Sustainability and ethics as attraction factor and talent retaining, the case of the companies in Brazil

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Abstract: An ancient paradigm considered people as simple production factors. Nowadays, we know that human capital is fundamental for business success, and the challenge of attracting and retaining talents in competitive markets encourage companies to search for elements to differentiate themselves from competitors. Another paradigm says that the company’s responsibility towards society is to limit themselves into producing a profit. Advances in debates about sustainability and ethics made us comprehend that companies cannot ignore that they have an important part in the matter that extrapolates operation limits. But how do sustainability and ethics contribute to attract and retain talents? Through this revision of literature and data from researches done with Brazilian companies, this essay intends to evaluate sustainable practices and how can they interfere in attraction capacity and retention of talents.

Keywords: human capital; knowledge management; leadership; talents; sustainability; value; ethics; sustainable development.

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1 Introduction

Great differentiation factors between rival companies are capacity, knowledge, effort and proper people management. They are of an importance that goes beyond structural elements and is a key factor to achieve better development compared to companies who do not follow the same measures. Therefore, it is essential to offer a working place capable of attracting the best talents.

Nevertheless, people do not look just for working conditions and professional growth opportunities, they also hope to share with companies the same values, technology development and processes that can make a difference for businesses and allow the construction of legacy.

During times of financial crisis and global credibility, a result of recent corporative scandals such as the ones from Enron, Lehman Brothers and most recently the Brazilian oil company Petrobras, an ethic and sustainable image tend to imprint greater safety guarantees – not just of job maintenance, but also of a place capable of providing career development and professional realisation.
According to the ‘Our Common Future Report’ (Brundtland and Khalid, 1987), sustainability is “the ability to make development sustainable to ensure that it meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”. A key part of global corporations incorporate that speech, but they usually fail in two aspects: first, it is just a speech and does not reflect on the internal environment, thus the company live the antithesis of what they preach to external audiences. Second, the company fails to communicate effectively its actions, resulting in a non-exploitation of the effort applied towards good practices.

Social compromise is not characterised by isolated business actions that are not capable of changing the cultural organisation and the company relationships. More and more companies are realising that they should make sustainability a business strategy that permeates all processes and decisions. The same goes for ethical values, who must be incorporated in all principles and organisational initiatives.

The company value consists on the ethical behaviour of its leaders and employees, the sustainable strategies and the company’s conscience of the paper they have in develop a new model of social organisation. This value is pointed as a strong talent identification factor among companies, and it is vital for the success of organisations in this new model context. Every organisation need values, but a lean organisation need it even more because it sustains strategy coherence and speeches in times of crisis and competitiveness.

Ballerini et al. (2016) state that “ethic goes through comprehension of organisational culture and through how values, beliefs and daily questions are solved”. Workers want to be recognised, valued, do something interesting and realise they belong to a collaborative environment based on mutual ethic values.

The purpose of this essay is to work in a qualitative approach obtained through bibliographic research, analyse the desired values by those considered the talents of today and evaluate how companies are adapting themselves to this new reality by incorporating sustainable practice to their routine and by monitoring ethical questions.

The essay is separated into seven segments:

1. The introduction of the central issue, methodology and objectives.
2. Researches that show the lack of talents in a global scale and how they can make a difference for companies;
3. Dealing with intellectual capital and knowledge management and what can they do to make a difference in companies.
4. The new profile of companies and talents and the need for convergence.
5. Ethics and sustainability paradigms and the incorporation of these new values to business strategies.
6. It is highlighted Brazil’s leadership in worldwide debates about sustainability and we present data from two researches done throughout 2014: a ranking of the most sustainable companies in Brazil and a ranking of the best companies to work for in the country. The results show that the effect of one in the other is not immediate.
7. Conclusion.
2 Talents deficit in a global scenario

Attempting to publicise the image of internal public valorisation, the term ‘talent’ has been frequently used as a synonym of the employee. However, we need to differentiate talents from other employees. Talents are capable of making a difference in the path of the company. Chiavenato (2004) says that “talent was the name given for weight and coins currency in the ancient Greek and Rome. It denotes someone who excels at doing something with ability, ingenuity and success”. This means that a talent can be found in any area and/or any company’s hierarchical level.

People with talent have gifted and special abilities in one or many areas. When we exercise talent, we call it competence. According to Perrenoud (2015), “the notion of competence will designate the capacity to mobilise various cognitive resources to face a kind of situation”. Therefore, if a company attracts and retains talents needed to face expected challenges it will, at least in this aspect, better suit for the competitiveness battle. Obviously, it should also count with technological, financial, management and reputation structures.

A research made by Bain & Company Consulting in 2012 (Fiorentino et al., 2012) concluded that the talent war will intensify over the next few years. Besides, companies fight for talents with entrepreneurship opportunities that might attract young and well-prepared workers. The study also showed a migration trend of migration from developed country managers to entrepreneurship, which brings an extra challenge for the management area, since it should conquer its talents at a younger age and invest in their formation and retention. One of the initiatives in this scenario is the growing of trainee programs, performed by companies all over the world.

The research ‘Global CEO Study 2010’ made by IBM Company (Berman, 2010) revealed that the lack of qualified professionals is a major concern of CEOs. Results show that in Brazil, lack of qualified and competent work was the biggest problem for 50% of the presidents of the interviewed companies.

The consulting company McKinsey Quarterly published in the year 2000 a research named “War for Talent – part two” (Chambers et al., 2007), which involved 6,000 senior managers and 200 big USA companies. This research concluded that a collaborator with high performance produces more in comparison with others with medium behaviour. The result presented an increase of 40% in productivity on operational position, 49% of the increase in profits on general management positions and 67% increase in revenue.

In 2007, as a continuation of this research, McKinsey Quarterly published a study called “Making talent a strategic priority”. In this study, McKinsey concludes interesting and potentially controversial things regarding what is the politically correct thought regarding talents management. The first conclusion is that, after almost 10 years of the first survey, companies were still not ready to deal with the talent competition. The other conclusion is that investments in systems and human resources processes to manage talents are inadequate, giving little or no revenue (Guthridge et al., 2008).

3 Intellectual capital management as a competitive factor

The value of a company is not only measured by the sum of its tangible assets, which can be quantified and negotiated. Intellectual capital, also known in accounting as intangible
assets, is a great differential and, consequently, a competitive asset between organisations.

According to Joia (2001), “human capital does not belong to the company because it is a direct consequence of the sum of abilities and specialities of its employees”. Structural capital, however, according to the same author, “belongs to the company and can be negotiated (at least in theory), being the real environment built by the company to manage and generate its knowledge adequately”. Structural capital is composed of all internal and external processes; the relationship with providers, clients, service providers and other publics; and by the innovation capacity, which results from company’s culture and its ability to create new knowledge based on pre-existing.

The sum of human capital and structural capital constitutes of what we call ‘intellectual capital’, which would be the intangible assets of a company.

Innovation must be associated with the strategic plan of an organisation to occur. It also requires structure and organisation. The knowledge management is presented as a technique for innovation to work. Every intellectual capital that the organisation has will be organised and managed to be used in the most efficient way in order to achieve the organisational objective.

More than a global phenomenon, knowledge management consolidated by the end of the 20th century as a successful critical factor for the effective creation of competitive advantages in organisations, since the central role of its leaders of all levels is mostly defined as managers of teams packed with knowledge. Hard functional structures are less observed. In turn, flexible management models that incorporate project management, strategic business unities and matrix structures are some of the forms increasingly adopted by CEOs to stimulate production and practical application of all generated knowledge. Consequently, adequate knowledge management grows into a critical factor for strategic differentiation and can build competitive advantages inside the company.

In special, knowledge management emerges as a way of discipline intellectual capital as a new power factor. Knowledge management emerges to deal with scenery analysis and relevant knowledge retention – intellectual capital – as discipline management. Within that line, we add that knowledge management must be present as an effective technique in business and career management to retain talents.

The shifting of a paradigm based on tangible assets to a logic anchored in intangible assets and in an innovative and dynamic global scenario might lead organisations to deal with a series of unexpected situations (Bhatt, 2001). Then, even tactic knowledge, considered as a competitive basis, can become obsolete (Ambrosini and Bowman, 2001).

According to Sveiby (1998), the knowledge management is “the art of creating value leveraging intangible assets”. This perspective must prevail over the company management as a whole, covering activities in all management areas.

Regarding intangible assets, Sveiby (1998) classify them in three categories, defining each one as:

- Professional competence, which refers to the competence of people who plan, produce, process or has products and solutions.
- Internal structure, which refers to support from employees, those who work in general administration sectors, accounting, personal, reception, bureaucratic
departments etc. We can correspondingly include in this category people who perform activities such as routine maintenance and database systems.

- External structure is composed of brands, images and relationships with providers and, most importantly, relationship with clients.

Therefore, we can say that organisational development is a direct function of the adequate management of intellectual capital. Still, organisations know that it is not adequate to believe they have all knowledge necessary, neither believe that the knowledge they have is ‘right’ (Elkington, 2012). Although extensive research about developing methods, techniques and tools of knowledge management was made, a great number of organisations do not even know where to start. The basic guiding principle between people and organisation is the alignment of necessities and collective and individual innovations, including all stakeholders.

According to Freeman (1984), we can understand stakeholder as “any group or individuals who are affected by or can affect the achievement of an organisation’s objectives”; the most used definition nowadays. Corporative behaviour associated to this context must be seen as motivation to create value. Internally, managers support employees by bringing them into organisational context, realising their objectives as well as the company’s objectives, thus creating value and auto realisation sense.

Contribution and vision of human intellectual capital for the global economy’s development were never before so present in business management. Seen before only as inputs, the pure and simple vision of manual labour as input resources, simple as production factors. Yet, thanks to the vision of human capital, organisations could reach better development levels and produce more.

Elkington (2012) offers a comparison between global economy displacements and the concept of natural sciences. According to biology, the concept of ‘punctual balance’ considers that evolution occurs slowly in the normal course of events. However, from time to time there is a drastic change in the environment, resulting in the death of species that were adapted to the previous situation, posteriorly being swapped by something different. Therefore, he evaluates that at the beginning of this century we are facing a moment of redirecting business logics to a punctual balance and thus “we are living in a highly uncertain period of time” (Elkington, 2012).

In this economic period surrounded by uncertainty and risks of all kind, talents, with their superior development capacity, knowledge and versatility, are capable of responding to big challenges faced by companies.

However, the fact that intellectual capital is intangible makes it very difficult to quantify and evaluate it, but superior organisation results with differentiated human capital show that talents are very important. The world that once concentrated in automatisation of human processes begins to concentrate on the people that are being managed.

According to Pfeffer (1999), “what distinguish a company from its competitors is capacity, knowledge and commitment of its people and the good management of workers, which conducts a performance up to 40% higher than companies that do not”. Good management, according to the author, is composed by the respect of individuals, decent treatment and valorisation of team and knowledge.
4 Talent management in this day and age

An important part of an organisation evaluation is rooted in the people who are a part of it. The more evident it is for managers, more human capital will be valued inside an organisation. The knowledge that constitutes human capital has a value and the talents clients of this new reality search for rewards that reflect this value. These rewards do not only mean better salaries, but also identification with the organisation’s businesses so that the talent can see its value in a conquest for better results.

In contrast, the routine and business profiles are altered due to technological innovations that happen at increasing speed. In the early 90s, the five biggest companies in the world belonged to the industry of oil and automobile:

- General motors
- Shell
- Exxon
- Ford
- Toyota.

In 2014, according to Forbes Magazine, the five biggest companies belonged to sectors of technology and services (with the exception of Exxon): Apple (worth US$ 483 billions); Exxon (US$ 422 billions); Google (US$ 382 billions); Microsoft (US$ 343 billions); Berkshire Hathaway (US$ 309 billions) (POLI, 2014).

This means that what worked in the old economy might not work the same way in an economy that became digital and intensive in knowledge. We are connected nowadays, and we have a new employee profile of someone who can be seen as a participative element, solver of complex situations and hard goals through shared views, respectable social life in convergence with multiple values in organisations. This profile is typical of the new generation of talents and allows organisations to have better results in this context.

To Oliveira (2009), in order to utilise convergence value to content creation through the intellectual human capital, a company must search for generative learning, which is defined as the capacity to build a future, not only to survive or conform.

Gordon (2003) understand the convergence as something that will radically change the relationship between consumers and producers. For him, new job requirements appear daily, both in organisations and schools and universities, especially regarding the shaping of next generations.

However, at the same time that a new business reality brings opportunities, such as the optimal use of individual capacity for business’ results, it also brings threats of the same proportion. The internet allowed more elevated satisfaction levels, experience and values exchange. Through access to the digital world, horizons broadened and are now almost unlimited, especially for talents of the newer generations. The idea that they are capable and that everything is possible for them makes it challenging for companies to meet this public’s expectations since they are capable of trading a managerial position in a solid multinational company for a master’s degree overseas or even for a dive into self-knowledge in India or Bhutan, for example.
This migration process from the source of professional career realisation to competition with other activities was greatly potentiated by the recent economic crisis and corporative scandals that contributed to this search of realisation out of business areas.

5 Ethical values, sustainability and influence over talents

The increasing responsibility of an organisation towards environment and society create new challenges for leaders, who need to be capable of handling complex and multi-dimensional systems with time horizons, ambiguity and competition among interested parts. Adoption of new values promotes a constant personal development, which represents a more updated management approach, with a responsible leadership focused on sustainability.

Sustainable development and global impacts generated by organisations require profound understanding from leaders and employees. Innovation does not configure itself as sustainable without responsible and in-depth understanding, respecting different perspectives and looking for a balance between interests and necessities of various stakeholders.

According to Zadek (2004), companies treat social and environmental subjects differently, according to incorporation stages of sustainability where they are, that can be summed up in five stages in the learning curve, in the process of organisational changes to sustainability:

1 Defensive: They do not know responsibilities and do not have bad practices.

2 Conformity: They adopt politics and measures to allow the accomplishment of current standards. Investments are necessary for operation.

3 Management: Includes responsibility elements in processes and management systems.

4 Strategic: Integrate social-environmental variables inside the strategic business core.

5 Integrative: Promote changes in society, as well as the company’s direct control.

On companies that have yet to incorporate sustainability on business strategies, the theme is the responsibility of a determined department, not being present in processes and routines. The company limit itself in managing investments and social programs, and managing publications and corporative image. However, that does not change the organisational culture and consequently, does not have a significant impact in the company’s value attentiveness as a differential among others, neither will be able to influence the perception of employees.

When strategy and sustainability are associated, new paradigms influence activities from all departments. This will implicate in a revision of practices and adopted processes, preparing the company to deal with internal resistances against changes. Therefore, sustainable culture must be a part of a program of changes strategically structured, since all of them must act under these new paradigms. Besides incorporation of ethical values, management methods are necessary, combining cognitive, emotional and affective values with learning, thus developing solutions and taking responsible and sustainable decisions.
When a company endorses itself as compromised with ethic and sustainability, it sees the charge for coherence between speeches and public practices of interest. Employees are key assets in this process. After all, they are the ones who execute the business strategy and the company must recognise them and engage them as active subjects and partners in transformation processes. For example, if the company talk about child and adolescent care, employees begin to claim for childhood assistance or other assistance for children of employees. If the company speaks about ethic, employees also use this speech in their claims.

Therefore, proposed ethic and sustainable action cannot just be part of a marketing plan of the company or an attempt of conformity with new global patterns. It must be something internalised in the company’s culture, part of its vocation and essence, guiding all businesses. Otherwise, plans will not possibly resist and the idea that this might contribute to retention and attraction of talents will have the opposite effect.

When ethic and sustainability are rooted in the company’s culture, policies and processes maturely permeate throughout the business organisation, decisions, negotiations and ways of relating to diverse means of interaction, providing risk reduction of value relaxation in the first challenge and consequently, the shock of interests and values with their public, mainly talents.

Employees perceive shock of interests and values as a threat to their professional and personal projects since it puts in risk credibility, reputation, safety and image of companies by people who sometimes does not even work there. Employees who do not fit in talent definition usually get over these stages, often appealing to conformism or unfair treatment. But talents, mostly the ones of this new generation who are more dynamic and without limiting borders, will see these facts as motives to search for new jobs, where they can dedicate their time and employ their potential aiming to realise their objectives and self-realisation.

Companies tend to have a broad impact on society, representing a big part of the lifetime of people who work there. This influence is so strong that it has the power to have an effect on behaviour, even on a personal level. The way a company treats its employees, clients, providers and other interested parts determine how much is collaborating for transformations experienced by society.

6 Companies that make a difference in Brazil

Sustainability is almost unanimous in common sense, a road with not return for all kinds of businesses since no leader, either in public or business life, openly deny principles of sustainable development. If he does that, there is a giant repercussion and possible image damage for him and/or the company.

However, despite urgent recognition and subject relevance, not all organisations around the world are mobilising concretely to make their road sustainably and not cooperate with degradation of natural resources.

Brazil holds an important position in world debates about sustainable development. In 1992, Rio de Janeiro hosted the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, also known as Rio 92, which reunited leaders from more than 190 countries to discuss the subject. This event effectively consolidated the ‘sustainable development’ concept, used for the first time in the UN 1987 report called ‘Our Common Future’, which criticises the development model adopted by industrialised countries and
reproduced by nations in development. This event also revealed the initiative called Agenda 21, which is a guide for countries, states and cities on how to grow and, at the same time, solve environmental and social problems.

At that time, the main environmental concern was the hole in the ozone layer, which grew rapidly due to the high emission of so-called CFC gases (chlorofluorocarbons) – a substance used in aerosol and refrigeration that destroys the ozone of high atmosphere, allowing the passage of ultraviolet rays harmful to people and biodiversity. Brazil was heavily criticised due to the advance of Amazon’s deforestation, and instead of simply defend itself, the country assumed a proactive position and led the debate about the environment (Carvalho, 2012).

In this diplomatic background, Brazil was always ahead on discussions about the subject, and has attractive subjects for the rest of the world, such as extensive forest areas like Amazon, plenty of fresh water resources, an energy matrix considered clean, mostly hydroelectric, among other factors. However, the public policy and private and civil society set is not coherent and is far away from strategic excellence. According to Abramovay (2010), “sustainable development is formed by an infinity of determining factors, but whose progress depends only on the presence of a strategic”.

To Daniel Esty, professor of Yale University, almost zero countries are as ready as Brazil to assume a global leadership on sustainable development. “Brazil has a lot of companies that are world leaders, and the environment is faced seriously by the business community, which puts Brazil as a potential global leader” (Cruz, 2008).

A great mistake committed by companies who intend to adopt a sustainable position is to believe that any initiative will generate results, which is not true unless they analyse opportunities for improvement and incorporating practices into business strategy.

Organisations, of course, cannot solve the country’s problems by themselves. However, they are an important part of the solution, along with civil society who also seems worried about the future and has been vocal about it.

In an essay written for Exame, a Brazilian magazine, British writer John Elkington said that the next years demand more ambitions, transparency and aggressive goals from companies, but that Brazil can excel in this area, leading the process of global changing. However, for that to happen, the country should work on implantation of public politics and instruments to become reality and stand out as “the first BRICS countries to explore new ways in approaching the subject” (Elkington, 2014).

We can consider that Brazil’s biggest challenge nowadays is political adequacy regarding sustainable development. An important part of parliamentarians is directly connected to agribusiness, a reluctant sector regarding adoption of environmental practices and one of the biggest responsible for deforestation and other illegal practices. At the same time, pressure from society and international organisations play an important part in requesting regulations and environmental protection.

This pressure acts in the necessary convergence of government and executive agenda to sustainability. While for the government, reasons to adopt changes can include politic, economic, social and moral considerations, for investors and executives business is the main focus. This way of thinking about social responsibility kept most business leaders in the argument of economist Milton Friedman, who said that the social responsibility of business is to increase its profits. Concepts such as Eco-efficiency, sustainability, triple bottom line (social, environmental e economical) and shared value emerged in posterior times and are a result of the change of focus from risk to opportunity (Elkington, 2014).
Behind all these tendencies, however, there is a wider and deeper change. Challenges that once were foreseen and debated are now beginning to weight in quotidian of markets. World economy must deal with the pressure of interlaced challenges, such as food, water, energetic and climatic security. These challenges are not just ethical dilemmas for companies. Most of them compromise operation and existing conditions of most of them, whether by operation licenses or lack of resources.

Therefore, the part of the company in these segments must not be treated as just corporative citizenship. It is, more than never, a condition for them to continue operation. When we think these questions as opportunities for companies, we are aware of the part they can play, standing out as a precursor of pattern changes, in the use of resources and technological innovations that will guarantee the continuous existence of business activities and the planet. In addition, they should meet the new transparency paradigm in markets.

Thus, we followed the yearly growth of companies that develop actions towards sustainability. To evaluate some of these actions, we will present some of the main research results presented by 2014’s Sustainability Guide from Exame Magazine, a reputable business magazine from Brazil. Every year they publish an issue about business sustainability practices where, through a method developed by the Center for Sustainability Studies (GVces) from the Getulio Vargas Foundation, companies are invited to participate by being evaluated by specialists in the area. The result is then published by the magazine, along with brief descriptions of main practices that gave a good overall score for the company.

In 2014, 228 Brazilian working companies participated in that research, which is composed of four steps. In the first step, companies answered a quiz with four parts of the same grading weight: Overall dimension – 23 questions about compromises, transparency, conduct, governability and engaging with stakeholders. Economic dimension – 16 questions about strategic planning, risk management, opportunities, treatment of intangible assets and company’s development. Social dimension – 40 questions about politics and relationship practices with different stakeholders, such as collaborators, providers, clients, consumers, society and government. Environment dimension – 52 questions about compromise with environmental preservation, such as measures regarding water use management and waste emissions.

At the second stage, the company’s development is calculated in each dimension. For the next step, only the companies who obtained results above average are designated. The third step considers quiz points and a journalistic research about participating companies, assessment committee members and the magazine editorial define a list of 61 companies that deserve to be emphasised. On the fourth stage, based on highlighted companies of each sector, and journalistic criteria, the Exame magazine office selected the best out of those 61. This company received the Sustainable Company of the Year Award.

Brazilian company Fibria, the world’s biggest cellulose producer, received the Sustainable Company of the Year Award in 2014. Its highlights were their new way of talking and treating conflicts with indigenous people and social movements, old enemies of the company. Incorporating dialogue with communities in the company’s strategies gave positive results for communities, which instead of confronting the company started talking about it, and for the own company, which saw reductions in its legal and social liabilities and its financial development improve significantly in the last few years (Rossi, 2014).
Sustainability and ethics as attraction factor

The 61 companies considered environmental friendly in the evaluation made by Exame Magazine are divided into 18 economic sessions. Below, we highlighted companies that are the first in their sessions and which actions were highlighted in their sustainability practices:

1. **Agribusiness industry**: Bunge – logistic investments allowed this food company to reduce in 20% the distance to export grains to Europe and avoid 100,000 truck trips, improving the environmental performance.

2. **Car industry**: Volvo – Through improvements proposed by leaders of each sector, in 10 years this company reduced 50% of carbon dioxide emissions and 63% of the energy necessary to produce a vehicle.

3. **Capital goods**: Tetra Pak – By using green polyethylene, resin obtained from sugar canes, the proportion of recyclable packages went up from 75% to 82%.

4. **Consumer goods**: Unilever – This company works with suppliers in order to achieve the goal of 100% of certified raw material until the end of the decade.

5. **Construction sector**: Even – The company created a program to reduce the stress that building construction causes to those living nearby. In addition to dialogue, this company prioritise noise emission in periods that cause less impact in the neighbourhood, as well as promoting urbanisation actions near working areas.

6. **Consulting, management and IT industry**: Promon – In order to recycle packages from a certain client, the consultant area from Promon Group created a model that goes beyond legal requirements and generate social and economic benefits for the recycling chain by investing in more than 30 recycling cooperatives.

7. **Electronics**: Philips – This Company worked to reduce in two years the price of LED bulbs by almost 70%. These bulbs use 80% less energy than incandescent bulbs. In Brazil, almost 20% of total energy consumption comes from lighting.

8. **Energy sector**: AES Brasil – This Company want to diversify its energy-generation resources. The first step is building a solar energy plant to fuel part of São Paulo city.

9. **Hotel sector**: Grupo Rio Quente – Educational programs are the basis of this groups’ sustainable politics, and they are responsible for managing eight hotels and a water park in Goiás. Their environmental education program focuses on clients, employees, providers and nearby communities.

10. **Infrastructure sector**: CCR – The Program of the CCR Group, one of the world’s biggest infrastructure concessionaires and responsible for managing 10 Brazilian highways, contributes to the development of future drivers and by lowering accident taxes in highways.

11. **Financial institutions**: Itaú Unibanco – By supporting less risky credits and financial education programs, Itaú Unibanco reduced delay rates in client’s payments.

12. **Construction material**: Masisa – This Company developed a project to integrate and develop all productive chain with actions directed towards employees, clients and providers. Their main goal is to develop each public integrally and sustainably.
Mining and metals industry: ArcelorMittal – This company started a project to reutilise gases from coal burn used in production process to generate electricity.

Pulp and paper industry: Fibria – The cellulose manufacturer established in 2011 a set of goals to reach until 2025, aiming at becoming more sustainable. Among their objectives are reducing the necessary area to produce cellulose, reducing solid waste, recuperation of degraded areas and build a better relationship with communities.

Chemical industry: Beraca – This producer of chemical products developed a project to support low-income families from the state of Piauí by making possible for them to have access to clean water and education.

Health services: Sabin – Supported at work with female predominance, Sabin Laboratories began a new management cycle to guarantee longevity and market expansion.

Telecommunications: Algar Telecom – This company developed a recycling project which turns an acrylic canvas into school materials and recycled bags produced by inmates and distributed among low-income students, combining in this project environmental, educational and social objectives.

Transportation e-Logistic: Grupo Libra – This group, one of the biggest port and logistics operators in Brazil, invest in electrical equipment to reduce gas emissions with housing effects in its port operations.

This data reinforce companies’ tendency to adhere the sustainability matter. However, although there are some good initiatives and good results shown, it does not mean companies became sustainable throughout its broad context. A good action isolated to the strategy does not make the company sustainable.

Social corporative responsibility values such as ethic, transparency, respect for diversity, good working conditions, preoccupation with community and environment influence employee’s vision of the company. Therefore, the more ideas get associated with this practice; more of these actions will have positive repercussion.

After this research evaluation, we inquire how the sustainable face of a company is reflecting and collaborating for talent management policies. With that in mind, we also evaluated the results of the 2014’s “Great Place to Work Brazil (GPTW)” research, published by Época Magazine and focused on political, business and economic areas in Brazil.

In this publication, 1.095 companies participated and more than 73 thousand employees answered a special quiz. It evaluated criteria such as care towards people, the level of trust and prudence, openness to dialogue, hiring practices and how new employees are welcomed. After analysing these answers and grading them, the “2014’s 130 best companies to work for in Brazil” were defined (ÉPOCA, 2014).

Unlike previous research, we will not present detailed results of the ranking. What we will highlight, however, is that out of 61 companies listed as more sustainable on the first research, only 15 also appeared on the list of 130 best companies to work for. This means that only 25% of Brazil’s most sustainable companies are also considered the best companies to work for, according to research methods from GPTW. If we consider the first 18 from the best companies ranking, according to data presented in this section, only five are both considered ‘best to work for’ and ‘sustainable’, representing a little more
Sustainability and ethics as attraction factor

than 25%. They are Volvo, Grupo Rio Quente, Sabin, Algar Telecom and Zanzini (a special category).

A definitive conclusion would require more information, including a visit to companies, an in-depth study of processes and interviews with managers and employees. This result does not mean that companies that have not been singled out in both surveys are not performing actions correctly in every step necessary for sustainability and retention of talent. But, by crossing data from both researches, that when a company decides to bet in sustainable practices and its image, it does not always impact the employee’s perception of the company, especially when taken actions are part of the strategy and daily routine, actually turning out to be counter-productive.

The systematisation of strategies and the monitoring of the results achieved in the management of ethics and sustainability will bring to the company the learning and the opportunity to build an attractive environment for the best professionals. In addition, the monitoring of results is indispensable for the implementation of any value to the company.

7 Conclusion

To orchestrate and manage effective talent management strategies, the first step is to recognise that intellectual capital is an intangible asset and that it creates value. However, the word value cannot be used as attraction or retention factor in monetary terms. Current talent generation value factors such as brand image, learning environment and ethical values. Together, these elements stimulate the feeling of belonging and identification with the company.

Ethical values collaborate with strategies to attract and retain the best talents and are obtainable in absolute integrity at the institutional level, surpassing conflicting moral values of interested parts. Adoption of sustainability as a strategic element is part of incorporating ethics in business since they tend to promote a sustainable society and mutual business comprehension of multiple stakeholders.

Although there are competitions with other activities such as entrepreneurship, many talents of this new generation tend to construct their professional careers in business environments considered more secure and stable. However, they will increasingly wish and claim that business spaces become compatible with materialisation of their various projects, which goes through the learning environment, development, cooperation and positive legacy constructions to society and the environment.

These claims can only be answered by companies that really promote a revision of policies and processes and have ethic and sustainability as pillars of action permeating through business. Overall, these are just social-environmental actions that do not resist to changes in the company’s management body.

Sustainable companies have enhanced the ability to retain talents and attract those who are in the market, based on the opportunity to share values and the dialogue established with its stakeholders, including employees. Therefore, sustainability is the biggest investment an organisation can do. Human working environment, ethical management, respect for the differences, the spirit of citizenship and learning incentive throughout life: That attribute set can attract and retain professionals and their intellectual capital.
Finally, it is the construction and support of an image and organisation culture with attractive values that inspire a talent to be a part of an organisation. This highly valued and intangible active is the future leader, responsible for changes in working dynamics, as well as responsible for impacts in global economy development.

References


