Accelerating Corporate Sustainability in Asia
THE ATKISSON ACCELERATOR
Systems Tools, Frameworks, Methods and Processes to Support CSR and Corporate Sustainability

The challenge of sustainable development creates unprecedented demands for learning, thinking, planning and decision-making. Economic, social, and environmental performance must all be improved, usually all at the same time, and often against a backdrop of one or more critically negative trends. All too often, these trends act together to reinforce each other.

As if that were not complicated enough, the challenge is often compounded by the need to work in diverse, multi-stakeholder groups -- and to achieve consensus on a set of actions that everyone believes will actually produce results.

Finally, initiatives seeking to promote sustainability are often doing so under a sense of time urgency, with limited resources. They do not have time or money to waste on suboptimal solutions or difficult-to-achieve agreements.
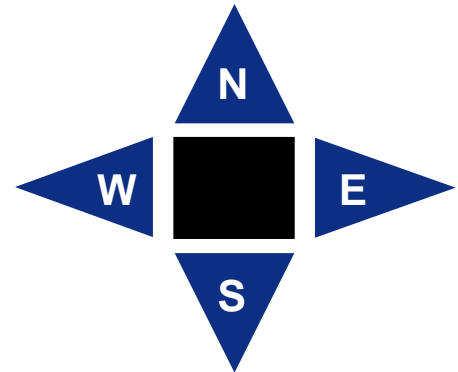
We developed a toolkit called the *Accelerator* to address these needs, building on a dozen years of work with sustainability and community development initiatives around the world. While Accelerator as an integrated process was first introduced in 2001, it is built on basic sustainability tools and methods that we have been using since the early 1990s.

Accelerator helps you manage the complexity through collaboration and capacity building, and to speed up the process of change. It supports a continuous learning cycle, so that you can keep refining your understanding of what sustainable development means, how it works, and how to make it happen. The Accelerator toolkit is currently being adopted by diverse business sectors, in Europe, North American and Asia-Pacific, including mining, power generation, textile manufacturing, pulp and paper manufacturing and others.

The primary tools include: (1) *Compass,* which is the overall name for a family of tools used for framing, defining, assessing and measuring progress towards sustainability, and; (2) *Pyramid*, a versatile group process tool that can be used for introducing sustainable development, or for planning workshops for creating new initiatives, projects, visions, or strategies, and as a multi-stakeholder process for building consensus around a specific course or action. The tools have been packaged together under the name "*Accelerator"* because we believe that using them will speed up progress towards genuine sustainability.

THE COMPASS OF SUSTAINABILITY

Compass, aka "The Compass of Sustainability," is the overall name for a family of tools used for framing, defining, assessing, and measuring progress towards sustainability. With Compass, you can create indicators of sustainability for a company, city, or small community; assess the sustainability performance of a specific company or project; or simply communicate the basics of sustainability to people in terms they can easily understand.

COMPASS

Compass is named for its core image and framework, a compass with the four North-East-South-West directional points replaced by the four key dimensions of sustainability: **Nature, Economy, Society,** and **Well- Being.** While this formulation is based on extensive research, it is also easy for anyone to understand ... and remember.

Compass consists of handbooks, spreadsheets, sample meeting agendas and work plans, reporting templates, everything you need to create guiding indicators and assessments from sustainability. It has supported small businesses, small communities, military bases, governments, and regional initiatives. (Follow the links from www.AtKisson.com to review sample reports and websites.)

You can also use our performance scaling method to create a **Compass Index**, which takes a range of indicators and converts them to a performance score on the scale of 0 to 100, where 0 equals "collapse, worst-case scenario" and 100 equals "ideal conditions for sustainability."

PYRAMID

Pyramid (aka "Building the Pyramid") is a very versatile group-process tool that can be used in many ways: as an intensive capacity-building workshop on sustainable development; as a collaborative planning workshop for creating new initiatives, projects, visions, or strategies; and as a multi-stakeholder process for building consensus around a course of action. (It can actually do all three at the same time.)

Pyramid is named for the workshop's structure, and for the three dimensional model that is often built during the course of the workshop. The process guides people through a review of sustainability indicators, systems analysis, innovation processes, and strategic planning for implementation.

The **Pyramid** planning process has been used to support national-level land-use and development planning, the creation of local-level projects to reduce greenhouse gases,

and many things in between. **Building the Pyramid** has been used to train a core of regional change agents who then have led a range of initiatives, and it has resulted in a major change in international strategy for sustainable development. It is one of the most powerful tools in **Accelerator**.

The process is also designed for maximum participation and engagement, which builds energy and enthusiasm and supports teambuilding. Designed for seamless integration with **Compass**-based indicator processes, **Pyramid** can also be adapted to many other popular frameworks, or tailored to your specific framework.

ISIS: AN INTEGRATED MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

ISIS, which stands for **Indicators, Systems, Innovation, and Strategy,** is primarily a methodology. It is integrated into other Accelerator tools (especially **Pyramid**), but it also stands alone. The ISIS Management Framework gives you the perspective you need to review a company or organization's existing management systems, assess what's missing from a sustainability perspective, fill in the blanks, and integrate the results into a more coherent whole.

The **ISIS** method also serves as the sequence for those who want to use **Accelerator** as the primary guide to creating and managing a sustainable development program for a company, city, region, organization, or any other entity. **ISIS** is both the simplest, and the most fundamental, of the tools in the Accelerator suite. If you can understand and apply **ISIS**, you can do sustainable development successfully.

CONCLUSION

While *Accelerator* is still a relatively new set of tools, it has already been used successfully in many different contexts and cultures. It has proven itself adaptable to a number of different sustainability frameworks, from "Triple Bottom Line" to "Natural Step" to our own "Compass of Sustainability." From the reports of users, we can say that it has produced satisfying, and in some cases quite exemplary, results.

Experience with a wide variety of groups, in settings throughout Southeast Asia (and in the rest of the world), confirm that the model is effective. In our practice, clients have often found it to be an improvement over their existing strategic planning methods in a more general sense. Their testimonials lead us to believe that the process works well on a variety of levels. Workshop leaders and participants report that the process:

- Teaches them to think in a clear and systematic way about what sustainable development means, in tangible terms.

- Helps them understand the complexity of the systems they work in, and gives them critical insights about how, and where, to make change happen.

- Stimulates them with new ideas and creative thinking about what kinds of change are possible.

- Supports their understanding of how different stakeholders view the issues, and broadens their perspective.

- Makes it easier to achieve consensus on what actions are the most appropriate and effective next steps.

Building Competency through an Accelerator Intensive

The AtKisson Group periodically offers two- to three-day intensive training sessions to build familiarity with the **Accelerator** tools and to help participants increase their capacity for change agentry in complex systems. These sessions have proven very valuable to participants, whether or not they go on to become formal Licensees.

Of course, we also use our tools in direct work with clients, and one way to build competency and familiarity is to engage us as consultants. We can then plan an initiative that includes the development of your own competency to use our methods, resulting in a Licensing Agreement.

Licensing Accelerator

While the AtKisson Group is a private consultancy, we are dedicated to the ideals of sustainable development. We currently require that trainings etc. conducted using *Accelerator* be done under the terms of our Licensing Agreement (just as computer software is licensed); but this is principally to insure the quality of the presentation and implementation of the tools. Groups interested in becoming licensed to use the Accelerator tools are warmly invited to contact the AtKisson Group for more information.

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