



Driving Innovation: Nudging Employees towards Sustainable Innovation Creation

Simon Rusch

Background

Sustainable Development is considered to play a major role in overcoming threats such as social inequality or degradation of the environment. Consequently, increased attention is given to corporations and how they can contribute through sustainable innovation. This study aims at finding out what role nudging could play in the sustainable innovation management of organizations. Scholars have mostly focused on nudging on a policy level, thus a research gap in the field of nudging on an organizational level can be detected. This single-case builds on a qualitative research design including six semi-structured interviews to advance organizational theory on sustainability. Moreover, the results helped to understand the role of a bottom-up approach for sustainable innovation and make recommendations on how to foster it with the use of nudging. Major findings include barriers on employee level regarding sustainable innovation, desired support from management and motivational factors for sustainable innovation creation.

Research Question

Which role could nudging play in the sustainable innovation management of an Austrian supermarket-chain?

Researched Organization

- Austrian supermarket-chain in the province of Vorarlberg
- 650 employees in 26 branches & their head office
- Locally operating
- Interesting for several reasons:
 - Organization is trying to foster bottom-up approach of sustainable innovation
 - Part of larger European corporation → wider applicability of recommendations

Nudging

Framework by Hansen and Jespersen (2013) provided basis for data collection and for understanding how companies can foster sustainable innovation with the use of nudges

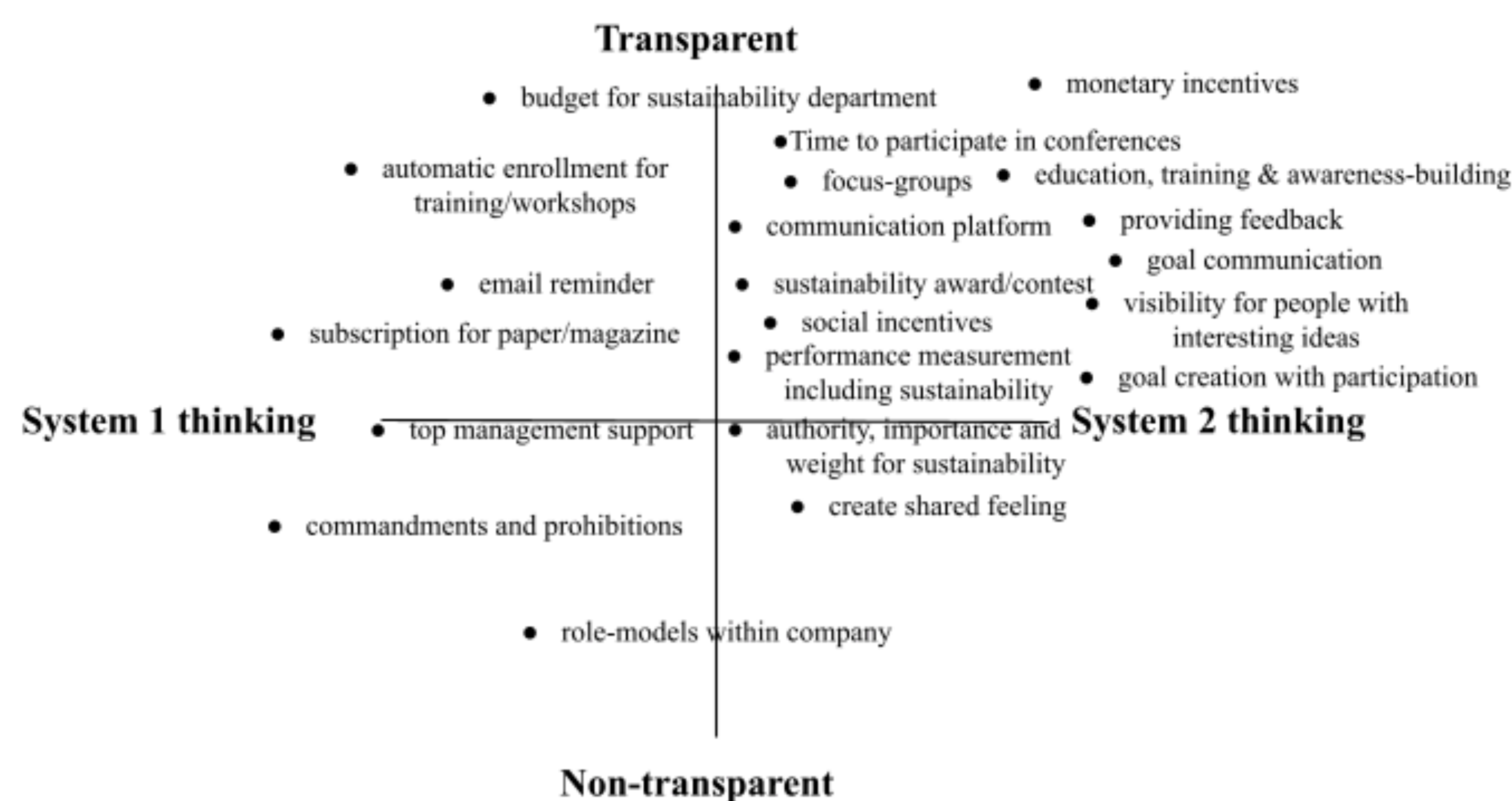


Fig. 2. Possible Nudges to foster Sustainable Innovation

System 1 thinking: automatic and intuitive

System 2 thinking: rational and reflective

4 Key Recommendations

- Attach authority & importance to sustainability (not enough if department consists of part-time position only)
- Give department a budget
- Create Communication platform for sustainability to foster inclusiveness and participation
- Ensure continuous education and awareness-building

Conclusion

- Nudging alone will not be able to solve complex challenges regarding internal sustainable innovation but can be seen as factor influencing the success of an organization
- Future studies recommended that explore different kind of nudges and their interaction with other factors and variables

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