Pop Quiz! Why does sustainability matter?

One of the INSEAD founding values is academic rigor and relevance. One might assume that means INSEAD MBAs are tested from day one on the latest trends affecting global business. That is absolutely correct.

On the first day of Introduction to General Management, a foundational course in the MBA Programme, INSEAD Professors Felipe Monteiro and Gabriel Szulanski engage each new class in Singapore and Fontainebleau with a pop quiz on sustainability. The sustainability quiz is comprised of questions designed to test student knowledge on the definition of sustainability, progress towards global goals and preferences for action. Quiz questions include:

- How do you define sustainability in a business model?
- How many Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are there?
- In 2020, what percentage of professionally managed financial assets were invested in sustainable investment products?
- What is your most important sustainability goal?

The quiz translates key concepts of sustainability into thought-provoking questions and can help identify sustainability champions. The quiz should kickstart discussions and provoke perspectives about sustainability. But is it valuable to students?
Professor Gabriel Szulanski certainly thinks so, saying “Through this quiz, we don't just test knowledge, we discover the unsung heroes of sustainability among us – the passionate and proactive, those who are already charting the way to a greener tomorrow.”

A pop quiz isn’t always popular. So after this year’s opening day quiz, Professor Monteiro and Professor Szulanski reached out and asked the MBA Class of ‘24J students to provide their perspectives on the value of the exercise. Their responses, paraphrased and presented in their own words, are promising for the future of business.

**Arpita Guha**

One of the reasons I wanted to study at INSEAD was because I watched videos of the INSEAD Hoffmann Institute at the SDG Tent at Davos. I felt that the school’s impact objectives aligned with mine. To my pleasant surprise, the very first lecture had a quiz on sustainability. Watching the entire class get animated over positive social change followed by discussions on our experiences in the impact space was a fitting introduction to how intertwined business and sustainability will be in the coming decade.

**Simantika Mohapatra**

The pop quiz was really interesting, with so many facts about sustainability. I come from a financial services background and haven’t worked in this space, but I am interested in sustainability and climate change. I personally observe the changes in climate in the past few years and it’s quite concerning for me. I have been meaning to work in this space for quite some time and contribute to alleviating this issue in a more meaningful way.

**Nancy Mittal**

I really like the Sustainability Quiz because it helped me identify my blind spots. For example, I was amazed to find out that global emission from air travel accounts for only two percent of global emissions. The quiz made me realise the growing interest of people in sustainability.

**Hunter Luber**

The Sustainability Quiz was quite informative, and it was a great way for us to highlight key misconceptions surrounding the ESG and sustainability spaces. I was able to have success in the exercise due to a personal interest in the topic and a background in international law, which often considers cases with reference to a
sustainability framework. The exercise made clear certain deficiencies in my knowledge which I am very interested to explore further moving forward.

**Benjamin Pierre**

This quiz was a great way to refresh the knowledge that is necessary to answer environmental and social questions. I was happy to see some questions I had never encountered before on this particular subject.

**Anubhav Nayak**

The quiz was eye-opening and re-affirmed some of the scary things we have been reading every time an extreme climate event is in the news. This was absolutely the right way to start the day and our programme in the larger context. There's no business to be done in an uninhabitable planet. Personally, I worked in the e-commerce space so even during Covid, when people said our worldwide emissions were down, I saw a lot of the waste and emissions we were putting out there by virtue of the supply chain. So plenty of work to be done!

**The Path Forward**

Reflecting on the exercise, Professor Felipe Monteiro says, “the quiz enabled an insightful conversation not only with those students who were already working in the sustainability space but more broadly with those who want to dedicate more time to it during the MBA.” At INSEAD, those students will have the opportunity to explore sustainability and social impact.

*The Hoffmann Global Institute for Business and Society would like to thank Professor Felipe Monteiro, Professor Szulanski and all our MBA students for elevating sustainability as part of the core INSEAD MBA programme. For more information on the Sustainability Quiz, please read the 2022 Pop Quiz story.*

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