party) and the loan's interest rate. Therefore, bpost is incentivised to further improve its sustainability performance in order to lower the interest rate. In utilising this flexible financial tool, bpost's sustainability agenda is further embedded into the organisation's operations and ethos. Based on a stakeholder consultation and materiality assessment, bpost has defined its wider Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) strategy and its potential impact on the sustainability score, around three main pillars [3]:

- People: care about its employees and engage them with sustainability;
- Planet: strive to reduce its impact on the environment;
- Proximity: engage with the community it serves.

The aim is common value creation: business continuity, employee satisfaction and engagement, customer satisfaction (Figure 2).

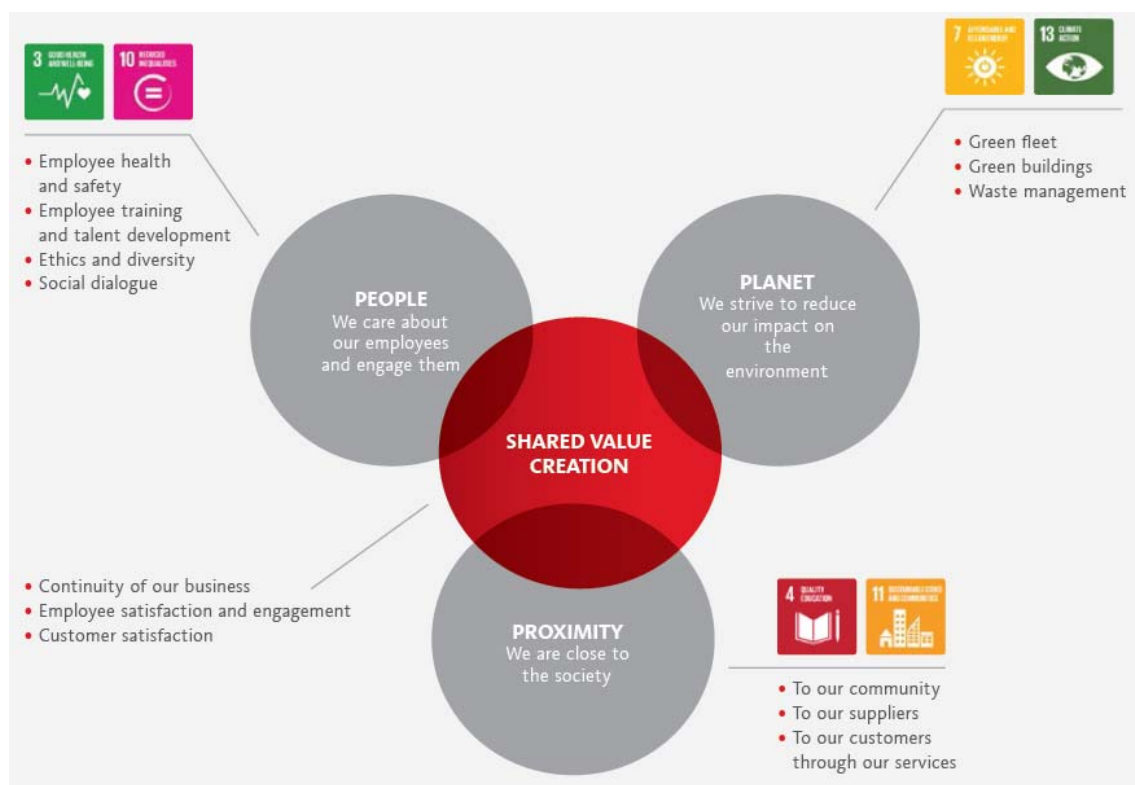


Fig. 2 Embedding CSR and introducing innovative programmes such as RCF into corporate operations and culture of bpost [3]

bpost, Belgium's largest postal service, plays a major role in society, and it strives to be an organisation its customers can trust. Embedding its CSR strategy and introducing innovative programmes like the RCF into its corporate operations and culture will help it reach its ambition of sustainable growth and demonstrating sustainability leadership.

As part of its goal to reduce its carbon emissions, An Post plans to extend the use of electric vehicles in its fleet. The Irish postal operator is in the process of replacing all its diesel vehicles in the six major Irish cities (Dublin, Kilkenny, Waterford, Cork, Limerick and Galway) with electric vehicles, effectively delivering zero emission parcel delivery and e-commerce services. An Post has set itself the goal to be the greenest postal service in Europe by 2030 and is the first postal service worldwide to achieve ISO50001 certification for its entire operations. It currently delivers 2m items of mail using a road fleet of circa 2,800 vehicles and 1,600 bicycles, and over the next four years will replace 750 diesel vehicles with electric vehicles (Figure 3). The electric vehicles that have already entered service have realised savings of 12.2 kg CO₂e per 100km travelled and 25.2 kg CO₂e per 100km after investment in renewable electricity. The 220 vehicles needed to deliver zero emissions in all Irish cities will save 1.13 GWh of energy per annum at an average of 10,000 km per vehicle, and avoid emissions equivalent to 554,400 kg CO₂e after in renewable electricity. Alongside the reduction in CO₂ emissions, electric vehicles also reduce pollution and noise, while lower service and maintenance costs (including oil, tyres, brakes) reduce costs and payback time to fleet operations [4].

In order to address the environmental impact of last-mile deliveries, Spanish operator Correos and Correos Express have joined forces to implement a sustainable delivery programme. The Correos and Correos Express programmes integrating efficiencies and new technologies underpin its commitment to the environment and capacity for innovation. Correos implemented route optimisation systems and developed new delivery methods such as the CityPaq service, an automated collection point. These initiatives have engaged and brought satisfaction to employees, introduced more sustainable and cost-effective transport and reduced the environmental impact on local communities [3].



Fig. 3 An Post deploying electric vehicles to drive down emissions [4]

For Le Groupe La Poste, sustainability and innovation go hand in hand. France's postal operator has developed creative technological delivery solutions including a remote-controlled drone and an automated mail cart named Effibot. This automated mail cart was first tested in March 2017 in three cities, on five delivery rounds, with five different mail carriers. Equipped with sensors and able to carry up to 150 kg of parcels and letters, this autonomous cart accompanies the Postman/ postwoman during his/her delivery round and facilitates the work, stopping when they stop, circumventing obstacles and carefully avoiding pedestrians.

The Effibot is equipped with an electric battery and therefore produces no noise or local pollution. The DPDgroup drone (Figure 4) has operated since 2016 and is completely automated, with an average speed of 30 km/h, a 3 kg payload and a range of 20 km. The DPDgroup drone simplifies deliveries in secluded or difficult to access areas, and can facilitate deliveries in emergency situations, such as delivering medicine. These sustainable solutions are not only safer for employees and more efficient for customers. They are part of the new and innovative technologies that can help deliver environmental benefits and improve employees' working conditions [3].



Fig. 4 The DPDgroup drone simplifies deliveries in secluded or difficult to access areas [3]

The single largest source of greenhouse gas emissions in Norway is the transport sector. Posten Norge believes that collaboration across industries is necessary to reduce city emissions while at the same time meeting increasing transport needs. The company aims to reduce emissions from heavy goods vehicles and minimise local pollution by electrifying vehicles used in urban areas. In 2017, Posten Norge set a goal to be using only renewable energy sources in its vehicles by 2025. Posten Norge has entered into a partnership with waste management operator Ragn-Sells and other companies under the #Elskedby (beloved city) scheme in several cities in Norway and Sweden. The companies establish a joint city centre hub and collaborate by sharing electric vehicles (Figure 5). Each day, joint staff will drive fully-loaded vehicles into the city to deliver post, and use the same vehicle to collect waste, often from the same customers. By utilising common vehicles, emissions, traffic and noise are reduced. The #Elskedby scheme began in Stockholm in 2017 and has been expanded to Malmö. In Norway, the cooperation started in Oslo in April 2019. There is no rigid timeframe, but the scheme is ongoing, and the aim is to implement the concept in other cities across Norway and Sweden. In Stockholm, the scheme is well-established and has resulted in a 73% reduction in CO₂ emissions. The Oslo scheme is still in its early stages, but hopes are high that similar emission reductions can also be realised in the Norwegian capital [4].



Fig. 5 Sustainable city logistics in Norway [4]

Conclusion

The major trend which is likely to have a significant effect on the future of the postal sector, is sustainable growth and environmental policy. The postal sector affects the environment through at least two channels: the consumption of paper on the one hand, and CO₂ emissions from transportation and buildings' energy consumption on the other hand [5]. The postal companies are aware of their responsibility not only towards the society and environment but also towards employees and engage in sustainable human resource management. In particular, they consider the creation of the best working conditions for safety, health, social background and continuous education of employees. Postal companies are making considerable efforts to continually improve safety and health at work. Equally in the implementation of education and in the consistent application of the principles of diversity and equal opportunities. An open communication culture that encourages employee involvement in these processes and activities is, of course, a matter for postal companies. Every year, EMMS and SMMS demonstrate new and innovative ways of engaging employees in sustainability issues. Employee initiatives can have a combined effect that will benefit not only postal companies but also the workforce itself, thus supporting the SDG 8 - decent work and economic growth.

Postal sector is investing in the development of alternative services, innovative new features and the promotion of efficient delivery of postal items in order to meet evolving social, environmental and economic challenges. By providing sustainable employment and reducing the ecological footprint the postal sector can create solutions that meet customer needs both today and in the future.

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