

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IS ÅF'S CORE BUSINESS

ÅF works on a broad front for long-term sustainable development. Of greatest significance in this respect is the work ÅF performs on assignments to improve its clients' enterprises and performance. But, in order to raise awareness, increase understanding and reinforce the credibility of its message, it is equally important that the company sets its sights high, too, for its own internal work on sustainability.

Background

Sustainable development and sustainability are concepts that were first widely adopted following the UN's "Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future" published in 1987. This is frequently referred to as the "Brundtland Report" after the politician Gro Harlem Brundtland, who chaired the commission. Sustainability is a very broad concept that embraces three overlapping spheres: economic,

social and ecological sustainability. The report emphasises that the right conditions for sustainable development can only be achieved by creating a balance between these three elements that leads to "development that satisfies the needs of the present generations without compromising the capability of future generations to satisfy their own needs".

Over the past ten years the concept of sustainability has become firmly entrenched in the world of trade and industry. "Sustainable business" is business that is conducted in a way that maintains a balance between, and makes use of, the synergies in all three spheres of sustainability.

Sustainability is and will remain the core of ÅF

Sustainability is part of ÅF's business strategy and a prerequisite for all aspects of ÅF's operational activities. For ÅF, sustainable business is about generating long-term economic, social and ecological values for all of the company's stakeholders. When ÅF was founded back in 1895, the company was conceived out of a desire to develop more sustainable forms of entrepreneurship. Today, more than a century later, ÅF's ambition remains the same, even if the conditions and the world in which we live have changed.

Did you know that ÅF's headquarters in Solna are the first commercial premises in Sweden to be certified as a "Green Building"? This means that the building's energy consumption does not exceed 75 percent of that prescribed in national standards for premises of the same size.

ÅF is convinced that technology and technical solutions will play a decisive role in solving many of the challenges the world is now facing – especially when it comes to the future of energy production. ÅF is also convinced that the company's experience and core values are the key to making things happen.

ÅF makes a difference

The greatest difference that ÅF can make in terms of underpinning sustainable future development is through the projects it performs for its clients. Sustainability is part of every assignment that ÅF carries out. But more than that, sustainability is even written into the company's corporate mission: "ÅF's joint pool of expertise creates solutions that are profitable, safe and sustainable."

It is a mission that brings with it a commitment to responsibility. ÅF does more than merely satisfy its clients' needs. Every day in their work on thousands of projects worldwide, 4,500 ÅF consultants are also tirelessly seeking to achieve the right balance between environmental, social and economic factors.

Technology, knowledge and experience are all needed to foresee and tackle the issues of climate change. ÅF wants to be a positive force behind the creation of a sustainable future. ÅF wants to make a difference.

ÅF Green Advisor Plan

Seen from the perspective of the environment and sustainability, 2009 marked the start of a new era for ÅF. In spring the senior management group made the strategically significant decision to increase efforts to promote ÅF's credentials and image as a "green business". A new position and new areas of responsibility were created for a Director for Sustainability and CSR, extending and superseding that of the Group's former Environmental Director.

"The ÅF Green Advisor Plan" is an action plan for sustainable business. ÅF has its sights set on becoming Europe's leading technical consulting company. A major step on the road to this target is to establish some of the most demanding sustainability goals among European technical consulting companies.

Sustainability is part of all ÅF's processes

As part of the ÅF mission statement itself, sustainability permeates thinking in all of ÅF's processes. Systematically analysing each and every process from the three perspectives of sustainability – economic, ecological and social – strengthens ÅF as a whole and paves the way for even more and better business opportunities.



By the year 2015 ÅF aims to:

- have halved its direct climate impact (baseline year 2009, calculated per individual).
- include a proposal in every offer or tender that ÅF submits, to enhance the sustainability aspect of the project.
- be perceived as the technical consulting firm that, from a sustainability perspective, best solves the technical challenges that its clients are faced with.

“The ÅF Green Advisor Plan” is the strategic sustainability tool that ÅF works with. By following and systematically implementing the plan in the markets where the company operates, ÅF can improve the opportunities for generating more business. Alongside this, thanks mostly to the difference that its solutions make to its clients’ operations, ÅF can also contribute to a more sustainable pattern of development in society as a whole.

ÅF Olympic Green Advisor

ÅF is extremely proud to have been appointed Green Advisor to the Olympic Committees in Finland, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland. The Olympic Games provide a stage for the ultimate achievements in the world of sport. But the games also present a unique opportunity to raise environmental awareness and implement a raft of highly visible green initiatives. Collaboration between ÅF and the national Olympic committees centres on strategic sustainability studies and on educating employees and athletes in sustainability-related issues.

ÅF Green Advisor Reports and Seminars

As part of its commitment to achieve its sustainability targets, from 2010 onwards ÅF will publish reports on projects, technological progress and challenges within the fields of energy, buildings, infrastructure and industry. The purpose of these reports is to present a clear picture of how technology and technical expertise can be applied and adapted to meet the many different needs of clients. An “ÅF Green Advisor Report Seminar” will be held to coincide with the publication of each report, focusing on areas of topical interest and giving invited experts within the area an opportunity to share their thoughts on the current situation and what the future holds.

Work environment at ÅF

ÅF does all it can to ensure co-workers of an unbeatable environment in which to work. For further details about ÅF as an employer, the educational opportunities the company offers, its shared values and incentive programmes, please see pages 14–20.

Sustainable ownership

Ångpanneföreningen’s Foundation for Research and Development is one of the company’s largest shareholders. It uses some of its earnings as an owner to offer support in the form of research grants and scholarships to projects at Sweden’s universities, colleges and research institutes in fields that include energy, environmental engineering, security and industrial processes.

Did you know that ÅF recruited its first environmental consultant in 1901?

CODE OF CONDUCT

The Code of Conduct is a summary of the rules and principles that describe how ÅF conducts its operations and what it expects of all its partners, regardless of geographical location or cultural background. The code is an integral part of the way ÅF does business and applies equally to all of the company's directors and to all employees.

The code is based on the OECD's guidelines for multinational corporations, the UN's declarations of Human Rights and the Rights of the Child, and the ILO's central conventions.

General principles

ÅF is to comply with the laws and regulations and to respect the culture and traditions in the countries where ÅF operates.

ÅF shall not offer clients or business partners any benefits in violation of laws or accepted business practices.

ÅF employees shall observe good business practice and conduct themselves ethically in all operations and relations with stakeholders. ÅF employees shall not accept payments or other kinds of reimbursement from a third party that could affect their objectivity in their business decisions.

All financial transactions must be reported in accordance with generally accepted accounting practices, and accounting records must show the nature of all transactions in a correct and transparent manner.

Employees and members of the board of directors shall conduct their private and external financial interests in a manner that is not in conflict or can be perceived to be in conflict with the interests of the group.

ÅF observes neutrality with regard to political parties and candidates.

ÅF encourages an ongoing dialogue with its stakeholders.

Human rights and labour standards

ÅF supports and respects the protection of internationally proclaimed human rights.

ÅF hires and treats its employees in a manner that does not discriminate with regard to gender, religion, age, disability, sexual orientation, nationality, political opinion, union affiliation, and social or ethnic origin. ÅF encourages diversity in the workplace.

No form of forced labour or child labour is tolerated.

Freedom of association shall be respected in all operations.

A safe and healthy work environment shall be provided for all employees.

Sustainability

ÅF assignments and operations must be carried out in a way that contributes to sustainable development and makes efficient and effective use of energy and raw materials.

Did you know that ÅF has doubled its workforce over the past five years?

ÅF'S SUSTAINABILITY WORK AIMS HIGH

In September 2009 Alice Bah Kuhnke took up her new position as Director of Sustainability and CSR at ÅF. Behind her, Alice has a career as a presenter and features producer for Swedish Radio and the Swedish television companies SVT and TV4, as operations manager in the "Ideas for Life" department at Skandia insurance, and as secretary-general for Rättvisemärkt, the Swedish Fairtrade organisation. Her most recent position was at Sektor3, a think-tank for civil society. In her new role at ÅF Alice has a clear message: sustainability is profitability.

What does sustainability mean to you?

"Sustainability is so much more than traditional environmental work. It involves addressing business operations from three angles – economic, ecological and social. This broad approach gives the scope to make a real difference. You can no longer focus on just one of the areas if you want to run a business sustainably."

How can ÅF help to make the world more sustainable?

"Sustainability is a feature of every ÅF assignment. ÅF employees contribute daily to making our world more sustainable. Many of the major challenges facing the business community and the world around us today are – crass as it may sound – business opportunities for us. That's why we need to profile ourselves more clearly and demonstrate that our know-how is something on which our clients can build a sustainable future."

What can a client expect from an ÅF consultant?

"Our clients are always offered the best solution based on the criteria laid down. But we will also propose a second option for our clients – one that is the very best from a sustainability perspective. This gives clients even greater choice. Our clients are our most important asset and the constant focus of our attention, particularly in terms of our insights into where and how we make the biggest difference."

How does ÅF tackle the fact that there are big differences between some markets?

"It's a big challenge – but one that we relish. The key is to handle the differences with respect for different cultures and traditions. I tend to start by assuming that everyone is well-intentioned and that you can achieve a great deal through information and mutual respect. That's why communication is crucial for achieving the high goals we've set ourselves. We must be clear in our communication with shareholders, co-workers, clients, suppliers and all our other stakeholders."

What is at the top of your agenda for the next two years?

"There are big changes on the horizon and there's no time to be lost. We've set our sights high for ÅF's sustainability work and we've taken the first steps. While patience is essential, the key to success is not talk, but action."

