

Ricoh's Environmental Sustainability Vision Used as Case Study for Harvard Business School

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For over 30 years, Ricoh has proactively followed and implemented a number of environmental sustainability practices. Recognizing the need for a society where our environmental impact is reduced to a level within the earth's own self-recovery capabilities, Ricoh took bold steps and in 2005 formulated the Year 2050 Long-Term Environmental Social Vision. Based upon this Vision, in 2009, Ricoh put in place its own environmental impact reduction goals for 2020 and 2050.

Having a strategy such as this is quite uncharacteristic for most private companies, and it caught the attention of the Harvard Business School (HBS). Greatly intrigued by Ricoh's long-term and product lifecycle strategies, HBS reached out to Ricoh Company, Ltd. to support the publishing of a case study on Ricoh's environmental sustainability.

Ricoh accepted Harvard's request, and the HBS team visited Ricoh Japan in March 2010 to develop the case study. Interviews were conducted with Mr. Shiro Kondo, President and CEO, Ricoh Company, Ltd., and other executive members, followed by site visitations at the Ricoh Gotenba and Numazu plants to study actual business operations in regards to environmental sustainability.

HBS successfully completed the case study and recently included it as part of their Advanced Management Program (AMP) "Transforming Proven Leaders into Global Executives," an eight-week class for future business leaders. To enhance the course, HBS invited Ricoh executives to speak with students during the May 18th class.

Mr. Tasuo Tani, head of the Corporate Environment Division for Ricoh Company, Ltd., and Mr. Ike Kakegawa, VP, Environmental Sustainability, Ricoh Americas Corporation, went to HBS to discuss Ricoh's Sustainable Environmental Management to an audience of 140 students who currently work for a variety of corporations in 40 different countries. Mr. Tani and Mr. Kakegawa spent a lot of time with the students educating them on Ricoh's 30-year environmental history.

The students asked many questions and even stayed for some time afterwards with Mr. Tani and Mr. Kakegawa to learn more. The students spoke about how surprised they were that Ricoh had such a clear environmental sustainability strategy for the long-term and whole product lifecycle, and were impressed with the steps Ricoh has already implemented.

HBS videotaped Mr. Tani and Mr. Kakegawa's discussion to present to other students in the next courses to be held in the autumn semester. The discussion will remain with future curriculum in the hopes of helping students gain a better understanding of how corporate environmental sustainability plans are implemented and are put into action.

The case study was scripted by Senior Lecturer Robert G. Eccles and Professor Amy Edmondson. The co-author's feel that the Ricoh case study is a "real keeper" and that Harvard is in the early stages of figuring out all the ways they can use it.

Professor Tom Piper, who sat in on the May 18th class, described the situation to Eccles as "haunting" because he couldn't think of any other U.S. company that currently has the kind of vision that Ricoh does.

Eccles noted that he and Professor Edmondson are excited about the endless possibilities the Ricoh Company, Ltd. case study presents for discussions well into the future.

Incidentally, Harvard University happens to be an IKON major account customer. Taking this opportunity, the account team had two meetings with Harvard: one with Harvard's environmental team, and another with Harvard's purchasing team to learn more about how Ricoh/IKON could work together with Harvard for bettering their environmental sustainability.

For those interested in purchasing the complete Harvard Business School case study, titled "Ricoh Company, Ltd." check out the following site:
<http://cb.hbsp.harvard.edu/cb/product/610053-PDF-ENG>

For more information on Harvard Business School's Advanced Management Program: "Transforming Proven Leaders into Global Executives," please visit:
<http://www.exed.hbs.edu/programs/amp/>

To learn more about Ricoh's Environmental Sustainability please visit:
<http://www.ricoh.com/environment/>