

Driving Sustainability, the Greenpac Way

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Susan Chong, Founder and Chief Executive Officer of Greenpac (pictured below), a company that specialises in providing environmentally friendly packaging solutions tells us what she believes are key to making a business sustainable yet profitable.



Sustainability is no longer just a buzzword but it has become a business imperative. Driven by market forces and changing consumer needs, more businesses are striving to adopt sustainable practices to create long-term value and to gain a competitive edge. But can these businesses remain sustainable and yet profitable?

Having bagged several awards such as the 'World Packaging Star Award 2020' by World Packaging Organisation and the 'Innovations Excellence Award 2017' by Enterprise Singapore, Greenpac has proven that it is possible to pursue commercial profits while championing sustainability initiatives.

A Strong CSR Framework

Birthered out of a vision to 'do well and do good' and to make the world a more environmentally friendly place, Greenpac has come a long way since it started in 2002. Ms Chong attributes the company's success to its strong Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) framework which rests on three key thrusts: community engagement, being environmentally friendly and responsible entrepreneurship. "I believe that it is important to have a clear vision and framework in place, because it enables you to steer your organisation in the right direction. When you have a purpose-driven organisation, your staff will be able to find meaning in what they do," says Ms Chong.

In the drive towards sustainability, Greenpac's environmentally friendly initiatives include building a four-storey factory in Jurong which is Singapore's first green factory and became one of the country's first few BCA Green Mark Gold Plus certified buildings. The building also has a zero-energy office powered by renewable solar energy and a rainwater harvesting system.

Greenpac also serves its community by donating hydroponic systems to neighbourhood schools for children to grow vegetables for their

projects. The company sponsors school internships and donates vegetables grown in-house to the community as well.

“Many look at CSR initiatives as an additional cost. But if you look at it from a deeper perspective, it helps to create a strong culture among staff. When staff feel happy to contribute and perform their jobs, productivity level often goes up and this in turn often results in cost-savings for the organisation,” she adds.

A Proactive Approach

While many enterprises still choose a reactive approach to sustainable business practices. Ms Chong believes that a proactive approach is vital to create long-term value. “It would be dangerous to choose a reactive approach and not to recognise underlying risks. In today’s world, you have to be able to plan ahead of time and foresee the challenges that lie ahead to be better prepared.

“This is why we constantly look at our supply chain processes to see how we can improve productivity and cost savings not just for ourselves but our clients and customers in order to create sustainable solutions and to serve them better,” she says.

One example of how Greenpac has better served its customers and clients is through the more cost-effective and sustainable approach of utilising green energy for the heat treatment of pallets which is in accordance with international trade regulations.

To improve productivity and sustainable practices within the organisation, workers of different ranks are also given the autonomy to identify issues in their supply chains to improve productivity and sustainability and present them to the senior management for review.

Servant Leadership

As companies plan ahead in the midst of a global and environmental crisis, it will take exponential leaders to communicate well with their staff to drive effective and competitive sustainability strategies for success. Ms Chong highlights that leaders must practice servant leadership to communicate strategies effectively and enable them to understand the needs of their staff.

“What’s more important is that you will need to be able to not just lead from the front but work alongside your staff to understand the challenges that they face. Sustainability is going to be even more crucial in the next five years. Hence, we believe that it is important for leaders to work hand-in-hand with their staff in order to achieve the goals that are set in order for the organisation to thrive.”