'There are no shortcuts to sustainable development'

Environmentally responsible technologies and practices can help consumers reduce cost and simultaneously raise productivity. Here's how and why of it all

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Why are most countries including India hesitant about Kyoto Protocol? Is environment not a priority for them? Do they not want to stabilise the green house gas concentrations to a level where these gases do not impact the future of our generations? The answer is in the fact that no country wants to adopt norms that will stem its economic growth.

Isn't that how a majority of us think about the green principles and practices that we are exposed to? We approve it as long as the technology or practice it is replacing is better in performance and quality and most importantly does not demand a premium.

As a proponent of environmental friendly practices throughout my career, I have learned that there are absolutely no shortcuts to sustainable development. A comprehensive approach by integrating social, environmental and economic dimensions is one of the best ways to enhance the plausibility of the solution. This takes us back to the concept of triple bottom line–people, planet and profit. Consumers seek solutions that cater to their economic and social needs. Producers make products that differentiate them from the competition and drive the growth of their top line and bottom line.

Can a triple bottom line dove-tail joint be created here between consumers and producers in association with all the other stakeholders? Well, the answer lies in environmentally responsible technologies and practices that help consumers reduce cost and simultaneously raise productivity. Let me use lighting solutions in existing buildings as the example to explain how this can work. Existing buildings are by far the prime energy guzzlers in developing nations. They typically account for approximately 25-35% of the total energy consumption and over 30-40% of raw material consumption. Buildings are responsible for over 40% of the green house gases and contribute up to 70% solid waste. These figures are startling, but provide an opportunity to both producers and end users to adopt technologies that are cost effective and environmentally responsible.

One might ask, are these technologies expensive? You might think they ought to be since they are the state-of-the-art inventions available in the market today. In reality, the sticker price should not be the compelling factor to accept or reject an environment friendly solution. A simple payback analysis will tell you if the solution is right for your business. Taking this approach, in most cases, you will end up with a solution that is 'good for business and good for environment'.

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Vinod Kumar

Arun wants to expand his venture into other developing and under developed economies

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A five-star hotel typically uses 50W halogen lamps to light their corridors. A 8W LED lamp (green technology) can not only offer better lumen levels (illumination), identical colour temperatures, simple plug'n'play, better design specifications, but can also reduce 42W of unnecessary energy consumption

LED lamps last for over 40000 hrs compared to 2000 hr energy guzzling incandescent lamps or 9000 hr mercury laden CFLs