



Achieving Sustainability in Commerce

We in business have an obligation to sustain those businesses in which our stakeholders have entrusted us. Business stewards who seek personal gain or fortune often overlook this fact, as do business owners who fail to invest in their businesses. In order to execute a sustainable business model, a number of constituencies must be satisfied, such as our brands, employees, customers, suppliers, and our environment.

Not to be underestimated in achieving business sustainability is the generation of profits. Without profits, a business can sustain neither itself nor its constituencies. All employees and stakeholders must understand this fact fundamentally. Of course, most of the business profits should be re-invested in the company for future growth and sustenance. A sustainable business does not have CEOs with excessive compensation, nor is it saddled with massive debt, or engaged in risky ventures.

Achieving a sustainable business means:

- Investing sufficient resources in the business
- Compensating employees and stakeholders fairly
- Paying vendors in a timely manner and within agreed terms and conditions
- Giving back to the community
- Garnering the trust and commitment of all stakeholders
- Taking a long term perspective when making important decisions
- Maintaining integrity in every aspect of the business

Sustaining Our Brands

Brands have a shelf life similar to our products and people. By providing them with “vitamins and minerals” and nurturing them, brands will improve with age and can be sustained for the long term. We create our brands carefully, instill meaning into them, and we have a responsibility to ensure that they thrive and prosper. Invest in them wisely, and allow them to flourish.

Sustaining Our Employees

Sustainable businesses place a high emphasis on taking care of their employees. Do not treat your employees well *so that they will work harder*. This will only lead to employee burnout. Rather, treat your employees well so that they will work hard *and* be committed, productive employees for the long-term benefit of the business. Help them learn new aspects of business through job rotation and re-training, education, provide community service opportunities, cultural or sporting events, or simply a venue for your employees to meet and discuss topics of mutual interest. Provide adequate compensation, meaning and personal development. Employee morale will skyrocket, further sustaining your business.

“People thrive in our environment when we consider and nourish the whole person – body, mind, heart, and soul. Our employees are not a means to an end. Our people are our company.”¹

Sustaining Our Environment

By “environment” we mean not only the world in which we live, but also our work place, community, the organizations we support, and the footprint our businesses leave behind. A sustainable business needs to support its community, be it one local cause or a host of global projects. In order to achieve a sustainable business model, we must ensure that other communities grow and thrive. Without strong, happy and motivated people, together with a clean and healthy environment, a sustainable business cannot be achieved.

Examples of Sustainable Businesses

There are countless examples of American businesses refining their sustainable business models. For example, Stoneyfield Farm monitors its environmental impact and promotes organic dairy farming; New Leaf Paper makes recycled paper that decreases greenhouse gases and saves water, trees and energy; Organic Valley – the largest farmer-owned coop in the U.S. – promotes the sustainability of family farms and produces only organic food.

It is not only food companies that are committed to a sustainable business model. Nike has set a goal of producing zero waste by 2015. Nike is removing all PCVs from the soles of their shoes. Rather than having large, efficient factories serving a wide region, Nike is developing “community factories” in villages throughout S.E. Asia. Contrary to much corporate think, these small factories are reducing Nike’s costs due to decreased product defects and less employee turnover.

After scrupulous analysis, Patagonia realized that the natural cotton fiber they

were using in their jackets was actually more harmful to the environment than synthetic fiber (conventional cotton uses 25% of the world’s pesticides). Since there was not enough organic cotton to supply their needs, Patagonia’s fleece is now made from recycled soda bottles.

All of these companies are developing businesses that will thrive and remain profitable for future generations, while having a minimal impact on the planet. Businesses themselves gain and prosper by practicing a sustainable business model and reaching out to their communities. *HN*

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¹“Raising The Bar: The Story of Clif Bar Inc.”, Gary Erickson, Jossey-Bass, 2004, San Francisco.

Hospitality Newsbites



Seattle Culinary Academy still leads the way

The Seattle Culinary Academy at Seattle Central Community College, widely recognized for its 63 - year tradition and for being the oldest culinary school west of the Mississippi, and named a 2001-2002 "College of the Year" by TIME Magazine, in recognition for its diversity and academic excellence announces new course, "Sustainable Food Systems Practices." Sustainability is redefining the way kitchens interact with the ecology of the earth and chefs are in an ideal position to teach this healthier, more environmentally conscious way of living.

The Culinary Arts and Specialty Desserts and Breads Programs are accredited by the American Culinary Federation Institute. www.seattleculinary.com



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