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SÉRGIO SANTÓRIO

PAPER THAT RECYCLES LIVES...

The history of global advancements, as well as the construction of important cities, has large industrial corporations as lead players that acted as development agents. It wasn't just production potential that companies took to regions where they chose to install themselves; they also took the intention of local development and development of the community as a whole.

Signs of these times are still present in various metropolitan regions in São Paulo. Housing development, clubs, cooperatives and schools divide space with skyscrapers along the landscape of modern cities, sharing the memories of such industries, such as those of Matarazzo in the Greater ABC region. Back then, companies were perceived as the second home of employees.

Today, much has changed in relation to this form of employee-company integration, but what has remained over time is the concern of corporations towards social sustainability – which is nothing new, but traditional on the part of entrepreneurs, and continues to this day. Simply look at what recently happened in the municipality of Três Lagoas (MS) upon the arrival of Fibria and International Paper.

Time passed until the day when companies – particularly at the end of the 1980s and early 1990s, despite the social importance embedded – began being exclusively evaluated for their financial performance, with social factors taking on less relevance. The criterion for calculating all financial results changed in the eyes of market experts.

History, however, is cyclical, and in the beginning of the 21st century the social function of companies began being part of results and demonstrated in their financial statements. New concepts brought back a focus on the importance of having an integrated management vision based of the pillars of sustainability: economic, environmental and social.

As such, in order for a company to be recognized and pursue excellence, it must obligatorily obtain good financial results, respect the environment and exercise its role in the society where it is located. It is here that social projects take on a key role in truly increasing a company's value.

It is interesting to observe that our pulp and paper sector has always played a leading role in the various regions where it has or continues to operate, creating well-being in the various communities, even when such activity was not an important requirement for company value.

Reflecting this spirit of our industry, ABTCP has been working these last four years with inmates in half-open regime from São Paulo's penitentiary system and for more than 10 years with former prisoners in Brasília's Federal District, through the Recycling Paper and Lives Project, in conjunction with the University of Brasília (UnB).

This social responsibility action by ABTCP and UnB is creating new perspectives for people who need to learn and have a profession to reenter society with important knowledge on how to make handmade paper and artifacts made from paper. This constitutes such an important opportunity for those who did wrong and need help to be able to correct the course of their lives in a new way.

The Recycling Paper and Lives Project has yielded important results in helping these people recover. Some results include recovery of their self-esteem and the valuing of life and family, among others. It is important to point out something very important for society: the 50 former convicts who graduated from our Training Workshop in Tremembé (SP) did not return to a life of crime – an extraordinary feat, in view that statistics show that 70% return to this form of life due to the lack of job opportunities.

At present, we are focusing on making this social project self-sufficient, which initiative belongs to the entire sector and its members. If the results make us proud, then the companies and professionals associated to ABTCP should be even prouder, since they are part of this story of success that's giving former convicts even more pride: the pride of building something that makes them feel capable of changing their life story.

However, we need all of you at this moment – particularly companies and their ideologies of true social responsibility – to increase the number of spots and structure a plan to place all the paper produced by the Recycling Paper and Lives Project. We need to be change agents: not dependents of it!

So, if you or your company wishes to be engaged in this cause, you are more than welcome to participate and share with us the satisfaction of doing something to improve our society. In fact, work such as this effectively contributes to make Brazil better and advance its economy in a sustainable manner. ABTCP awaits your visit – here at the event booth or at our headquarters, to present you a role that recycles lives: our Recycling Paper and Lives Project! Be an investor-partner. ■

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