

## Extended Abstract

### Efficiency Awareness – Prerequisite for Resource Management in Companies

Author: Schmidt, M. (Pforzheim University)

#### Keywords:

resource efficiency, corporate management, success factors

Since the energy and material prices on the world markets have risen, energy and material flow management in companies are not just an ecological game. Instead, they have become much more of an economic necessity. No company can afford to produce inefficiently in the long term and leave potentials for savings untapped. The very fear that a competitor could procure cost advantages in this way should lead companies to develop their own efforts.

Despite this, promotion measures and pilot projects are repeatedly necessary to make the significance of this thematic area clear to companies, especially to SMEs. Many promotion programmes in Germany have for a long time now been looking deliberately at the key indicator of costs, which is the most understandable aspect for companies. Although in many promotion programmes it has been shown that significant economic potentials for saving exist, actions often fail to follow. Success stories from pilot projects do not automatically generate followers in the respective branches, as often expected.

While the reasons for this were initially sought in technical issues or financial obstacles, more recent analyses and evaluations of such promotion programmes reveal that there is a multiple-layer problem of the corporate management here. Questions of corporate policy, corporate culture and corporate strategy are crucial for the innovation and action capability of such enterprises and whether they then really implement the potentials recognised.

As a consequence, the obstacles cannot be eliminated with simple promotion measures, technical consultancy or new analysis tools, but instead require a mix of various measures in order to achieve a kind of "Efficiency Awareness" among the target groups in the companies. This awareness depends on the one hand strongly on the significance that the general public, policy-makers and leading consulting firms accord to the thematic area and whether something along the lines of a new management method can evolve. On the other hand, the necessary competences must also be present within the companies. Training and upgrading sessions for managers and technical staff help when it comes to being able to identify and appraise points of approach in the specific company. What is necessary for staff in companies today applies all the more so for future management elites. Thus the universities too will have to devote more attention to this field and take the subject of resource efficiency into consideration in their curricula.

Within the companies the problem of resource efficiency cannot be separated from the other management problems that confront them. Whether and to what extent a company succeeds in implementing appropriate efficiency potentials depends very strongly on how well the management basically responds to current challenges. Various strategies for overcoming these obstacles can be developed from this, but this must always be done in the light of the organisation of a company and its scope for action. To this end, in a study by the Institute for Applied Research Pforzheim, archetypes of companies were formed that behave in different ways as regards resource efficiency and for which specific strategies and measures have to be developed.