How Can One Form an Effective ‘Picture’ for Different Users of Metrics?

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Successful implementation of a metrics program can be assessed by how well it informs the decision-making process. No matter how sophisticated the metrics and the logic underpinning them, if they do not help form within (inform) a relevant and accurate picture for the decision-makers, then the program is not useful. For sustainability metrics, there are basically four groups of non-sustainability users and specific perspectives to take to engage them, focused on whether they understand sustainability and whether they want to understand it.

1. **Those who get sustainability and want to**: These executives only need help in understanding how sustainability metrics link explicitly to other process and financial metrics. They need clarity on the model that links them all up. The key focus for them is to help them tell a cogent story – one that they already believe.

   - **Help me see the link**
   - Make the explicit link from their existing systems to next level of systems
   - Provide the logic they need to be able to understand and tell the story to the next level of management

2. **Those who get sustainability and don’t want to**: These executives understand sustainability thinking and either do not find value in it or don’t believe it is relevant. They have to be either convinced of the logic of the benefit to the organization, or the logic has to be provided in spite of them, for the others. The key focus for them is rigor in answering three ‘measure rigor’ questions, forcing them to use the data. Those questions are: Is this a measure that is relevant to our strategy? How good is the data and is it the right proxy for what we want to measure? How does this measure relate to all of the other measures?

   - **Help me live the link**
   - Make the explicit link to sustainability measures
   - Probability of survival = sustainability of core business, supply chain, stakeholder relationships, community values

3. **Those who don’t get sustainability and want to**: These executives want to understand sustainability and have not been able to make the connection in their own experience. For some this is an issue of logic. For example, show them how future success (revenues) is a function of the probability of survival, which depends on the sustainability of the core business, the supply chain, stakeholder values, community support and environmental performance. For others it is not an issue of logic; they have had plenty of exposure to that. It is an issue of experience; they have not embodied the understanding. Provide experiences where they actually see / live the impact of sustainability thinking.

4. **Those who don’t get sustainability and don’t want to**: These executives don’t understand sustainability and don’t see why they should. Like #2 and #3 above, these executives need experiential understanding through the fundamental experiences that let them live the impact of non-sustainability, as well as informing their cognitive understanding by providing them with rigorous measures and studies that make explicit the links of sustainability thinking to more accepted metrics.