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BEST PRACTICES IN SUSTAINABILITY

LESSONS FROM NINE COMPANIES ON THE FRONT LINES OF SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY

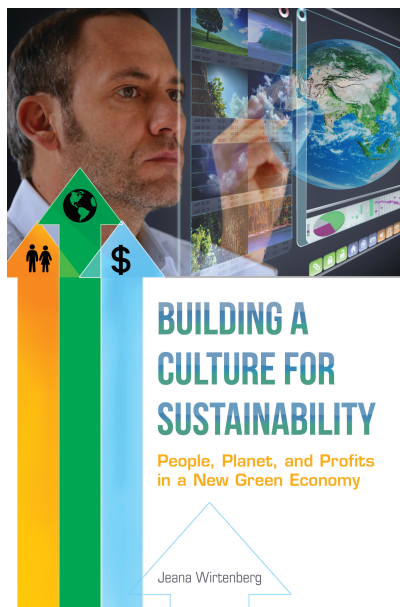
There's a quiet revolution in sustainability and social responsibility, occurring in ways that are not the stuff of headlines or ad campaigns and sometimes not even found in sustainability reports, and a new book provides a peek. In *Building a Culture for Sustainability*, Dr. Jeana Wirtenberg, a human resources and leadership expert trained in psychology, looks at the lives of nine major companies to see whether and how sustainability happens on a daily basis.

The book records dozens of ways companies in a cross-section of industries—not the usual media darlings—are doing things that are changing what it means to go to work and do business.

“In some cases it's happening slowly and incrementally and in some cases it's happening as sweeping business strategy or process changes,” says Dr. Wirtenberg. “But what we see is so many different bits and pieces as well as tectonic shifts that, together, are adding a rich new dimension to the practice of capitalism.

“Sustainability, social responsibility, and people-centricity require people to think and work differently,” says Dr. Wirtenberg. “That's what I see happening in these companies. It's in things like waste reduction and turning off the lights. But for a lot of people in areas not normally thought of as ‘sustainability jobs’, we see an evolution in how they work, how decisions are arrived at, and who they work with.”

What the Shift in Sustainability and CSR Looks Like



Building a Culture for Sustainability shows how sustainable and responsible business culture is being built in many ways, with the common core being deliberate action that changes the traditional business equation by making people and planet considerations a routine part of everyone's job. Here are a few of them:

Alcatel-Lucent, whose customers are telecommunications companies running energy-intensive networks at a time when the use of communications devices is exploding worldwide, is set up so that part of their value proposition is helping those customers meet carbon reduction goals, and designing products accordingly.

Alcoa's Community Assessment and Public Strategy Structure is a system designed to enable front-line employees, like plant managers, to engage stakeholders, analyze and evaluate community needs and then set priorities. The structure's “value contribution” system teaches front-line employees that meeting community needs is part of their job, and develops capacity throughout the company and around the world to make that new mandate a reality.

Chemical company **BASF** is in process of building a requirement that employees at every level—from the factory floor to the executive boardroom—set sustainability goals for their jobs and articulate what sustainability means to them. They also articulate a strategy to all employees that’s built for the long term—orienting toward making the more crowded, hot, and flat world of 2050 a better place to live. The company also takes steps to bridge the work of sustainability specialists with partners from other parts of the business who are responsible for taking ideas to market.

Manufacturing company **Ingersoll Rand** has baked sustainability planning into some of its product development systems so that engineers can “upgrade” products with features that are good for the environment—and that they know their customers will pay for. That’s especially important for a company whose core products are heating and cooling systems, which are heavy energy users and are going to be more in demand as climate change raises temperatures. The company also has its own in-house sustainability center, which has been a source of support for individual employees who’ve taken initiative to make green teams a source of broad impact.

Sanofi now makes engaging patients a core business practice, even going so far as to make them part of the drug-development process in some cases. This and other practices that blur the lines of company and stakeholder help everyone from scientists to salespeople think of their work as people- and society-oriented rather than disconnected science.

Turning Best Practices into Action

Building a Culture for Sustainability also provides a framework to help companies bring all the pieces together. What’s needed, Dr. Wirtenberg argues, is a shift in mindset and behaviors across many dimensions: She shows where to start as well as what the new business mindset ultimately has to look like. The book features an in-depth look at the eight essential elements of a culture for sustainability, and the 15 sustainability-inspired practices that can help any company to succeed, and provides practical tips for embedding sustainability within corporate culture.

Dr. Wirtenberg says cross-pollination of ideas not only within companies but from one company to another and across stakeholders and sectors is critical to efficient and rapid culture change. The book’s findings on what makes sustainability and social responsibility take root also forms the basis for [an executive development course offered through the US Chamber of Commerce Foundation](#) and led by Dr. Wirtenberg.

The result is a comprehensive look at some of the most innovative and successful sustainability programs at work today, thoroughly documented and analyzed by Dr. Wirtenberg, a leading sustainability expert and the CEO of [Transitioning to Green](#). Dr. Wirtenberg also teaches in the [Bard MBA in Sustainability](#) program in New York and is Founder/Senior Advisor at [the Institute for Sustainable Enterprise at Fairleigh Dickinson University](#).

For more information and visual assets:
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