

Focussing Innovation Strategy for Sustainability Chemical Industry as an example

Jan Venselaar, John J. Hageman

Avans University, research group Sustainable Business Operation

POBox 1097, 5004 Tilburg NL +31.13.5958190, email tertso.venselaar@planet.nl

Sustainable development must be the driving force for new developments in businesses. A major obstacle is that most, particularly SME's, find it difficult to evaluate how this must be incorporated in their business strategy. It is difficult to define the focus and to set adequate priorities for an innovation strategy in view of the complex character of sustainability and the many issues involved. For a practical sustainable business strategy a company must concentrate on a limited number of key sustainability areas and issues that are particular for that company in view of its character, products, location and ambitions.

The FOCISS method: 'Focussing Innovation Strategy for Sustainability' can assist here. It is based on a stepwise focussing approach for selecting consecutively the major areas of relevance, the major issues within these and the most promising (in view of economics and sustainability) innovations. It uses selection and reflection 'tools' adapted for this. The method was developed in close cooperation with industry, among them several chemical companies.

Sustainable development is 'translated' individually to something the company 'recognizes'. Thus a companies become much easier aware of the crucial importance of sustainability issues for their strategy and future profitability. The method promotes at the same time an extensive internal communication about the issues and views. That generates and strengthens the commitment within the company to really change course.