

THE OUTSIDE WORLD***Concept***

The Outside World, the environment, is composed by the external conditions, resources, stimuli etc. with which a Company interacts.

A business environment is the social, technological, economic and political environment in which a business functions. The business environment affects organizational decisions, strategies, processes and performance.

The internal business environment consists of customers, suppliers, employees, board of directors, creditors. The external environment consists of factors and forces which are beyond the control of the organization, such as the economic environment, technical environment, legal environment, political environment and cultural environment.

Objectives for Excellence

Relevant environmental indicators are identified, their results are regularly collected and recorded, and subsequent actions are taken.

The company co-operates sporadically with other companies or institutions in research projects, with budget assigned in a case by case basis.

There is a documented procedure to keep the information about technology permanently updated and there is somebody responsible for its operation.

Environmental indicators are consistently positive, showing the concern of the management about these matters.

There is a research unit in the company with a specific and significant budget attached to it, or alternatively there is a regular collaboration with companies or institutions to carry out research projects, with a specific budget entry attached to this activity.

Actions for implementation

The is company aware of its impact on the environment including possible acoustic, atmospheric water or other overall pollution effects, and it takes effective measures to reduce the negative effects on the environment.

The company is actively involved in the community progress, through positive actions like charity initiatives, volunteer activities, training or handicapped employment.

The organisation works on a regular basis with Technology Centres or Universities to carry out training, research or advisory activities.

The information channels about new technologies are well defined (technical publications, exhibitions, seminars, providers, customers) and exploit.

There is specific personnel with the responsibility of being permanently informed about the technology available in the market and distributing it within the organisation.

There is a documented procedure to keep the information on technology updated and is there anyone responsible for its functionality.

There is a research unit in the company, with a specific budget attached for research activities, including cooperation with external technological organisations.

Best practice¹

Think about

Social responsibility

Can a business be socially responsible? If it can be then criteria does it need to be to ensure that it is perceived in this manner? There are four areas that should be measured not matter what the outcome that is needed: Economic function, Quality of life, Social investment and Problem solving.

For instance if the business were to try to better the plant by reducing its carbon footprint; how would it go about doing this? (Carbon Footprint, 2006) Would it begin by doing something major like installing water heaters throughout the building or re-doing the building insulation? Or would they begin in small ways that would be more cost effective like mandating that parking lots lights are turned off at a certain time? Or that office computers all be turned off at the end of the workday instead of being left on and simply logged out.

Social investment looks at what the business is doing for the community. Does the business work with the community to fix outstanding issues and social problems? How much of an investment does it make? What issues are they addressing? To what depth are the problems that they are working to fix?

Open Innovation

- Not all smart people work for us so we must identify and tap into expertise outside our company.
- External R&D can create significant value; internal R&D is needed to claim some portion of that value.
- We might profit from research generated elsewhere, the most important is to build a better business model than our competitors'.
- If we make the best use of internal and external ideas we will win.
- We should make sure we profit from others' use of our IP, and we should buy others' IP if it advances our business.

¹ Real case coming from the experiences of InnoSME users, to be incorporated in the future.

Technological cooperation

Technology transfer is the process of transferring scientific findings from one organization to another for the purpose of further development and commercialization. The process typically includes:

- Identifying new technologies
- Protecting technologies through patents and copyrights
- Forming development and commercialization strategies such as marketing and licensing.

Protection

Data released by the UK Intellectual Property Office shows that 30 per cent of all patent applications in the first quarter of 2007 came from individuals looking to start their own businesses.

The Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) said that it was vital the government acted to help small businesses protect their intellectual property and inventions.

Small businesses produce sixty per cent of commercial innovations in the UK and it is vital to the country economic success that their ideas are supported, not stolen. If a small business can protect their ideas and bring them to market it will reward them for those ideas and encourage others to follow in their footsteps, safe in the knowledge that they will benefit from their innovation.

Resources and Links

[IBLF](#) – The International Business Leaders Forum works with business, governments and civil society to enhance the contribution that companies can make to sustainable development.

[WBCSD](#) – The World Business Council for Sustainable Development seeks to illustrate how companies work independently, or with different stakeholders, to integrate the challenge of sustainable development into their business activities. The value of sharing these experiences lies in their ability to further the business case for sustainable development by supporting the design of effective processes to continually improve practices.

[CORDIS](#) – The Union Community Research & Development Information Service of the European Commission.

[IRC Network](#) – The Innovation Relay Centres Network supports innovation and transnational technological co-operation in Europe with a range of specialised business support services. IRC services are primarily targeted at technology-oriented small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

[STOA](#) – The Assessment of Scientific and Technological Policy Options for the European Parliament.

[TTI](#) – The Technology Transfer Initiative (TTI) website. The TTI is an innovative support structure for small to medium sized companies in the West, Midwest and Southwest regions of Ireland.