

## **REVIEW : *People & Strategy Journal*, Volume 31.3 (Fall 2008)**



Rated “Four Books” (highest possible rating) “Must Read”

### **The Sustainable Enterprise Fieldbook**

Authors: edited by Jeana Wirtenberg, with William G. Russell and David Lipsky in collaboration with the Enterprise Sustainability Action Team.

Reviewer: Michael Williams, Professor, The Eli Broad College of Business, Michigan State University.

The Sustainable Enterprise Fieldbook is a collection of well-written essays by 29 members of the Enterprise Sustainability Action Team. The editors organized the essays to convey the importance and method of developing core competencies and resources focused on long-term, global sustainability. The editors define sustainability as an enterprise’s awareness and ability to renew and rejuvenate resource inputs, while not degrading local and global ecosystems.

A sustainable enterprise is likely to pursue a triple-bottom-line strategy tied to three broad domains of stakeholder needs: social, environmental, and economic.

The book is divided into five parts and contains explanations, activities, challenge questions, case examples and tools that leaders and managers can apply to help break down barriers to creating sustainable organizations and enable their organizations to work in sustainable ways.

Part I provides the introduction and overview of how a leader can use the book to understand and implement sustainability. Central is the “Sustainability Pyramid Model,” created by the editors, which describes the common qualities of nine sustainable enterprises. The pyramid is stacked in three layers: the foundation layer, the traction layer and the integration layer. The foundation layer includes: deeply embedded values, senior management support, and management’s commitment to sustainability as central to an enterprise’s strategic plan.

Part II presents three primary ingredients of the foundation of a sustainable enterprise. The first is leadership, effectively illustrated by the “Leadership Diamond,” created by Daniel F. Twomey, a contributor to the book. Second is thinking about sustainable enterprise and the importance of having an open mind to see the opportunities afforded by sustainability. Third is the presentation of specific methods for developing a sustainability strategy.

Part III identifies the challenges of managing change. In particular, the essays in Chapter 5 concentrate on the employee as an essential stakeholder in the transition to sustainability. Chapter 6 gives excellent examples of metrics and measurement systems to quantify and identify a company's long-term sustainability.

Part IV turns to globalization and the challenge to look outside of oneself and beyond our bounded rationality to view the world. The essays attempt to challenge the reader to change and think in a much larger context. Finally, Part V is titled "When it all comes together," and it is a very well laid out summary of the book.

Overall, this book is a very user-friendly and practical book on sustainability. It is well written and comprehensive, very clear and concise in its explanations and applicable examples. The key challenge the editors continually ask themselves and the reader is "what more can be done?" The first thing to do is to read, understand and follow *The Sustainable Enterprise Fieldbook*.