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PASSION OR PURPOSE: WHAT DRIVES SUSTAINABLE ENTERPRISE SUCCESS

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Abstract

“Find something you love to do, and you will never have to work a day in your life” is a common phrase of unknown provenance that is often used as career advice. Love, or put another way, founder passion has been described as a critical component of any sustainable business venture. An intense internalized response to an observed opportunity. The implication of this view is that if there is no intense internalized response then that opportunity should not be pursued.

Purpose, on the other hand, is often defined as the reason why we act. This act is primarily for others, an act that contributes to solving a perceived external need. In other words, while pursuing passion may satisfy an internal desire, pursuing purpose satisfies an external need. The question remains, which is a stronger motivator in the creation of a sustainable enterprise.

The authors provide six examples of businesses that are actively pursuing purpose. This purpose was not based upon an internalized passion but rather as an external need, either observed or forced upon these businesses as a requirement of survival. These businesses are for-profit and not-for-profit and range in size from several hundred thousand to several million dollars in annual revenues.

Based upon the insights provided by these businesses, the authors posit that purpose is rarely created from pursuing personal passion but rather is something that is discovered. That purpose frequently finds the founder and in that discovery a venture will be formed, and passion will ensue.

Conference Track

Sustainability Issues in Decision Making