The Doing Good Business Game

Benefits and shortcomings in gamification of triple layered business model design and teaching

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Extended abstract

In recent years we have seen an expanding development of tools for incorporating sustainability in Business Models (BMs), to a large extend relying on Triple Bottom Line (TBL) thinking. A popular approach is the Triple Layered Business Model Canvas (TLBMC) by Joyce & Paquin (2016), expanding the original BMC to three BMC layers for PROFIT, PLANET and PEOPLE. As part of their work, they discuss horizontal coherence in each layer and vertical coherence as an alignment between the layers. This alignment is different from a simple summing up of bottom lines, but how businesses should work with their vertical coherence is not straightforward (Bruun & Kyhnau, 2024).

The Doing Good Business Game by Kyhnau (2022), based on the TLBMC model and the Doing Good Business (DGB) framework by Bruun (2021), proves to be very suitable for development of the BMC in each layer and finding the horizontal coherence. However, experience has revealed shortcomings when it comes to determining the vertical coherence down through the BM layers. We therefore set out to develop a new process model; the Doing Good Business Diamond (DGBD) which crosses the TBL's PROFIT, PLANET and PEOPLE with the DGB framework's three parameters VALUE Creation, GOVERNANCE and BEHAVIOUR into a tool that can be used to determine the vertical coherence.

In the following we describe the DGBG tool and briefly the new DGBD process model and how the game and the model are interconnecting based on the DGB framework.

DGBG – a game-based tool for developing sustainable (triple layered) business models

The Doing Good Business Game is a tool designed to cultivate sustainable business models through a reflective practice-based learning approach. Rooted in the TLBMC framework by Joyce & Paquin (2016), the DGBG integrates the concept of Doing Good Business to enhance

students' understanding of real-world dynamics. The purpose of the game is to equip players with the skills to develop sustainable business models, with a focus on the Triple Bottom Line.

The game structure and elements

The game is divided into three parts, an introductory profitability part and two sustainability parts (PLANET and PEOPLE). The first part, Doing Good Business (PROFIT), is preparatory to be able to play the two actual game parts: Doing Good for PLANET and Doing Good for PEOPLE.

The PLANET game and the PEOPLE game each have three rounds. These rounds guide players through the process of developing sustainable business models, promoting a holistic understanding of the interconnectedness between profits and environmental and social responsibility.

Gamification and reflective practice-based principles

The DGBG not only uses gamification and game-based principles but also leverages UCN's learning approach, Reflective Practice-Based Learning (RPL), which aims to bridge the gap between theory and practice. RPL encompasses three core concepts: Experiences, Thinking, and Action. The game incorporates these principles by using real-life cases and scenario-based exploration close to practical experience. Task cards, reflection cards, and collaborative practice-based learning elements stimulate critical thinking, and actionable insights.

Drawing on RPL principles, the DGBG transforms traditional learning into an engaging game-based format. The design ensures coherence between learning principles and playing techniques, emphasizing not only short-term motivation for the participants but also

fostering in-depth learning that intertwines theory and practice through reflection processes (Gyldendahl Jensen, 2023).

Experiences, benefits, and shortcomings

Since its release in 2022, the Doing Good Business Game has proven a valuable tool for fostering sustainable business model development through its innovative integration of the TLBMC and the DGB framework. More than 25 game workshops with students at UCN, working together with case companies, confirm that the DGBG provides a dynamic and engaging platform that equips students with the skills and mindset needed to navigate the complexities of sustainable business practices in the real world.

By breaking the theory down into smaller parts, it gives the participants a place to start. This makes it easier for them to create business models that are useful and value creating for companies. The game is used by a variety of business and technology programmes at UCN. In addition, DGBG has become a permanent part of the education of students on UCN's Next Step program - an educational program for new entrepreneurs.

The game in international settings

In collaboration with the BM research group at Saxion University of Applied Sciences (Netherlands), the DGBG has been tested in various contexts, i.e., in a circular BM workshop with Ph.D. students from Amrita University (India) facilitated by a researcher from Saxion Business Models research group. One of the PhD candidates who took part in the test of the game has expressed his experience as follows:

"I find the concept of integrating TBL into the realm of business strategy through the Doing Good Business Game to be enlightening (…) it offers a dynamic platform for experiential learning, allowing participants to navigate the complexities of sustainable business practices within a controlled environment".

However, our experience from working with the TLBMC model in our game context, has revealed a shortcoming when it comes to determining the vertical coherence in the three BM layers. There is a need for guidance when summing up the findings from designing each of the BMCs to evaluate and answer the big question to the focal company: Is what you give more valuable than what you take?

DGBD – a new model for determining vertical coherence in the three BM layers

We have created a process model that combines the two triads from Triple Bottom Line thinking and the Doing Good Business approach: The Doing Good Business Diamond (DGBD). We will briefly describe the model in the following using three figures.
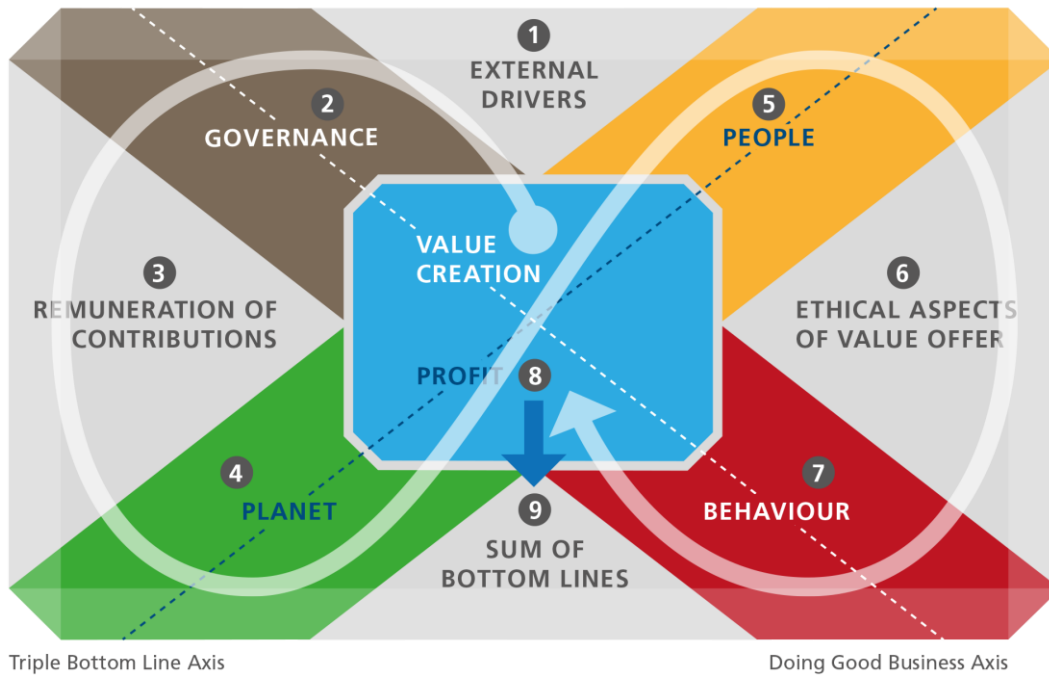
Figure 1: *In the Doing Good Business Diamond the triad of Profit, Planet and People is crossed with the triad of Doing Good Business; Value, Governance and Behaviour, filling in characteristics of the external environment; drivers, remuneration, ethical aspects and sum of bottom lines. The arrows indicate the process of using the model.*
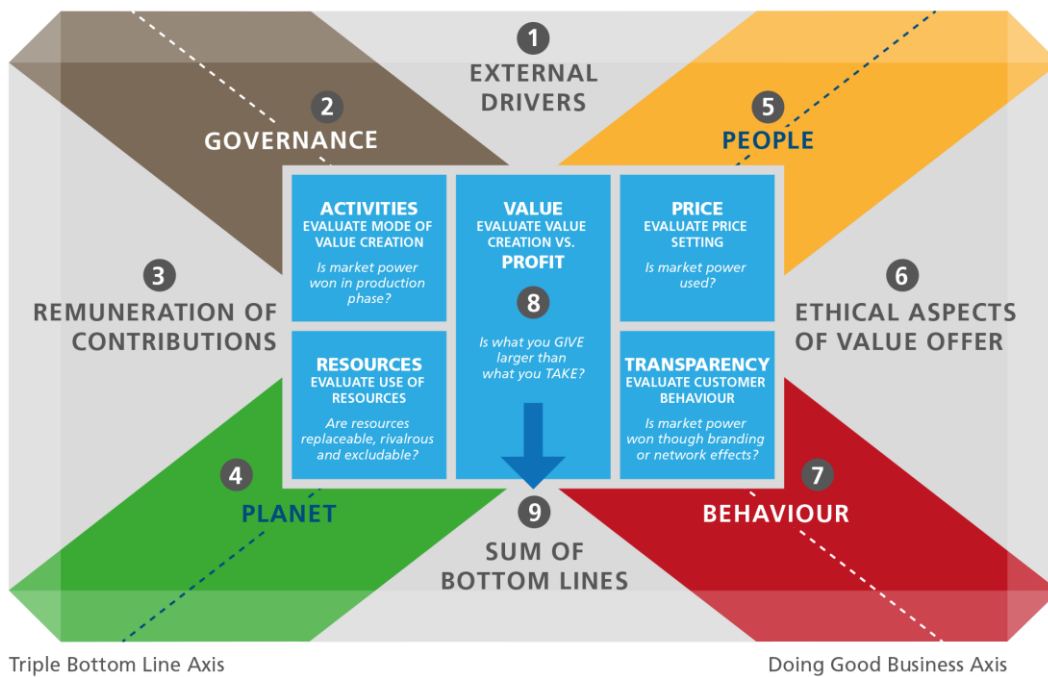

Figure 2: *The process of the game ends up in sums of bottom lines answering the big question: Is what you give to People and Planet more valuable than what you take?*
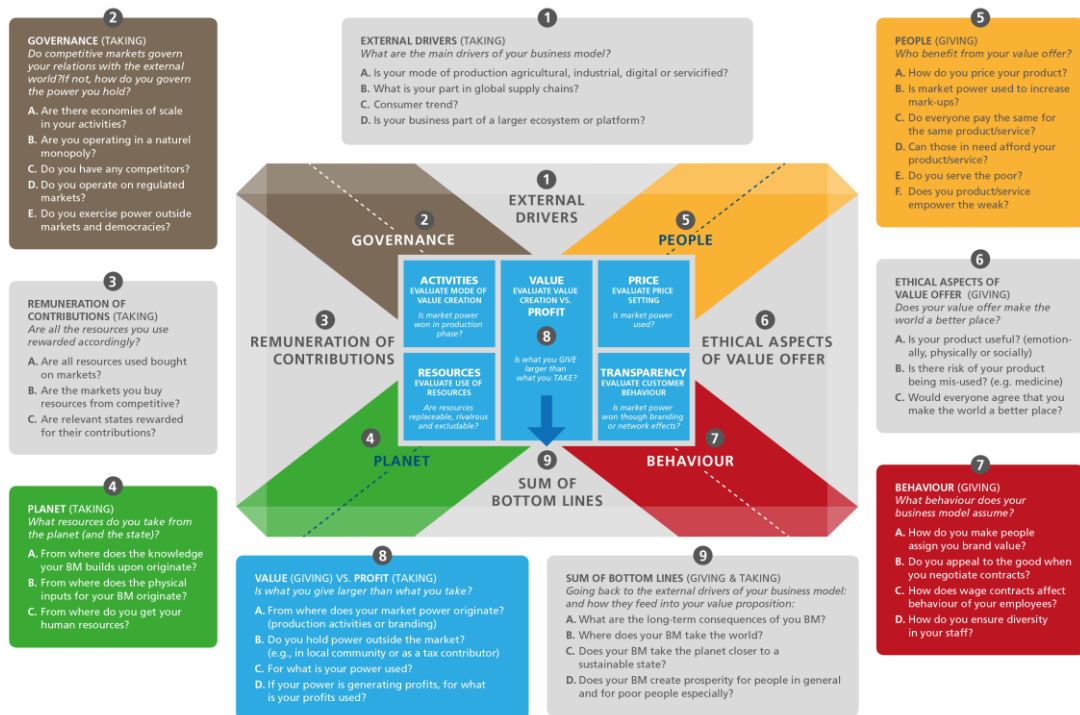
Figure 3: *The Doing Good Business Diamond process model with examples of trigger questions.*

A more in-depth description and explanation of the DGBD model and process, as well as the theoretical basis behind it, can be read in our full paper submitted to NBM 2024: "The Doing Good Business Diamond - Going beyond the triple bottom line for sustainable business modelling" (Bruun & Kyhnau, 2024).

Concluding remarks

We intend to test the new DGBD process model in upcoming game workshops as an additional game element to determine coherence in the created triple layered business model. Based on these tests as well as feedback on our full paper it is our intention to create an additional game board and an accompanying set of cards with instructions and trigger questions.

Keywords

Triple Layered BMC, Coherence in Sustainable BMs, Sustainable Value Creation, Gamification, Reflective Practice-based Learning

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