

Recruiting for Sustainability. Administration or development?

Ola Bergström, PhD (ola.bergstrom@mgmt.gu.se)

Department of Business Administration
School of Economics and Commercial Law
University of Goteborg
PO Box 610, SE-405 30 Göteborg, Sweden
Tel. +46 – 773 15 44
Fax. +46 – 773 54 14

Peter Dobers, PhD (peter.dobers@lector.kth.se)

GRI, Gothenburg Research Institute, and
Indek, Royal Institute of Technology
Indek - KTH
SE - 100 44 Stockholm
Tel. +46 – 702.070707
Fax. +46 – 8 10 83 77

Abstract

Sustainability is a complex concept involving disparate issues of environmental, social and economical significance (WCED, 1987). To work towards sustainability, we need both technological and social skills. Several studies on environmental technology and environmentally adjusted technology have been undertaken, as well as in the area of human resource management and environmental management (Wehrmeyer, 1996). However, our understanding of *how* people are recruited to work towards sustainability and *what* type of persons are drafted for leading environmental projects is not very elaborated. The purpose of this paper is to develop an understanding of specific characteristics and effects of recruiting persons with either administrative / exploitative or developing / explorative characteristics. The paper is based on a field study of the latest attempt in Sweden to work towards sustainable development. In 1998, the Swedish government formulated a program for local investments aiming at positive environmental effects and increased employment rates. We have in detail studied and analyzed the recruitment process for the position of environmental project leader at a municipality with data from 32 applicants and with transcriptions of recruitment talks with 6 candidates. In contrast to the traditional model of “choice of candidates”, we propose a widened model of “cultural match” to understand the recruitment process (Bergström, 1998).

References

- Bergström, Ola, *Att passa in. Rekryteringsarbete i ett kunskapsintensivt företag* (Cultural match. Recruitment in a knowledge-intensive firm), (Göteborg: BAS, 1998).
- WCED, (World Commission on Environment and Development), *Our common future* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987).
- Wehrmeyer, Walter (Ed.) *Greening people. Human resources and environmental management*, (Sheffield: Greenleaf Publishing, 1996).