

A Work Project, presented as part of the requirements for the Award of a Master's degree in Impact Entrepreneurship and Innovation from the Nova School of Business and Economics.

**Accelerating Corporate Sustainability by Empowering Individuals: Identifying
Bottlenecks with Sustainable Transformation**

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11-12-2023

Abstract

This research paper illustrates how CEBRA, a student-designed program based on inner development, can support corporates on their journey to tackle current bottlenecks with sustainable transformation by empowering key individuals within the organisation. The research is built on three individual areas of research to define the problem, understand corporates' internal landscape of sustainable innovation, and test the potential product with young talents to assess the outcome. In this paper, only one of the three individual parts is discussed more in depth, highlighting the bottlenecks with sustainable transformation.

Keywords: sustainable transformation, sustainable innovation, inner development, product-market fit, organisational change, innovation

This work used infrastructure and resources funded by Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia (UID/ECO/00124/2013, UID/ECO/00124/2019 and Social Sciences DataLab, Project 22209), POR Lisboa (LISBOA-01-0145-FEDER-007722 and Social Sciences DataLab, Project 22209) and POR Norte (Social Sciences DataLab, Project 22209)

Table of Contents

1	<i>Introduction (Group part)</i>	3
1.1	Context and Aim.....	3
1.2	Problem Analysis.....	4
1.3	A Novel Approach: Inner Development For Outer Change	6
1.4	Opportunity Identification: Empowering Individuals.....	8
1.5	The Field Lab.....	11
2	<i>Bottlenecks with Sustainable Transformation (Elin Ap��ll)</i>	18
2.1	Literature Review.....	18
2.2	Methodology	24
2.3	Findings	27
2.4	Limitations	31
2.5	Conclusion.....	32
3	<i>Product Market-Fit (Group part)</i>	34
3.1	Tying it Together	34
3.2	Target Customer	34
3.3	Underserved Needs.....	36
3.4	Product Value Proposition	37
3.5	Product Features	39
3.6	MVP Design	40
4	<i>Conclusion</i>	42
4.1	Future Steps	43
	<i>References</i>	45

1 Introduction (Group part)

1.1 Context and Aim

Scientists have for more than a decade stressed the urgent need for sustainable transitioning (Clark 2001), requiring various changes in the organisational structure such as values, beliefs, norms, and behavioural patterns to incorporate more sustainable practices. With today's pressure to transform into a more sustainability-driven organisation and meet the Sustainable Development Goals¹, companies have come to the realisation that their traditional operational methods are no longer appropriate to facilitate their profound transformation (Dhanda et al. 2021). However, research shows that companies acknowledge the need to change but lack strategies and methods for sustainable implementation (Kiesnere and Baumgartner 2019). This is because incorporating new operational strategies requires various skills to drive development forward both from the individual and organisational levels to make sure the change is long-lasting (Deloitte 2023).

This research paper examines how CEBRA, a student-designed venture, can support corporates on their journey towards sustainable transformation by empowering key individuals within their organisations. The paper is built on three individual areas of research to define the problem from an organisational perspective, understand corporates' internal landscape of sustainable innovation, and test a potential product with young talents to assess its feasibility and impact. As a result, this allowed for the construction of a comprehensive case for the product-market fit of CEBRA.

¹ Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are global objectives that aim to tackle numerous challenges and encourage sustainable development in society (UNDP n.d.).

1.2 Problem Analysis

Whilst 2023 is the halfway mark to the 2030 deadline for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the latest reports show that global progress remains insufficient. The 2023 Special Edition of the SDG Progress Report reveals a concerning status, indicating that merely 12% of approximately 140 tracked targets are on track, while nearly half show varying degrees of deviation from the intended trajectory (United Nations 2023). With the global population's expansion intensifying the demand for resources and contributing to increased greenhouse gas emissions, as noted by Princiotta and Loughlin (2014), urgent action is imperative. The UN Sustainable Development Goals Report 2022 emphasises the worsening situation, citing a 65% rise in global reliance on natural resources between 2000 and 2019 and a 6% increase in energy-related CO₂ emissions in 2021. Forest destruction escalated in 2021, placing nearly 40,000 species at risk of extinction. Additionally, plastic pollution, human rights violations across value chains and inequalities remain a pressing issue many companies face (United Nations 2022). This calls for urgent attention from businesses and organisations to transform current business models and find innovative solutions to supply the increasing demand in a sustainable way (Bornay-Barrachina et al. 2023).

This awareness has gained considerable traction recently, propelling sustainability into the mainstream. Currently, most of the world's largest companies set specific goals and publish sustainability reports. Notably, approximately 30% of the biggest public companies in Europe have made commitments to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050 (Winston 2021).

This surge in corporate sustainability is not just a voluntary trend; it is enforced in recent regulations, such as Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) criteria, compelling companies to transparently disclose their sustainability efforts (Lokuwaduge and De Silva 2022). This change in the regulatory landscape, aimed at reducing falsification and

greenwashing strategies² signals a significant shift in the importance of sustainability within the corporate landscape. Additionally, the increasing phenomenon of ‘conscious quitting’—where individuals, particularly millennials and younger workers, actively seek environmentally friendly employment opportunities—is a prominent trend shaping the workforce landscape (KPMG 2023).

As a result, businesses, especially those not initially built for sustainability, are now compelled to undergo a sustainable transformation to align with societal expectations and regulations. Sustainable transformation, as defined by Paul Polman (2021) and ENGIE Impact (n.d.), involves profound changes that incorporate social, environmental, and economic aspects into the core business. This complex process demands a deep understanding of evolving technologies, customised investment plans, stakeholder involvement, courageous decision-making, and cultural change. While awareness of the need for sustainability is growing, there is still a gap between the intention and the integration of sustainability into the core business. This is reflected in Deloitte’s interviews with 2,016 C-level executives, which show that companies are mainly focused on finding quick fixes and minimising the impact of their existing operations. In contrast, companies are less inclined to take action that affects the very nature of their business models, highlighting the challenge of fully embedding climate considerations into their culture and core business (Deloitte 2023). As a result, a significant number of companies are still in the early stages of their sustainable transformation, despite the increasing pressure on companies and the growing number of communicated targets.

The gap in integrating sustainability into the core business is also addressed by business leaders like Paul Polman, the former CEO of Unilever, whose philosophy of Net Positivity transcends

² Greenwashing is a term that refers to when companies are spreading misleading or false information about their sustainability efforts (Lokuwaduge and De Silva 2022).

the traditional paradigm of avoiding harm; it calls for companies to proactively drive positive change (Polman 2021). It challenges the conventional profit-centric approach, advocating for companies to embed purpose at the core of their business models and create value directly from the company's ethical foundations. Thereby, Polman advocates for a fundamental shift in the corporate mindset and states that the net positive journey starts with introspection, requiring individuals within companies to examine their personal purpose and commitment to making ethically sound choices.

1.3 A Novel Approach: Inner Development For Outer Change

There is a growing field of research that supports this notion of a mindset shift and argues that the preoccupation with external systems and solutions has often overshadowed the importance of the 'inner worlds' of individuals within organisations. Yet, these personal realms and mindsets are central to sustainability actions and possess the potential to catalyse systemic change (O'Brien and Leichenko 2019). In order to sufficiently solve today's complex problems and find innovative approaches to integrate sustainability into the core business, there is a need for a range of cognitive and emotional skills and other capacities that go beyond what most people normally learn in school and higher education levels (Dondi et al. 2021). Based on this insight, the Inner Development Goal initiative was founded in Sweden in 2022 with the aim to further define the most important skills needed for this transformation and to draw attention to the need to improve them. Through extensive research with international experts in the field of adult development and sustainability education, a framework has been created that includes 23 capacities and skills that are considered most important for individual inner growth leading to outer change (Inner Development Goals 2022). To give a definition, the concept of inner-outer change implies that an individual's internal state impacts the external circumstances which pertain to how an individual feels and thinks impact the surroundings in life (Sasson 2022). The qualities included in the framework such as self-awareness, emotional intelligence,

mindfulness, resilience, and ethical decision-making, were found to be essential for individuals to drive sustainable transformation within organisations (Inner Development Goals 2022).

Different resources underline the potential of inner development, to illustrate this; Kallbekken and colleagues conducted a study that showed that beliefs and personal values are the most important factors of a pro-environmental behaviour, underscoring the cruciality of individual-level change (Kallbekken et al. 2019). Developing individual-level change is what fosters the sense of responsibility to create a more sustainable environment. Redman and Wiek (2021) addressed the need for individual engagement for sustainable development. They identified eight necessary skills, with five established ones; normative, interpersonal, systems-thinking, strategic, and anticipatory, which can help individuals from different sectors to drive sustainable transformation in society. In addition, a study by Ruedy and Schweitzer (2010) found a significant correlation between ethical decision-making and mindfulness. The study showed that engaging in mindfulness practices is associated with increased ethical intention and decreased likelihood of ethical violations. The researchers concluded that individuals with high levels of mindfulness tend to behave more ethically, uphold ethical standards, and approach ethical decision-making with principled considerations (Ruedy & Schweitzer, 2010). Essentially, the concept of sustainability combines both social and personal imperative to take responsibility for present actions that have an impact on future outcomes (Carmi and Arnon 2014).

As a result, a first shift in perspective has gained traction that recognises that reaching the SDGs and achieving sustainable excellence goes beyond the mere development of green technologies or compliance with environmental regulations. Instead, it hinges on understanding, influencing, and building on the mindsets, attitudes, values, and behaviours of individuals operating within an organisation (Ives et al. 2019). This paradigm underscores the dynamic interplay between individual and organisational behaviour, acknowledging that sustainable transformation is not

solely an organisational endeavour but a deeply embedded cultural shift, starting with each individual (Polman 2021). It revolves around cultivating a collective commitment to sustainability, where every member of the organisation is not only aware of the importance of sustainable practices but actively engages in shaping and driving these practices (Inner Development Goals 2022). This inner and cultural transformation is instrumental in making sustainability an integral, enduring, and intrinsic component of the organisational fabric, rather than a superficial or transitory imposition.

In summary, inner development interventions can have a significant impact on individuals and their ethical decision-making within organisations. By cultivating mindfulness and promoting values aligned with intrinsic aims, individuals are more likely to recognise ethical dilemmas, uphold ethical standards, and make choices that prioritise the well-being of all stakeholders along the value chain. The practical implications of this approach can be significant if the potential of individuals as agents of change is supported. This can not only increase pro-social and pro-environmental behaviour at individual and organisational levels but ultimately lead to systemic change in the long term (Wamsler et al. 2021).

1.4 Opportunity Identification: Empowering Individuals

As outlined above, inner development interventions can empower individuals to become changemakers or intrapreneurs, in their organisation. Thus, introducing the individual and analysing their potential as changemakers unveils a significant dimension to the discussion around accelerating corporate sustainability.

First, the term *changemaker* must be defined. As described by Ashoka, an organisation that coined the term, defines it as *someone who is taking creative action to solve a social problem* (Rahman et al. 2016, 2), thus characterising changemakers as *intentional about solving a social problem, motivated to act and creative* (Rahman et al. 2016, 9). In recent years, the changemakers who work within organisations are also referred to as *intrapreneurs* – individuals

with entrepreneurial mindsets, who investigate their organisation for resources to innovate (Pinchot III 1987, 14-19). Further, both terms were used interchangeably in this research paper to describe individuals who use the company resources to act on sustainable or social causes. Research suggests that the role of changemakers and intrapreneurs are crucial for accelerating sustainable innovation in companies, as Coakes et al. (2011) state that “*without the presence of entrepreneurial activity to exploit opportunities as they arise within organisations, innovation remains little more than an aspirational destination than a sustainable tangible one*” (Coakes et al. 2011, 31).

Looking at today’s workforce in the next step, the latest research from the Inner Development Goal organisation and McKinsey (2021) demonstrated that business leaders lack essential capacities as well as knowledge to be able to shift towards a more net positive behaviour (Inner Development Goals 2022). While individuals do have the potential to drive sustainable transformation, recent research reveals that the growing complexity, risks, and uncertainty associated with climate and humanitarian crises, are contributing to heightened feelings of anxiety and overwhelm. Remarkably, over 70% of young adults express feeling overwhelmed by the responsibility to address climate change, indicating a notable incongruity between expectations placed on the 'purpose generation' and their actual capacity for effecting change (Force of Nature 2023)³. This underscores the importance of acknowledging critical issues such as eco-anxiety, which relates to feelings of stress, overwhelm, fear and grief towards the climate and ecological crisis (Force of Nature 2023). In addition to that, the perceived risks associated with embracing more sustainable practices, and the intricate nature of the systems and complex problems that individuals, particularly decision-makers confront, add to the challenge of

³ Force of Nature is an organisation that empowers young people to turn their climate anxiety into agency (Force of Nature Education 2023).

sustainable transformation (Trujillo-Barrera et al. 2016). Exploring these aspects and the tasks that individuals need to perform for organisational change more in detail is essential to understanding what skills and capacities individuals need to meet these complex challenges.

The Future of Jobs Report (World Economic Forum 2020) predicts that by 2025, the most sought-after skills will be primarily soft skills such as communication, responsible leadership and critical thinking. Conversely, recent research shows that a significant proportion of respondents feel their organisations lack sufficient learning and development (L&D) training to cultivate these soft skills (Bersin 2018). Furthermore, nearly 90% of executives admit that they currently have or expect to have skills gaps in their workforce in the coming years (McKinsey & Company 2021).

Taking a closer look at higher education, the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) emphasises to integrate "*a broader range of ethical, social and environmental considerations into business education*" (AACSB 2022). This highlights a growing awareness of the need to enhance the inner capacities of the future business workforce to address global challenges, although progress in this regard is observed to be gradual. This is also evident in McKinsey's Future Citizen Skills report (2021), which presents 56 skills grouped into four overarching categories - cognitive, digital, interpersonal, and self-leadership. The study shows that while people with higher levels of education are generally better at various skills, certain interpersonal and self-leadership skills, such as self-confidence, coping with uncertainty, courage, empathy, coaching and conflict resolution, do not consistently correlate with higher levels of education. In particular, for skills such as humility, higher levels of education were associated with lower levels of performance, challenging the assumption that more education will universally lead to improved performance in these specific areas (Dondi et al. 2021). All the above highlight a gap not only in the education system but also in current approaches to learning and development. Integrating the concept of inner-outer change

holistically into the corporate context is, therefore, an opportunity for corporates to better harness the potential of individuals as change makers in their organisations.

In summary, the findings above show that companies need and want to make a significant change in their current operational approach, making it vital for them to educate and empower current and future talent with the right skills to successfully navigate the complexity with sustainable transformation. The growing recognition, yet new approach of working with the inner human dimension points towards an opportunity to accelerate business sustainability by empowering individuals with the right skills. More specifically, it shows that there is a need to raise awareness of the importance of these inner capacities and the opportunity to provide training that adequately develops them within the workforce.

1.5 The Field Lab

Context on CEBRA

Having identified the opportunity and inspired by personal aspirations, the idea was born to create a student-led venture (CEBRA) that would contribute to raising awareness and building inner capacities, bringing inner development to the corporate world, and thus accelerating sustainable change. A first solution was outlined in the second academic semester, based on the following assumptions: (1) Companies need to change but do not have the skills or tools to do so sufficiently. They face the challenge of not knowing how to change and where to change. (2) Inner development is a key element as it addresses the principles, mindsets and actions that shape behaviour. It equips an individual with the right skills to overcome current challenges and become changemakers. (3) Equipping leads to change, meaning that when individuals are equipped with the right skills and qualities, they change organisations and systems. (4) There is a gap in the development of these skills in higher education. This gap was underlined by interviews with several professors at Nova SBE conducted in the second academic semester and McKinsey's research in Chapter 1.4.

Based on these assumptions, a first possible solution has been developed:

Product: CEBRA wanted to create an L&D program to equip talents with the right skills to drive sustainable transformation, based on Inner Development Goals. The idea was outlined as a 9-month long program to incorporate all skill sets from the IDGs and allow for a long-term change through comprehensive learning experiences that transform mindsets. It focused on supporting individuals on their journey towards self-development that later contributes to the transformation of a business. This product was mapped out roughly as a first draft and based its value-creation on the existing research of the IDGs.

Target Group: Due to the personal connection of being addressed as the *Purpose Generation* and the visible trend of youth activism on climate change (Cloughton 2021, 1-9), CEBRA decided to focus on young talents as users. To reach the ones with the greatest potential impact on for-profit organisations and to acknowledge the prevailing gap in sustainable skills among individuals emerging from business and economic academic backgrounds, CEBRA decided to target business students and graduates between the ages of 20 to 30, already working in their first or second job.

Business Model: CEBRA's business model is strategically aligned with a market gap resulting from the evolving sentiments of environmentally conscious young people concerned about climate change (Lawrance et al. 2022, 726-738). On the one hand, those who want to pursue their careers in a sustainable way lack both the competences and the employers who would allow them to be developed. On the other hand, companies face increasing challenges in attracting top talent, as environmentally conscious individuals prefer not to work for highly polluting organisations. In response to this gap, CEBRA has designed an internal development program aimed at equipping individuals with the skills necessary to drive sustainable change within organisations. This program is designed to be offered to companies seeking to attract young talent by providing an engaging internal development course alongside their daily job.

This innovative approach not only provides young aspiring changemakers with free access to a transformative inner development program but also helps them realise purposeful careers and develop into responsible leaders of the future. Meanwhile, companies benefit by gaining tools to attract and engage the most ambitious, environmentally conscious talent.

In the next step, the CEBRA team presented this idea to potential investors where three major weaknesses were pointed out:

1. Which exact problems in the sustainable transformation do you help companies solve?
2. Who buys your product? What is the value you offer for the user? And which exact jobs need to be done to add value to the buyer?
3. What exactly are you offering as a solution? How do you ensure the program and features deliver the promised value?

The critical feedback received accurately addressed both the problem and solution spaces that CEBRA had explored, highlighting a notable lack of product-market fit. This notion, defined as the ability to offer a product that adequately meets market needs (Olsen 2015), is central to CEBRA, as it aligns with its dual objective of developing a solution that not only creates positive impact, but also ensures financial sustainability. As a result, this field lab was designed thoughtfully to dive deeper into the identified weaknesses, gain new insights, and build a solution that meets the needs of the customer sufficiently. To systematically address these weaknesses simultaneously, each team member focused on a specific area and formulated individual research methodologies tailored to the respective objectives. To maintain common goals and ensure a coherent approach, Dan Olsen's (2015) product-market fit model (PMF) was chosen as the overarching framework for this research. Rooted in lean start-up principles, the PMF model allows for launching customer-desired products faster and with less risk compared to traditional methods (Blank 2018). Before CEBRA decided to incorporate the PMF model, other frameworks, such as the Business Model Canvas and Go-to-Market were also considered,

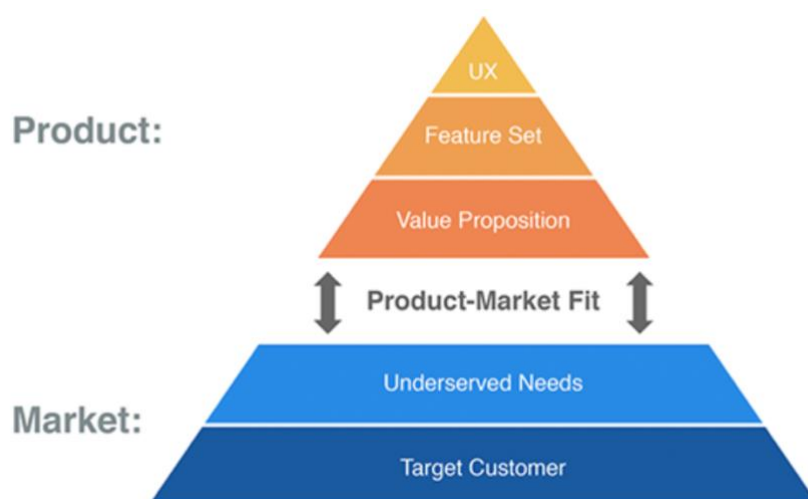
to determine which suited the needs of this venture the best. Thus, as the venture still needed to understand the target customer more in detail and conduct more research on potential product features the PMF model was more suitable to incorporate.

Product-Market Fit Model

As this field lab is conceptualised around the Product-Market Fit Model (PMF), it is important to outline the concept and further explain its importance before introducing the structure of this paper more in detail.

To reach product-market fit means that one has successfully built a product that meets the needs of the customers, creates customer value, and is better than other market alternatives (Lopes 2020). The model below represents a pyramid that symbolises the steps that are essential to reach PMF. Incorporating this model is essential for the success of CEBRA as it helps to solve the problem, define the ideal market, and understand the customers who need this product or service. CEBRA is an impact venture that aims to create meaningful impact whilst striving for financial sustainability, which is why the PMF model is vital to incorporate in the process as it also ensures that the targeted customer segment is interested in investing in this product.

Figure 1. Product-Market Fit model by Dan Olsen (2015)



Examining the lower layers of the model that covers the market, helps CEBRA to understand the real problem space from the buyer and the user perspective to define the target customers

and their unserved needs. It is important to focus on what the customers are lacking in current products that are available in the market to make sure that CEBRA facilitates and addresses this. Further, after the market is set it is important to go in-depth with the product plan – covering product value proposition, feature set, and UX. The value proposition helps to define the value of the product, by understanding the ways to surpass competitors with their offerings, as well as considering important factors like price and quality. The feature set and UX helps to specify functionality to build a viable product, test it, and receive critical feedback from customers to tweak and improve it accordingly. Overall, using this model helps to align with market demand, ensure business growth opportunities, and reduce the risks to reach long-term success (Olsen 2015).

Methodology and Structure of the Field Lab

In order to gather well-informed insights for each step of the PMF model and address the critical feedback of investors, individual research in three different areas was conducted simultaneously. The findings were then brought together again in the second part of the paper to inform the steps of the PMF model and achieve product-market fit. Below the individual research aims and methodological approaches are outlined more in detail:

1. The first individual paper focuses on the problem space, more specifically the organisational level of sustainable transformation. To examine the internal bottlenecks data from secondary sources, corporate sustainability reports, is gathered and primary research, more specifically interviews with high-level managers, is conducted to get the top-down perspective in a specific industry. The desired outcome of this paper is to understand the challenges that hinder companies from implementing a more sustainable operational approach on an organisational level, thereby understanding the target customer and their unserved needs, thus the problems CEBRA can help with, more in detail.

2. As this field lab aims to examine the potential of individuals to drive organisational change, interviews with existing intrapreneurs are conducted to understand the challenges and unserved needs of these individuals who create change from within. Additionally, secondary research is conducted to examine the market with a detailed benchmark analysis. This mixed method approach follows the objective of gaining in-depth insights and validating assumptions around the unserved needs of the user and the potential buyer from an individual perspective. As CEBRA aims to empower individuals, this research sheds light on how to do that in the best way, allowing for essential practical implications regarding the value proposition.
3. Following CEBRA's initial idea of creating an L&D program that empowers individuals by enhancing their inner capacities, the third individual project aims to better understand the scientific background and potential of inner-outer transformation and to lay the foundation for an evidence-based program. As part of the research, a prototype is developed and tested respectively with young talents which allows to test the feasibility of the approach in general but also to assess first product features and the extent to which they deliver the promised value. These insights are further used for the development of an MVP as part of the PMF in the second part of this paper. It is important to note that the research and product development carried out in this part were based on the assumptions at the start of the field lab, and therefore focus primarily on internal capacity building. Given the simultaneity and independence of the individual research efforts, the findings from the other two streams of research could not be incorporated into the product development phase.

After these three individual deep dives all the findings are brought together in the product-market fit model to design a solution that empowers individuals to accelerate corporate sustainability and is attractive to the market.

To summarise, the individual research of the three team members is split across three relevant areas, encompassing different methodologies that best serve the objective of gaining well-informed insights to achieve a product-market fit. All research conducted focuses on delivering practical implications for the further venture development of CEBRA whilst contributing to the emerging field of empowering individuals to drive sustainable transformation. This ambitious objective set for the field lab represents CEBRA's overarching aspiration of making a meaningful impact by guiding and supporting companies in their sustainable transformation journey.

2 Bottlenecks with Sustainable Transformation (Elin Apéll)

Context and Objectives

This individual paper aims to examine internal bottlenecks with sustainable corporate transformation to contribute to the creation of CEBRA by looking into the problem space more in-depth. The goal is to gather data from both primary and secondary sources to compose a paper that presents various perspectives of information adding valuable insights to the PMF model. Qualitative interviews with professionals are conducted combined with the collection of information from various corporate reports that are available online. Previous research studies have mainly focused on the lack of knowledge around the term sustainability, which parallels how corporates behave and engage in sustainable initiatives. It is crucial to build knowledge and examine internal factors that could interplay in the sustainable behaviour of corporates to understand the whole picture. The focus shall then be on identifying the bottlenecks that play an active role when a company is trying to shift to a more sustainable business and analyse how they can be addressed. The results of this individual paper reveal that various bottlenecks impact the progress of implementing sustainability in the organisation, but three major ones were identified: cost, sustainability implemented into the core business, and having a sufficient change management approach.

2.1 Literature Review

This chapter highlights the previous research findings related to the bottlenecks of sustainable transformation in corporations to understand the problem space more in-depth. It examines success factors such as change management, communication, and stakeholder engagement to highlight strategies that are necessary for successful sustainability implementation, as well as challenges with making a sustainable transition within the organisation.

The concept of sustainability can have varied interpretations as well as meanings depending on the individual. Bartlett (2012) claims that we should establish a clear understanding of sustainability before continuing to use the term. A widely used definition found in a report by Brundtland (1987,41) is “*Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs*”. This advocates a responsible approach to development, meaning that growth is essential, but it should not negatively impact our environment, future generations, and our well-being.

2.1.1 Challenges with Sustainable Transformation

As introduced in chapter 1.2, there has been a growing number of global initiatives in the recent decade to direct organisations towards incorporating more sustainability in their work (Pranugrahaning et al. 2021). This is because sustainability has become a critical aspect that encourages organisations to be more mindful of their operations, pushing them to take more responsibility. Corporations taking initiative and responsibility for sustainability is highly necessary today due to the increased demand and interest from consumers but also for their long-term vision to stay competitive in the market (Tai and Chuang 2014).

Today there are far more external pressures on companies to integrate sustainable development practices, and according to Hall and Vredenburg (2003) neglecting the pressures can result in future risks. The reality is that companies are having difficulty with sustainable development pressures due to the complex nature of the subject and coming up with sufficiently creative new solutions (Hall and Vredenburg 2003). This illustrates the expectations that are hovering over companies as well as the internal challenges with implementing sustainable strategies that meet external expectations. The implementation process is not the only difficult task but also finding the right framework that fits the core business and can be adapted easily by employees.

Making an organisational change can encompass both challenges and opportunities due to the various factors that interplay. Boston Consulting Group (BCG) stated that leaders have a

difficult time turning their ambitions into execution which demonstrates the challenge of implementing the desired change in the company as it requires many distinct phases (Santamarta et al. 2023). Leaders should therefore try to build a deep understanding of their current bottlenecks and apply established methods to manage them to attempt to reach their internal objectives instead of only planning them out. Some of the common internal challenges with sustainable transformation in corporates according to BCG are (1) Leader enablement - meaning that leaders need to be aligned if they are going to implement a new change. (2) People engagement - if the people are not onboarded, the change will not be successful. (3) Executional certainty – governance is needed during the implementation of the sustainable change to make sure it is carried out successfully (Santamarta et al. 2023). Apart from these three challenges, the main bottleneck for many companies is the costs associated with becoming sustainable, as the core business was not built to be sustainable in the first place (Supply & Demand Chain Executive 2023). This usually means breaking old habits and adapting new ways of working which can be a determinative factor, as not every company in the market has the financial stability to make this type of change. Companies that can manage these complexities are oftentimes more competitive, but they must act rapidly as sustainability is becoming rather a basic expectation.

Further, research shows that organisations have begun using sustainability assessments as a tool to understand the gaps in the path towards reaching their sustainability goals, but they still lack cohesion (Pranugrahaning et al. 2021). This is because sustainability has not been spoken of much nor promoted up until quite recently. According to Owen-Burge (2022), 90% of corporate leaders consider sustainability to be important while only 60% of organisations have integrated sustainability into the core business. This illustrates the significant gap between the recognition and implementation of sustainability in organisations. Despite this high level of awareness

amongst executives, it is crucial that companies learn how to translate awareness and acknowledgement into more extensive sustainability strategies to make an impact.

Looking at the presented articles showcase that there is a lack of initiative and long-term vision regarding having a more sustainable approach in organisations. This is because incorporating more sustainability principles and practices into the organisation is a difficult task as it requires innovative solutions, effective communication channels, the right leadership approach, and a clear vision. It requires a comprehensive system approach to facilitate the sustainable development and communication of sustainability policies (Azapagic 2003).

2.1.2 Change Management

After having investigated the bottlenecks, it is also useful to analyse how they can be addressed by looking into change management. This is because to be able to make a sustainable transformation, change management needs to be in place, particularly considering that organisations encounter an exceptional level of change (Conner 1993). This has to do with the constant change in society with technological advancements, market dynamics, social shifts, environmental challenges, and other external factors. Approximately 70% of change management processes fail due to ineffective communication, lack of management, and understanding of the implemented change (Dickson 2022). This makes it crucial for companies to know how to respond to various types of changes that are both external and internal. Suresh (2001) claims that leaders need to learn how to respond to various changes in the market if they want to stay on top. This is because organisations that know how to respond to change are automatically better positioned to succeed.

Change management is a process that is designed to evaluate proposed changes that concern business and technical aspects by making sure that the organisation has the right capabilities, resources, and attitudes for the upcoming change. Making a change typically entails new operational methods that can directly impact the stakeholders in the company (Suresh 2001).

This can often trigger various challenges if the change management team has not prepared or communicated the upcoming change to the employees. The following are potential interconnected challenges that could occur: (1) Leadership – Shifting the management style from command and control to a motivational leadership style. Change cannot be achieved successfully if the top management is not dedicated or fully involved in making sure the change is implemented. (2) Focus – Making strategic business decisions to improve the company and create agreement. Staying disciplined and focusing on the right opportunities is what will drive the organisation in the right direction. (3) Resistance – This can directly impact the results of change in both a positive and negative way. Most individuals are not fond of change, making it extremely important to keep employees on board with internal objectives for the future and communicate steps accordingly. Lastly, (4) Commitment – Nurturing dedication to the future of the company across all departments and levels. Leaders must acknowledge and devote time and support to individuals who may face difficulties with adjusting and understanding the steps that need to be taken (Suresh 2001). Change gives opportunities but only if done correctly, which highlights the importance of running a business with the right change management approach. Overcoming these four stated challenges can allow for sustainable and successful change within the organisation. Employees' openness to change is also a crucial aspect of the process of organisational change which can determine whether the results will be successful or not (Miller et al. 1994). This is especially important when making sustainable implementations in the organisation transitioning from a well-established strategy to a less familiar one. If there is a high level of openness among the employees, it often results in higher levels of readiness for that particular change to take place, and a more successful outcome compared to if employees were close-minded and reluctant to change (Miller et al. 1994).

2.1.3 Communication and Stakeholder Engagement

Communication is vital in any business-related matter especially when change is on the agenda, playing a determinant role in the success of a business as it fosters understanding and alignment. It is the process that is needed to convince, inform, and establish a mutual understanding of how things should be carried out (Genç 2017). When there is a lack of communication in the organisation it becomes harder to reach and implement internal objectives (Genç 2017). This is because all stakeholders must be fully aware of the changes that are going to be made within the organisation to avoid any misunderstandings and conflicts.

Genç (2017) conducted a study on the importance of communication in sustainability. They stated that it is important to be mindful of how a message is conveyed from the original source and perceived by the receiver. Appendix 1 shows how messages can be perceived, influenced, and understood by different individuals. How an individual thinks and expects are also factors that impact the way they communicate. Additionally, an individual's thoughts and expectations can have major impacts on the success and operation of an organisation while the organisation also impacts the individual's way of thinking (Genç 2017). This process highlights how reciprocal and interconnected communication is in organisations, making it crucial to deliver messages appropriately and ensure that the information is received in the desired way.

Furthermore, as the market has become more environmentally conscious, it has increased the importance of companies' establishment of effective communication channels, both on an internal and external level, to assure that important stakeholders are onboard (Amaladoss and Manohar 2013). Although it seems very evident why one should communicate, it does not happen as naturally for everyone as one may think. Mosadeghrad and Ansarian (2014) carried out a study that showed that lack of communication was one of the most frequently mentioned barriers to carrying out a successful change in developed countries. This enabled the authors to

conclude that it was one of the main reasons why companies are unable to reach their goals and ultimately fail.

McKinsey & Company (n.d.a) presented the following four principles to incorporate into the business model to improve communication: (1) Listen: this may seem like an obvious principle, but many leaders tend to dismiss employees' thoughts and opinions which instead results in low employee satisfaction, (2) Inspire: focus on problem-solving, learning, and testing to move forward, (3) Engage: create a platform or forum that foster communication and discussions between employees to ideate, test, and learn, and (4) Guidance: leaders need to make sure that the employees know how they should reach the internal objectives for the best outcome. Onboarding and engaging employees in changes that are happening in the company creates a more positive atmosphere and allows for an open dialogue that can increase the likelihood of adjusting better to future changes. It also increases the likelihood of the implemented change going through as employees have been aware of the ongoing processes and have had the time to adjust to them.

2.2 Methodology

After having looked at recent research on bottlenecks and success factors, the insights are still overgeneralised. As the topic is sensitive, companies usually do not reveal where they have the greatest challenges to meet customer expectations. As CEBRA aims to develop a solution that accelerates corporate sustainability, the aim is to understand the bottlenecks more in detail. To do so, the team decided to focus on the automotive industry as it is one of the most polluting industries that requires sustainable transformation for a positive change.

The research was conducted using a mixed method by combining primary and secondary research. The first step was to collect data from existing corporate reports in the automotive industry to identify potential bottlenecks that may arise with the presented sustainability strategies. The second step involved conducting interviews to better understand the specific

bottlenecks, not only the preceding factors but the consequences they had, and the practices that were adopted to mitigate them. Combining these two approaches was to understand potential customers more in-depth which specifies problems the future CEBRA solution should address. Due to the many uncertainties, limited research, and different viewpoints that are presented when making a sustainable transformational change, it was necessary to get validation from professionals in the field combined with secondary research from corporate reports. The empirical data was then analysed based on findings from both primary and secondary sources to be able to fully comprehend the main bottlenecks with sustainable transformation.

The research aimed to gain deeper insights by conducting interviews with high-level executives who share their organisational perspective on the perceived bottlenecks when it comes to sustainable transformation.

2.2.1 Secondary Data Collection

Secondary data was collected through a combination of publicly available reports globally, such as sustainability reports, annual reports, and consultant reports, amongst others. The selected ten corporate reports were mainly from large market-leading companies in the car manufacturing industry (e.g., Volvo Cars, Honda, BMW) but also smaller niche players (e.g., Ferrari). Examining reports from various companies allowed for a broader understanding of their work towards sustainability to examine how they manage bottlenecks internally and across the industry. Collecting information from secondary sources gives a better understanding of the sustainability objectives and facilitates transparency, but also gives clarity to the primary data that is collected.

The decision to gather secondary information from different sources was to get various perspectives on the different approaches industries and organisations have chosen to have. The focus was placed on climate related KPIs (e.g., CO₂ emissions) comparing sustainability reports from 2017 to 2023 and building a strong understanding of their integrated sustainability

initiatives. After the data was collected it was compared and analysed to observe potential patterns amongst the companies to determine the level of sustainable development. As a second step, the data was compared with the qualitative information that was gathered during the interviews to assess if the information available online differed from what the executives chose to share during the interviews.

2.2.2 Primary Data Collection

The primary data was collected through interviews with executives from corporates that had expressed the need to become more sustainable. Having this approach helped to get a better understanding and insight into how the various companies define sustainability and spread awareness about it within the organisation. It also allowed to find a clear pattern of behaviour and perception of sustainable transformation. Due to the reduced willingness to share information about how the corporate manages sustainability initiatives and communicate that to the organisation, it was highly necessary to combine this approach with published reports regarding the general idea of sustainability management.

Semi-structured interviews were carried out with a set of predetermined questions that were divided into the following sections: awareness, integration, and adoption (Appendix 2). Structuring the questions this way allowed for more focused analysis and clear reporting from the interviewee. The interviews began with a research protocol that explained the purpose of the research and defined the concept of sustainability to make sure they fully understood what it means to be sustainable. Having a research protocol also ensured that the participants gave full consent to being in the research study as well as understanding the expectations. This was a crucial step to be implemented to avoid any conflicts throughout the interviews and make sure that there is a clear understanding of the concept of sustainability as that can be portrayed differently in the eyes of different people (White 2013).

Examining the answers helped to visualise where they were having difficulties, and lacking knowledge, as well as observe any patterns related to sustainable behaviour across the corporates. It also allowed for a narrow analysis of the role of the human dimension concerning how sustainable initiatives, activities and norms are integrated into the core of the organisation. Further, the sample consisted of three 20-minute interviews with professionals holding top-level business roles within companies in the automotive industry, and due to the exchange of confidential information, the interviewees chose to stay anonymous. For sample characterisation see Appendix 3.

Moreover, the data collection strategy consisted of contacting various professionals on LinkedIn within different polluting industries to capture a wide range of perspectives and insights. The total number of contacted professionals amounted to 130 with a second message being sent to fifty people.

2.3 Findings

The findings section will present the main findings related to bottlenecks with sustainable transformation that target professionals in the automotive industry, as well as findings from corporate and consultancy reports.

2.3.1 Secondary Data Findings

The automotive industry is considered a high-polluting industry in urgent need of change towards more sustainable practices to reduce its environmental impact. The industry is under significant pressure from society, as trucks, cars, and other road vehicles are responsible for 75% of all carbon emissions produced by transportation, which is approximately 15% of the overall global CO₂ emissions (McKinsey & Company n.d.b). Changing to more sustainable alternatives (e.g., electric vehicles) can impact the whole supply chain process as that will require several changes for auto components. The automotive industry has a primary emphasis

on shifting to electric vehicles with the goal of having 75% being fully electric by 2030, which comes with several challenges as that implies that more gigafactories will be required to achieve that goal (McKinsey & Company n.d.b). According to research, the current adoption is behind the anticipated target and will only be able to reach approximately 45% by 2030, given the current progress. Hence, most of the major automotive companies have either planned or introduced electric vehicle models while others focus on making a complete transition towards being fully electric within the next 10-15 years (Binder and Weinberger 2023). However, due to the newly added ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) regulations, companies will have to undergo major transitions in the upcoming year that will speed up the process with sustainable practices being implemented, which will change organisations' current internal objectives.

Further, looking at annual corporate reports across several companies in the automotive industry shows that many companies already incorporate sustainability through various initiatives (e.g., building a circular economy and transforming to electric mobility). The published reports over the years have shown a significant change in sustainability commitment, illustrating the immense work towards integrating and acknowledging sustainability into the core. Companies have more ambitious goals of reducing their ecological footprint and showing commitment and understanding of the impact their company and industry can make. Further, most companies state their ambitions towards sustainability and the urgency of implementing it fully into the core of the business to reach internal goals. The larger companies with a more global presence in the automotive industry discuss the commitment to sustainable development and integration strategies. To give an example Volvo is one of the most competitive companies in the market within their industry that highlights the importance of training and raising sustainable awareness among employees and stakeholders by offering a wide range of training opportunities. Volvo offers learning camps during production stops as well as digital training

opportunities to help employees develop their sustainability awareness and adoption. This illustrates that they take responsibility for contributing to the environment and trying to decrease their ecological footprint.

Moreover, it is important to address that almost all corporate reports from 2022 that were examined mentioned their bottlenecks and complexities with either sustainable transitioning towards electric vehicles in the upcoming years or the carbon footprint reduction strategies. The bottlenecks that were mentioned in the reports had to do with the implementation of sustainability in the supply chain, circularity of materials, external collaboration, transitional risks, and new business model applications. But still lacked depth of the various bottlenecks that were mentioned. It was clear that the primary focus was on positive achievements and future plans. Hence, larger companies tended to provide more detailed information regarding their sustainability challenges focusing on the process and obstacles faced along the way. They are under more public scrutiny due to their market dominance in comparison to relatively smaller companies and may feel obligated to explain their actions and continuous work. Hence, smaller companies were more likely to provide a more general overview of their challenges rather than going more in-depth with them, which did not give enough detailed information on how they address and act upon these types of challenges. Therefore, it is important to mention that more established companies may have more social responsibility and feel obligated to incorporate more sustainability work into the business compared to smaller companies. This could mean that having more social pressure can push companies in the right direction of integrating more sustainable initiatives. As consumers have become far more knowledgeable about the subject they demand action, which has made it crucial to showcase the objectives and data of the corporate sustainability progress to make sure that greenwashing strategies are not incorporated.

2.3.2 Primary Data Findings

Based on the results from the conducted interviews it became apparent that every company acknowledges the importance of integrating sustainability and making it a critical component in the organisation. They showed awareness of the challenges and implications of implementing strategies to become more circular, but some still lacked evidence of how to achieve it.

Due to the different sizes of companies, levels of sustainable progression, and visions for the future, the current obstacles that were faced in the organisations differed. However, it became clear that every interviewee agreed upon having a collaborative approach to overcome current challenges together with external entities, and not solely rely on internal knowledge and experience. This shows their strong understanding of the value of sustainable integration to move forward and create long-lasting results not only from a financial aspect but also to maintain suppliers, retain customers, and make a positive impact.

Moreover, the main bottlenecks that the companies were currently facing were the following:

(1) Cost - integrating more sustainability initiatives comes with higher costs which not all companies have the financial stability to afford. (2) Measurement - measuring sustainability efforts is still vague and complex, and many companies are still not sure how to do it. (3) Core business integration - sustainability is a social goal that is often not integrated into the long-term strategic commitment, making it crucial for all stakeholders in a company to understand the importance of making it a core element. (4) Infrastructure - to transition towards a zero-emission society where current societal limitations hinder development, it can be difficult to reach the goal alone without society being fully committed to transforming. Furthermore, each company mentioned their training offerings to increase sustainability awareness amongst employees, but it was vaguely discussed. Based on the findings, their work to educate employees must improve as that will help them to understand how to integrate and execute their sustainability strategies. Company B stated, “The ambition for the company is very much real,

but to change the employees' mindset and old ways of working is the tricky part". This illustrates the importance of having workshops and continuously working on the employees' awareness of sustainability to help them to adapt to change. Being reminded daily, discussing strategies to implement sustainability, and educating employees on ways to work with it can instantly improve their awareness and understanding. It also mirrors the importance of having the right mindset, as that is a vital component in a successful outcome, which was also mentioned in the literature chapter. Company C further supported this by saying "Employees have an enormous role to play in this. It is their conviction that will help drive the transformation. Both when it comes to innovation of new and better solutions, but also to drive the change in their area."

All companies expressed how sustainable transformation was communicated in the organisation, stating that it was communicated across all levels and departments. Company B expressed that they did not communicate it enough and mainly focused on sharing reports to keep employees up to date. Since communication is essential for a company to succeed and ensure alignment from all individuals in the organisation, as discussed in chapter 2.1.3, this is a clear bottleneck for Company B. Further, making sustainable transformations in organisations today is essential in the business world, making it a key component to survive. This was a reflection that was widely recognised and mutually agreed upon amongst all the interviewed executives. Overcoming the bottlenecks requires an effective strategy and resource allocation, a strong commitment from the top management, as well as involvement from other important stakeholders in the organisation. Making a transition does not happen overnight and requires an organisation to go through various steps and phases to reach the internal objectives.

2.4 Limitations

This thesis wanted to explore the internal bottlenecks with sustainable transformation but due to sustainability being a very sensitive topic for most companies, there was a lack of available

data and information online. This impacted the findings from both the primary and secondary sources as most corporates are reluctant to share information that they still are unsure of, which became evident in the interviews. This could also be because of the undergoing organisational changes which impacts the availability of information due to uncertainties and unfinished process outcomes. Another limitation of the study was that it looked at more established companies in the market which cannot conclude the findings across all levels of the industry. Due to the limited interviews that were conducted, it is not possible to generalise across the automotive industry, but it gives an overview of where companies are lacking to a certain extent. Another limitation was that companies did not have enough time to go beyond what was asked due to time constraints, which then impacted the results of the study. Therefore, due to limited time, confidential and ethical aspects it is difficult to pinpoint whether the primary data validated the discussions of sustainable commitment in the corporate reports. For future studies and enriched results, more interviews would be required to be able to confirm the transparency and examine sustainable management more in-depth.

2.5 Conclusion

The first individual research paper aimed to delve deeper into the problem space, specifically to explore the bottlenecks with sustainable transformation in companies from an organisational perspective. Although information was limited due to the issue's sensitivity, important findings were uncovered. Due to the scope of the thesis, a more detailed summarising overview of all findings related to bottlenecks from secondary and primary research can be found in Appendix 4.

Following, the key insights are highlighted. Firstly, it became clear that the bottlenecks varied according to the specific objectives and future visions of the companies analysed. However, the primary and secondary data revealed three overarching bottlenecks: cost, integration of

sustainability into the core business (due to the nature of the business not being built to be sustainable), and sufficient change management. The potential of individuals to drive organisational change was also highlighted by the research found on change management, which emphasised the importance of having employees on board, as well as interviewees who emphasised the importance of individuals driving innovative solutions and change.

This study confirms that companies are aware of their need to change in a sustainable way, but also that change isn't happening at a fast enough pace. The bottlenecks identified are multi-layered and demonstrate the complexity of sustainable transformation. Although the scope of the research was limited, the findings helped to better understand potential future target customers and their needs. The high level of sensitivity around the issue and the individual bottlenecks identified leads to the conclusion that a future product from CEBRA will need to address these individual needs. It confirms the need for personalised solutions, working closely with the customer and taking the time to fully understand their problems before designing a potential solution.

To conclude, the findings of this research have important implications for achieving product-market fit in the second step of this paper. The various challenges in conducting the interviews led to limitations. However, it also provided many practical insights that the team can build on for further research.

3 Product Market-Fit (Group part)

3.1 Tying it Together

Delving deeper into the problem space and solution as well as going into the field to test the potential product, provided insights that enabled a well-informed product-market fit to be developed. The next step, the consolidation of individual findings, allows CEBRA to refine the initial assumptions made at the beginning of the project. This step is also critical in guiding the development of a product that will resonate effectively with the target audience, enabling CEBRA to design an impactful intervention and thus launch a successful venture.

Based on the findings of the three individual papers, it is clear that there is a market need for empowering individuals to accelerate corporate sustainability. At the same time, the various findings also revealed that an iteration of CEBRA's initial product proposition is required to do this effectively. Delving deeper into the different process stages of the PMF in this chapter (e.g. target customer, underserved needs, value proposition, feature set and UX) helps to guide the company towards creating something that customers really want, which is fundamental to achieving long-term success in terms of impact and profit.

3.2 Target Customer

The findings gathered in the individual research chapters of the thesis allowed for a better understanding of the market, including a detailed identification of CEBRA's target audience. The study contradicted the initial assumptions about young business graduates as the initial target audience and pointed to more detailed segment, buyer and user definitions, which are presented below.

Segment: An analysis of the automotive industry, chosen among other high-polluting industries, conducted in chapter 2 has confirmed that market leaders acknowledge the need for a sustainable transformation, yet lack the guidance and support to navigate internal bottlenecks.

There is therefore both a business and impact opportunity existing in that segment, that can be exploited. This opportunity is confirmed by insights from changemakers outlined in chapter 3 who suggest that for scaling faster it is worth focusing on companies that already have sustainability commitments integrated into their strategy but struggle to meet them efficiently. By targeting the high-polluting industries with the greatest CO2 emissions, CEBRA can strive to achieve the biggest impact, while innovations created by employees (with CEBRA's help) can tie into companies' ambitious sustainable commitments and help to reach them.

Target buyer: The analysis of changemakers has also identified internal buyers of this solution more specifically. What is unusual for B2B solutions is that the buyer cannot be described by their job position and should rather be seen through their motivation.

The conducted studies suggest that CEBRA target buyers in this segment can be described as *future changemakers*. They should be highly driven employees with a high level of awareness of social issues. They should have decision-making power or enough authority to initialise a purchasing process. These individuals do not necessarily define themselves as changemakers or intrapreneurs, but their sensibilities should be able to develop them into one. By targeting these individuals, CEBRA aim to educate them and develop their capacity to drive a sustainable innovation agenda in their organisations, acting as co-facilitators for CEBRA programs. These buyers would therefore be partially users of the service of CEBRA – as facilitators.

Target user: It is important to also take a detailed look at the second group of CEBRA users, those participating in the program. As highlighted by pilots run with students, those could be employees who desire to create a meaningful career with a strong interest in personal and professional development. Like facilitators, participants are driven individuals who are purpose-driven and strive to create meaningful careers. The difference between them is seniority and authority but could also be a lack of awareness of specific social issues. What

incentivises them to join the program is their interest to tackle the problem or the personal and professional development opportunity.

3.3 Underserved Needs

With CEBRA's customer defined, the next step is to synthesise the individual research findings into a holistic picture of the underserved needs within the market. Validated and clarified target customer problems allow the design of a set of responsive values that significantly increase CEBRA's chances of achieving product-market fit.

The first underserved need to emerge from the primary data, together with secondary sources of bottlenecks, was that companies face challenges with cost, change management and core sustainability implementation on an organisational level.

Additionally, the jobs to be done identified in chapter 3 that respond to those bottlenecks, reflect the underserved needs of CEBRA buyers more specifically. Based on the research, these are:

- Developing the inner capacity to solve internal bottlenecks successfully
- Educating stakeholders to change their perspectives and decision factors
- Defining social or sustainable problems to act on (systemic problem definition)
- Building a business case for sustainable innovation
- Designing a sustainable innovation program which benefits businesses and participants alike (enabling internal innovation capacities)
- Running the sustainable innovation program
- Implementing the outcomes into the organisation.

Stakeholder research and building awareness of the business's negative impact on the environment amongst decision-makers were also identified as important, but not crucial.

Those unserved needs are different to the users' needs identified in chapter 4, which are mostly related to creating a meaningful career, engaging in personal development, and creating a

fulfilling life. Participants also feel a need to: better deal with stress, have more space to reflect, have a safe community to share with and feel equipped to handle future challenges.

Looking back at the initial solution of primarily targeting the unserved need for inner development, the primary and secondary research has validated the nurturing of these inner capabilities as an important aspect of facilitating change. Nevertheless, insights from interviews with intrapreneurs and the Blue Ocean Strategy analysis revealed that the journey of implementing change within an organisation involves more than the enhancement of these inner strengths. It is imperative not only to equip and empower changemakers by developing their 'internal capacities', but also to accompany these changemakers on their journey, facilitating and creating spaces within their organisations where innovation and change can flourish. The transformation sought is not one-dimensional; it requires the harmonious integration of inner and outer metamorphosis.

This understanding clearly shows that the original concept of primarily providing programs for inner development is not serving the market needs sufficiently and thus a refined approach that effectively meets these needs more holistically is needed. For this reason, the product value proposition was iterated accordingly in the next step.

3.4 Product Value Proposition

At this stage, various significant customer needs have been identified, providing potential areas for consideration in developing the product. The subsequent task involves a selection process to determine which needs the product will deliberately address. This critical step in the Lean Product Process is centred on refining the value proposition of the product. It entails precisely specifying the customer needs CEBRA's product aims to address and articulating how it distinguishes itself as superior and distinct from existing alternatives (Olsen 2015).

As the term implies, the unserved needs outlined before, are not yet satisfied by the market due to a lack of holistic integration of nurturing inner capacities and enabling changemakers to apply their strengths in practical innovation programs that address organisational bottlenecks.

CEBRA aims to close exactly this gap by addressing both the inner capacity building of employees as well as the integration of sustainable innovation into the company's business model. With this approach a novel form of value is created - value that goes beyond what is traditionally offered by learning & development programs or sustainability consulting services alone.

To deliver this value, CEBRA aims to design an innovation development program, empowering employees to become changemakers and transform their organisations towards sustainability. This product aims to bring together the benefits of both, traditional sustainability consulting, internal innovation processes and inner development upskilling programs for teams in a unique way. This innovative approach ensures that organisations not only receive strategic guidance but also that necessary structures and spaces are developed within the organisation to successfully implement the desired change and capture the value of sustainable transformation.

CEBRA's work is therefor based on empowerment through collaborative problem-solving. With this philosophy CEBRA empowers organisations by working directly with their employees and ensuring that solutions are not imposed but co-created, leveraging the expertise within the organisation. Therefore, the overall value proposition of CEBRA is the following:

Holistic transformation consulting - empowering employees to drive the desired transformation from within. It is an iteration of the buyer value proposition concluded in Chapter 3, as it considers findings from all the studies in this paper and is refined to reflect both buyer and user needs. Based on this strategic focus and building upon the most relevant unserved needs, the following must have benefits of the future product can be defined more specifically for the buyer and for the user:

Buyer benefits:

- Improve employee engagement and upskilling (develop inner capacities for transformation?)
- Develop innovation capacities within the organisation
- Build capacities for change implementation within the organisation

User benefits:

- Feel empowered through inner capacity building
- Build and experience a meaningful career
- Be part of a community of changemakers

3.5 Product Features

The following features of the CEBRA solution have been defined in order to respond in an integrated way to the needs of both the purchaser and the user, and to build on the benefits defined in chapter 5.4. User feedback and practical learnings from the Impact Talent Journey were also incorporated. The CEBRA service will have two pillars that together create the potential for holistic, sustainable business transformation.

1) Consulting*a) Business case building (and strategic alignment)*

- i) Individual consulting on integrating sustainable programs into existing financial goals (or KPIs)
- ii) Frameworks for connecting sustainable programs to existing strategy
- iii) Internal solution pitch and finding sponsors

b) Project scope

- i) Customised project scope template for aligning stakeholders' expectations

c) Mentoring

- i) Individual sessions or mastermind communities for sharing experiences

2) Innovation Hub

a) Communication

- i) Communication guidelines and process for announcing and running the program
- ii) Argumentation templates for recruiting participants

b) Design Thinking process management (from problem to solution)

- i) Timelines, process structure and templates

c) Facilitation

- i) Facilitating sessions and physical meetings with participants
- ii) Fostering community by ice-breaking activities
- iii) Workshops with relevant problem – or solution-specific experts

d) Inner capacity building

- i) Workshops with experts on inner development

e) Implementation

- i) Storytelling workshops with experts
- ii) Pitch practice for internal pitching

In essence, the consulting features build the organisational capacity to benefit from the innovation program, creating the basis for integrating sustainable solutions into the organisation's business model (i.e. sustainable transformation). The innovation hub, in turn, serves the organisation to solve current business problems in a sustainable way and provides users with an opportunity for personal growth and inner capacity building.

3.6 MVP Design

With clarified product features, the next step in the process is to define the minimum functionality that is aligned with the target customer's preferences, thereby defining the feature set for the MVP. In this phase, the selection of features revolves around offering enough value for customers to perceive the distinctive advantages of the product whilst navigating the

challenges of limited resources (Olsen 2015). Because the proposed product has many interrelated features that together create value, most of them need to be developed as a first prototype for the MVP. The MVP feature set is derived from the exhaustive feature definition in chapter 5.5 and shown below, along with the prototyping idea.

1a) *Business case building and strategic alignment*: Collaboration with sustainability consultant, no frameworks but in-person consulting providing fundamental guidance on the two areas of developing innovation capacities and preparing the organisation for successful change implementation.

1b) *Project Scope*: Design project management template, outlining the most important milestones, stakeholders and resources for the overall project.

2b) *Design Thinking Project Management*: Co-creation of frameworks and templates with an experienced designer, a physical guide summarising key frameworks and tools for sustainable innovation processes, encompassing steps from problem definition to implementing the solution.

2c) *Innovation Hub Facilitation*: In-house facilitation (draw from experience of Impact Talent Journey), run small-scale collaborative workshop: In-person sessions fostering cross-functional co-creation, building innovation capacities and guiding innovation process.

2d) *Inner Capacity Building*: CEBRA in-house designed workshop series based on the learnings from Impact Talent Journey, enhancing self-awareness and mental resilience, contributing to individual well-being and internal capacity-building.

With this feature set, the next steps in the product development are clear. After the prototype of each feature has been developed for the cases in which this is possible, the aim is to test them before launching a first MVP to the corporate world. This rapid prototyping, as it was already done with the Impact Talent Journey, allows to iterate and refine the product based on user feedback. Thereby the functionality and value of the features are further improved, and hands-

on experience is gained. As soon as all MVP features are proven to deliver on the promised value, the full MVP can be tested with first pilot clients from the intended target group. This step requires to take a closer look at the UX design of the product. For now, the learnings from the Impact Talent Journey regarding communication tools and learning environment are incorporated for the first guidance of user experience design. However, developing internal innovation capabilities within a customer's organisation will require CEBRA to integrate the solution into existing processes, organisational structure and user characteristics. The user experience will then be heavily influenced by the existing culture of the organisation.

4 Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to explore and delineate the role of individual empowerment in accelerating corporate sustainability. Through extensive analysis and research, ranging from defining the bottlenecks in sustainable transformation, to identifying the market gap, to designing an inner development intervention, this study has illuminated the complex dynamics at play in fostering sustainable practices within organisations. As a result of the groundwork that was conducted to develop a market-ready product, the following key findings were identified: the specific challenges associated with sustainable transformation, the strategic positioning and value proposition of CEBRA's concept, and the successful development and evaluation of the Impact Talent Journey, which underlined the feasibility and effectiveness of the approach. Although all three individual papers had limitations, so that the findings cannot be generalised, they have nevertheless made a significant contribution to the creation of CEBRA by highlighting the existing gap in the market. Concluding, they collectively underscore the potential of individual-centric strategies in catalysing organisational change towards sustainability. The findings are not only consistent with the existing literature on corporate sustainability, but also offer new insights into the power of individual agency and the

impact of bottom-up approaches in driving organisational change. Furthermore, addressing the product-market fit bridges the gap between theoretical frameworks and practical applications, particularly in the context of CEBRA's role in fostering sustainability from within. The unserved needs defined in chapter 5.3 reflect the necessity for new solutions to achieve the desired outcome of sustainable transformation, which can be done through collaboration and changing the approach of consultancy to co-creation. By combining traditional sustainability consulting, internal innovation processes, and inner development upskilling programs, CEBRA ensures organisations receive strategic guidance and develop the necessary structures for successful change implementation. The overall value proposition lies in holistic transformation consulting, empowering employees to lead desired transformations from within. By bringing the various ideas together, CEBRA was able to recognise the complexity and design a product for organisations that want to make a positive impact and for individuals with a genuine interest and passion for sustainable change. Further, from a practical standpoint, organisations can build on these findings to design and implement more effective sustainability programs that leverage the power of individual agency and empowerment. These steps could significantly contribute to the broader goal of accelerating sustainable transformation in the corporate world.

4.1 Future Steps

The next step of this venture would be to test the MVP by conducting pilots with the intended target group to ensure that the product is in line with the preferences and wishes of the corporate world. This step is crucial to launch a well-informed service on the market. Another additional aspect to take into consideration for further development of the product is to seek external expertise from individuals where the team lacks competencies. This could enrich the performance and identify gaps with the current product that the team is unable to pinpoint. The third step would be to measure the impact of the program through the skills assessment that has been created throughout the CEBRA journey, focusing on defining specific KPIs and

determining whether the program is delivering on the promise of long-term impact, thereby increasing credibility. To go to market successfully, an important future step is to reach out to users and buyers who are within the target group and to attract and educate individuals about the product. The ideal strategy would be to focus on educational marketing strategies (e.g., educational posts on LinkedIn) to reach a larger audience and leverage the professional environment. Looking ahead, CEBRA is well positioned to navigate these crucial next phases with commitment and dedication, aspiring to ensure the program's future success to make a significant contribution to the sustainable transformation journey within organisations.

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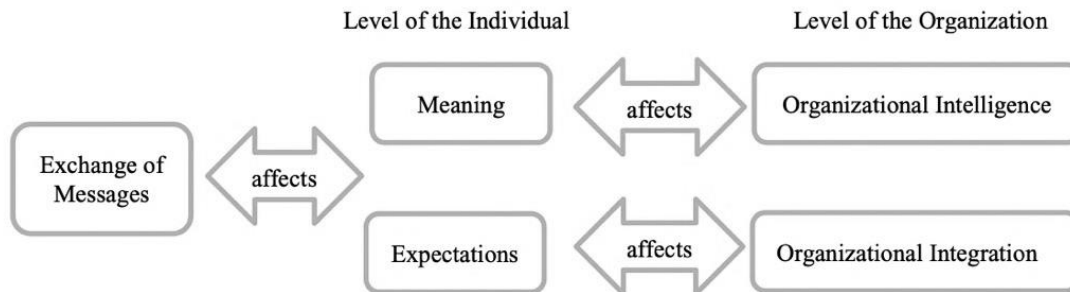
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Appendix

Appendix 1: Model of the process of communication by Genç (2017)



Appendix 2: Interview Questions

1. What is your role and responsibilities within the company?
2. Could you please share what sustainability means to you and the company's ambition towards integrating sustainability into the core business?
3. Could you describe the general level of adoption and awareness of the sustainable initiatives at the company? (e.g., any CSR or Supply Chain projects)
4. From your perspective, what is the most challenging aspect of adapting to a sustainability-driven change within the organisation?
5. In your opinion, how important is it that employees acknowledge and take part in sustainable practices to drive sustainable transformation?
6. How is sustainable transformation communicated within the organisation?
7. Does your company offer any training or courses that employees could take to increase their sustainability awareness?

Appendix 3: Sample

Company A: Chief Executive Officer, Sweden
Company B: Head of Marketing, Germany
Company C: Senior Vice President of Sales, Sweden

Appendix 4: Table of Sustainable Transformation Bottlenecks

Literature review: Previous findings	Secondary sources: Reports	Primary sources: Interviews
Leader enablement	New business model	Cost
People engagement	External collaboration	Measurement
Executorial certainty	Supply chain implementation	Core business integration
Cost	Circularity	Infrastructure
Core implementation	Transitional risks	-