

# Learning by Engaging in Pro-Environmental Behaviour at Work

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## Introduction

Environmental policies and strategies have rapidly become a common feature of the corporate landscape, as firms acknowledge that integrating sustainability in their business operations has a significant potential for substantial gains. However, developing and implementing environmental policies and strategies are not enough for effectively incorporating sustainability into the business practices. A cultural transformation that fosters employee engagement in environmental sustainability through pro-ecological behaviour is also required. In order to achieve sustainability goals, firms are turning to one of their greatest resources – the employees. In this context, employee engagement in pro-environmental behaviour at work emerged as a prerequisite for effectively mainstreaming organisational sustainability.

This case investigates the actions taken by the PwC Romanian entities, part of the Pricewaterhouse Coopers (PwC) global network, one of the largest professional services networks in the world. A sound environmentally friendly strategy was developed at the global level, part of the corporate responsibility strategy, which is implemented at different degrees by the local firms of the PwC network. In Romania, the goal of environmental stewardship creates a working environment that fosters the pro-ecological behaviour of the firms’

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employees. Actions and measures were investigated using the framework proposed by PwC at the global level. We argue that learning by engaging in pro-ecological behaviour at the workplace in an environmentally aware and environmentally friendly context has a high potential to be transferred by the employees to their households, spinning off towards society.

## Methodology and Area of Discussion

The focus of paper is to investigate the measures taken to implement at local level in Romania the environmental stewardship goal, part of the corporate responsibility strategy, formulated at the global level by the Pricewaterhouse Coopers global network of professional services firms; to gain a better understanding of the pathways to instil the pro-ecological behaviour to employees; and to examine environmental sustainability strategy implementation in an emerging market context.

The case study was prepared according to the qualitative research methodology. Data collection was done in the following ways: direct observation of the working environment by the researcher, face-to-face discussions with company representatives, and literature and mass-media reviews.

**Pro-environmental behaviour (PEB)** was defined also in relation to its impact on the environment, as “any action that enhances the quality of the environment, either resulting or not resulting from pro-environmental intent” (Steg et al. 2014); or, “a kind of behaviour that consciously seeks to minimise the negative impact of one’s actions on the natural and built environment” (Kollmuss & Agyeman 2002).

In principle, according to the **goal framing theory** proposed by Lindenberg and Steg (2007), people are motivated to engage in pro-environmental behaviour for three different types of reasons: for normative reasons (because they think protecting the environment is the right thing to do), for gain reasons (because it saves money) or for hedonic reasons (because it is enjoyable). However, involvement in pro-environmental behaviour may generate conflicts between the normative reasons on the one hand and the hedonic and gain goals on the other hand (Lindenberg & Steg 2007). Acting pro-environmentally is largely considered to be the right thing to do, but often it proves to be more time-consuming, less profitable, less enjoyable or more effort than acting in a way that is harmful to the environment.

Measures were proposed to reduce or even remove the conflict between the three different types of goals described above (Steg et al. 2014). Examples in this respect include: making pro-environmental actions fun (e.g. games) or convenient (e.g. increasing the availability of trash bins), making environmentally friendly products financially attractive, increasing the cost of environmentally harmful actions through taxation, or by making the environmentally harmful options less pleasurable. In addition, engagement in the pro-environmental behaviour can be

leveraged through strengthening the normative goals by creating and promoting the awareness of acting appropriately, in spite of cost and effort – for the benefit of the environment, of future generations and of other people. Many people buy organic food, engage in recycling or in the selective collection of garbage (Czajkowski et al. 2013) or support pro-environmental organisations.

But how to convince people to engage in pro-environmental behaviour? One of the most commonly referenced theories in the field of environmental studies that seeks to explain individual behaviour is the **theory of planned behaviour** (Ajzen 1991). The theory of planned behaviour was applied in the context of pro-environmental behaviour by Rioux (2011) and also applied in both household and workplace contexts by Nye and Hargreaves (2010). Their findings showed that individuals have a higher propensity to engage in pro-ecological behaviours in their households than in workplaces. Furthermore, in workplaces it seems harder to change old behaviours and to adopt new roles given the organisational culture, and that there is a need for strong evidence to justify new actions in line with pro-ecological behaviour.

Also, it has been argued that the **social exchange theory** is one of “the most influential conceptual paradigms for understanding workplace behaviour” (Cropanzano & Mitchell 2005). According to this theory, social exchange occurs when something considered to bear value is exchanged between an organisation and its employees (Schaninger & Turnipseed 2005). Related to pro-environmental behaviour, evidence showed that organizations value employee loyalty and extra effort beyond the job requirements and that employees value support from their organization. Evidence also showed a positive relation between employees feeling supported by the organisation and their commitment to the organisation and job satisfaction; that generates a context in which employees are likely to reciprocate by performing behaviours valued by their organization (Lavelle et al. 2007).

According to the social exchange theory, the employees are more likely to engage in pro-environmental behaviour at work if they perceive that their organization attributes value to the cause of environmental sustainability. Pro-environmental behaviour adoption is positively correlated to their job satisfaction and their commitment to the organisation, and the last two are correlated to the perceived organisation support (i.e. employees’ beliefs that their employer aims to foster a work environment that is conducive to well-being) (Paillé & Boiral 2013).

Factors that affect the adoption of pro-ecological behaviour at work can be divided into internal (individual) and external (organisational) factors, as proposed by Blok et al. (2015). The internal factors were the following: general values, personal norms, social norms, perceived behavioural control, attitude towards PEB, environmental awareness, and environmental values. The external factors identified were: situational factors, leadership support to PEB, and leadership boss (exemplary behaviour by leaders). Transformational leadership plays a significant role in employee motivation to engage in pro-environmental

behaviour at the workplace. The adoption of an environmentally friendly strategic orientation requires firms to lead important changes in employee behaviour. This is effectively done through the inspirational and value-based nature of transformational leadership that motivates employees to accept these changes and to engage in pro-environmental behaviours at the workplace.

### **Background on PwC Romania**

Pricewaterhouse Coopers (PwC) is one of the largest professional services networks in the world. It is present in 157 countries around the world, employing more than 223,000 people (PwC global website). The firms from the PwC network offer a wide range of professional services, including assurance, advisory and tax services. It is well-known as one of the so-called Big Four firms along with Deloitte, Ernst & Young and KPMG.

PwC entered the Romanian market in 1991 being, at that time, the largest professional service firm that established an office in the country, at Bucharest. During the past 25 years, PwC Romania has been actively involved in major projects for the Romanian economy, from involvement in the preparation of various legislative proposals to the establishment of several professional associations and institutions (including The Bucharest Stock Exchange, The Chamber of Financial Auditors from Romania, The Chamber of Fiscal Consultants, ANEVAR, UNPIR). They have been continuously promoting Romania as a place for foreign investment, and they managed to gradually attract foreign investors to the country (e.g. Unilever, SAB Miller, Ford, Enel, Heildelberg Cement). At the same time, they also focus on promoting Romanian entrepreneurship by being involved in the creation of a strong community for Romanian entrepreneurs within the Business Champions project. Last but not least, they support the economic higher education sector through their involvement in a series of projects in partnership with The Bucharest University of Economic Studies and The Babes-Bolyai University of Cluj (Simion 2016).

At present, PwC Romania offers a wide range of services in the fields of: assurance services (financial audit, risk assurance solutions, financial accounting advisory services), advisory services (consulting, deals and business recovery), tax services (taxation, human resource advisory), and legal services. They have regional offices in Bucharest, Cluj, Timișoara, Constanța, Iași – in Romania – and Chișinău – in the Republic of Moldova – employing over 650 people (PwC Romania website; Daily Business 2015). On the Romanian market, PwC faces both the international competition, especially the competition coming from the other Big Four firms, and the competition of local professional services firms, which tend to specialize in one or few services.

Among the Romanian network of PwC firms, PwC Management Consultants SRL holds the ISO 14001 Environment Management System (EMS) certification. This standard provides a systematic framework to manage the

environmental impact of an organisation's services and processes. This certification is an additional assurance to stakeholders that the environmental management system at the firm meets international industry-specific environmental standards.

### The Environmentally Friendly Initiative at PwC

The PwC network adopted a corporate responsibility approach, aware of the need for the sustainable development of our world. By using corporate responsibility as a societal lens, PwC is better able to understand societal trends and stakeholder expectations, to align corporate activities to them, to help other businesses in their efforts towards greater sustainability, and to invest in positive societal change (PwC global website).

Four focus areas were envisaged by the corporate responsibility strategic orientation:

- **Responsible business** – Being a responsible business and contributing to society is essential to the PwC purpose. This is represented by building trust in society and by solving important problems, purposes that align corporate values and behaviours (Kelly 2016).
- **Community engagement** – PwC shares their international skills and experience to maximize the potential of local communities and of their individuals, of the social enterprises and of the NGO sector across the globe.
- **Diversity and inclusion** – Diversity and cultural dexterity are seen as essential to the PwC business, not only within the network, but also when working together and interacting with their clients. Inclusion leverages the power of differences, and the inclusion of a diverse workforce ensures high potentials for innovation and leadership.
- **Environmental stewardship** – This area of focus envisions the responsible use of resources and the protection of the natural environment through sustainable practices undertaken by PwC.



**Fig. 1:** Total gross emissions (tCO<sub>2</sub>e) per employee.

Source: <http://www.pwc.com/gx/en/about/corporate-responsibility/environmental-stewardship.html>.

Note: These figures relate only to the 21 largest firms in the PwC network.

PwC's environmental stewardship is implemented in two directions: reducing their own environmental impact, and working with clients to achieve environmental friendliness and sustainability.

### 1. Reducing their own environmental impact

At the global level, PwC committed to respect the environment by understanding and reducing their business operations' impact on the environment. The development of the Network Environmental Statement guides the operations of member firms from the 157 countries from across the globe in terms of improving their environmental performance.

According to the Network Environmental Statement, PwC member firms are expected to comply with all environmental regulations and requirements to which they are subject, and more precisely, they are encouraged to:

- Continuously improve their performance and aspire to integrate environmental management good practice in business operations;
- Use resources efficiently and minimise the generation of waste;
- Consider environmental and social issues in the procurement of goods and services;
- Consider environmental issues and energy performance in the acquisition, design, refurbishment, location, management and use of buildings; and
- Consider how to reduce the environmental impact of business travel. (PwC Network Environmental Statement).

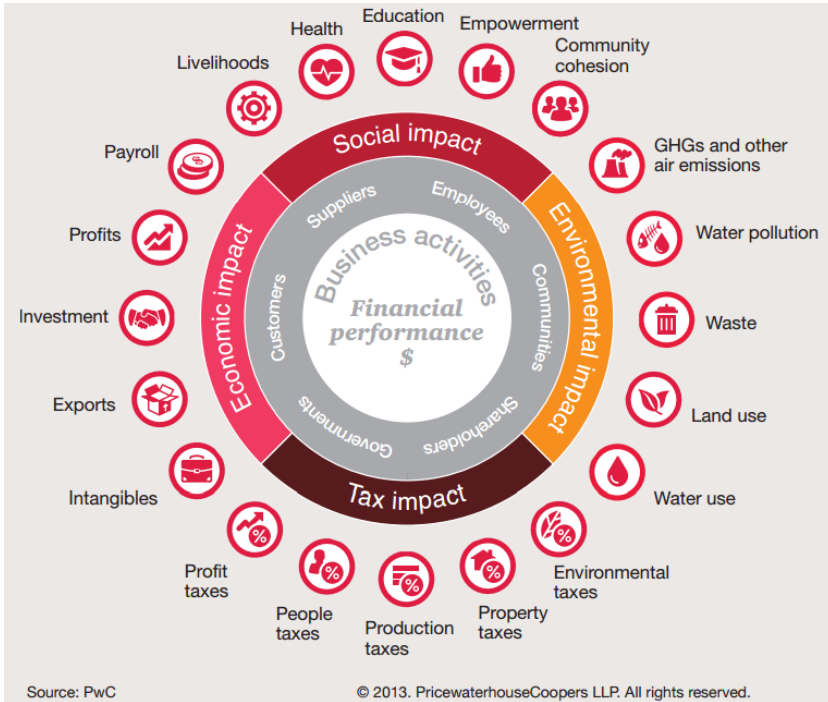
The analysis on key environmental indicators showed a reduction of total CO<sub>2</sub> emissions per employee (t CO<sub>2</sub>e) of 8% in FY 2016 as compared to FY 2014 (Figure 1). The greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions are also investigated by scope, as follows: i) gas, diesel and fuel for company-owned vehicles; ii) purchased electricity; iii) air travel. Efforts were also made to reduce the energy usage from offices and air travel and will continue to reduce gross and net emissions partly through making greater use of technology.

### 2. Working with clients to achieve environmental friendliness and sustainability

By working with clients to improve their environmental outcomes and to find new innovative solutions to environmental challenges, PwC gains their greatest impact on the environment.

Through the practice of Sustainability and Climate Change, PwC developed the Total Impact Measurement and Management (TIMM) tool. The tool helps businesses assess their total impact (social, environmental, tax and economic impacts), to identify and evaluate trade-offs, to make optimal decisions and to accommodate stockholders' interests.

The environmental impact of a business is assessed, taking into consideration greenhouse gases (GHG) and other emissions, water pollution, waste, land use and water use implied by the performance of the business operations. For a



**Fig. 2:** Illustrative dimensions of impact considered within TIMM.

Source: PwC (2013) Measuring and managing total impact: A new language for business decisions, p.23.

detailed presentation of the other impact dimensions, please see Figure 2. The environmental impact measurement methodology quantifies the changes in the ecosystem resulting from the performance of value chain activities by using business data, public information and econometric modelling. Furthermore, the tool converts these impacts into monetary terms and tracks them over time.

### Implementation of Environmental Stewardship in Romania

Encouraging pro-ecological employee behaviour at work emerged from the broader sustainability agenda of PwC. Incorporating sustainability into the business operations, meaning the practice of monitoring, measuring and reducing the environmental and social costs of doing business, requires the support of employees, who can make a significant contribution in terms of improving the environmental performance of PwC through engaging in environmentally sustainable work behaviour. The incorporation of environmental sustainability makes PwC able to provide clients with the most efficient, cost-effective and

high-quality services and to distinguish itself on the Romanian professional services market through environmental friendliness and community involvement.

The pro-ecological behaviour of PwC employees is ensured and, at the same time, promoted through measures that, for the purpose of this study, were investigated using the framework proposed by the PwC Network Environmental Statement because they offer a common standard for all PwC network firms. The goals and the actions taken are the following:

**Goal 1:** Continuously improve their performance and aspire to integrate environmental management good practice in business operations:

- Holding the ISO certification for the ISO 14001 standard on environmental management system for PwC Management Consultants SRL.
- Electronic systems and sensors in place to control lightning, heating and air conditioning, printing, water consumption etc.

**Goal 2:** Use resources efficiently and minimise the generation of waste.

Resource efficiency, also called “resource productivity” or “eco-efficiency”, provides cost-saving methods through the use of limited resources in a sustainable manner in order to reduce the environmental impact of a company. With regard to the environmental impact, primary resource inputs to any business are materials (especially paper), water and energy. Their use directly affects the environment, though extraction, pollution and waste generation. Other resources are also indispensable to the business activity – labour, money, time – but their environmental impact is generally more indirect.

Two directions are followed as regards resource efficiency at PwC Romania offices:

1. Resource saving:
  - Use of equipment that minimizes the amount of resources
  - Minimizing the waste of water by using sensor water taps
  - Use of an intelligent lightning system that adapts light’s intensity to exterior conditions
  - Energy efficient heating, ventilation and air-conditioning system
  - Use of motion sensors to automatically shut off lights when the office is not in use
  - Use of energy star appliances and lightning
  - Turning off the laptops or using energy saving settings when not in use
  - More use of electronic newspapers and other media
  - Adoption of new business practices that reduce resource consumption
2. Recycling and reusing for waste reduction:
  - Recycling shredded paper, batteries
  - Replacement of the plastic kitchenware with reusable utensils made of glass, ceramic and iron, for both employees and guests



- The use of recycled or environmentally friendly toiletry supplies as disclosed by the supplier

**Goal 3:** Consider environmental issues and energy performance in the acquisition, design, refurbishment, location, management and use of buildings.

The use of environmentally friendly buildings provides a series of benefits in: resource efficiency, improved occupant health, improved occupant satisfaction and productivity, and reduced environmental impact through lowering the consumption of energy and other material resources (Lotspeich et al. 2003; Parker 2012).

PwC Romania's offices are located in an eco-friendly building, designed according to BREEAM standards, although the final certification was not pursued by the building owner. Established in 1990, BREEAM is the longest established method of assessing and certifying the sustainability of buildings.

**Goal 4:** Consider how to reduce the environmental impact of business travel.

Business travel is linked to the ability of serving PwC's clients. Visiting clients' locations for on-site discussions and documentation is often a prerequisite for delivering high-quality services. The efforts to reduce the environmental impact of business travel currently challenge the internal business travel policy in terms of decisions regarding the need, frequency and mode of travel. Two directions for action were identified in this respect: i) establishment of regional offices in major cities across Romania, to reduce the travel of the employees from the Bucharest main premises; ii) avoiding business travel by the organisation of virtual meetings and teleconferencing – internal or with external participants – whenever possible, instead of travelling to different locations by plane, company cars or rentals.

**Goal 5:** Consider environmental and social issues in the procurement of goods and services.

The procurement activity of a professional service firm has, in general, a lower impact on the environment than that of a manufacturing company. The PwC orientation in this respect is to buy products with environmental credentials whenever possible. In selecting the new providers and suppliers, an increasingly important role has been attributed to the ecological and social factors. PwC Romania is recognizing the importance of sourcing office supplies that have a lower impact on the environment. Examples include: no plastic kitchen materials (cutlery, glasses, plates etc.) and 100% recycled paper towels and toilet paper as reported by supplier.

PwC Romania is supporting their clients that look to make a difference in their environmental and social impacts and to embrace sustainability demonstrated by trustworthy and credible reporting. Services rendered to clients fall into the following categories: i) environmental compliance audit, aiming at establishing the level of compliance with the legal applicable environmental

requirements (e.g. identification of the legal applicable requirements, establishing the impact of the current activities upon the environment and the level of the risk and potential environmental liabilities, identification of the main non-compliances and of remedies); ii) environmental due diligence, identification of the environmental risks caused by non-compliances with the environmental law and quantifying the associated material exposure; iii) environmental impact assessment; iv) environmental site assessment; v) waste management audit; vi) development and implementation of environmental management systems in accordance with the requirements of SR EN ISO 14001; and vii) issues related to the environmental fund (PwC Romanian website).

The improvement of the environmental legislation in Romania is actively supported through discussions and by providing opinions within first rank advocacy and business growth professional associations (e.g. American Chamber of Commerce in Romania, Foreign Investors Council). Priorities formulated by the American Chamber of Commerce in Romania aim at: helping Romanian central public environmental authorities in transposing and implementing the community acquis related to environment and solving non-compliance issues, strengthening institutional capacity, offering technical support, improving the environmental legislation in Romania (AmCham website).

Employee support is a key driver of implementing environmental policies and strategies within business organisations. Employees are performing the business processes and operations, and their pro-environmental orientation is crucial to greening such processes and operations and transforming the business into a sustainable one.

Several measures were taken to raise employees' awareness on environmental issues, to increase employee engagement in voluntary pro-environmental behaviour and to promote employee health and wellness, such as:

- Minimizing or completely eliminating the use of paper through the insertion of the "Think before you print" signature at the end of each email
- Minimizing the use of paper and cartridges by using two-sided printing as the network standard; also use multiple-page printing when possible
- Sponsorship of various green initiatives (e.g. "Let's do it, Romania!", the largest voluntary initiative to collect and recycle waste from the natural environment)
- Encourage and financially support employee participation in various green initiatives
- Environmental awareness raising messages placed indoors (e.g. number of trees cut annually for paper production)

Through the implementation of environmentally friendly measures, PwC Romania provides its employees with an organisational environment in which they learn and practice pro-ecological behaviour. Employees' pro-ecological behaviour can be voluntary (e.g. dispose of waste in separate bins) or required

(e.g. shred unneeded paper for confidentiality reasons, which goes to recycling). This pro-ecological behaviour, once adopted by the employees at the workplace, it is highly likely to be transferred to employees' households, spinning off into society.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

Nowadays, the environmental context is challenging, raising concerns for businesses to meet higher and higher expectations coming from various stakeholders, shareholders and legislators. Environmental stewardship is one of the goals assumed by the investigated organisation, within the global corporate responsibility strategy.

A strong prerequisite for developing an environmentally friendly working environment is represented by the procurement of the ISO 14001 certification related to environmental management systems. This was done for only one firm of the PwC network in Romania, and it is recommended that it be achieved for other firms as well. This international standard with voluntary adoption provides that the organisation not only meets the legal environmental requirements, but goes beyond them by keeping with the expectations of their stakeholders and shareholders. In addition, this certification can be leveraged as a competitive advantage as the organisation is able to distinguish itself from other organisations through corporate communication. Last but not least, the ISO 14001 environmental management systems' standard is an organised way to get employees engaged in meeting the environmental commitments of the organisation.

Individual values, beliefs, motivations and attitudes clearly influence behaviour, but it is important to acknowledge that the social context (in this particular case, the workplace) alters them and has the power to change individual behaviour. Given the potential of the workplace to exert significant influence on individual values, beliefs and, ultimately, behaviours, we illustrated the adoption of the environmentally friendly orientation of a large professional services firm – PwC Romania. Working in an eco-friendly organisation has the potential to increase employee motivation and feelings of organisational support, and to change existing habitual behaviour into pro-ecological behaviour.

The implementation of the environmental stewardship commitment in Romania, part of the global corporate responsibility strategy, has been performed through a series of measures grouped by aim according the framework proposed by the global environmental statement. It was noted that some aims were better supported by implementation actions (e.g. resource efficiency), while others still present a large potential for improvement (e.g. business travel and procurement). The PwC requirements for the efficient use of resources not only create employee awareness of the environmental impact, but also assure employees of the company's support in adoption of pro-environmental behaviours.

Pro-environmental behaviour promotion has been developed according to the learning-by-doing principle. Learning from the experiences of one's own actions was widely believed to be the most effective way of learning. In addition, the use of employee environmental engagement methods is recommended. These may include: awareness-raising activities, education and training, creation of dedicated teams, contests and challenges, and providing of enabling conditions and effort recognition schemes, as discovered by a recently conducted study on employee environmental engagement practices in financial institutions (UNEP FI 2011). Employees' engagement in pro-ecological behaviour has the potential to stimulate employee passion and pride for working for a company that demonstrates good corporate citizenship behaviour, to increase employee productivity and retention, to better attract new employees that share the same values, and to create a working environment that stimulates creativity, diversity and innovation.

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