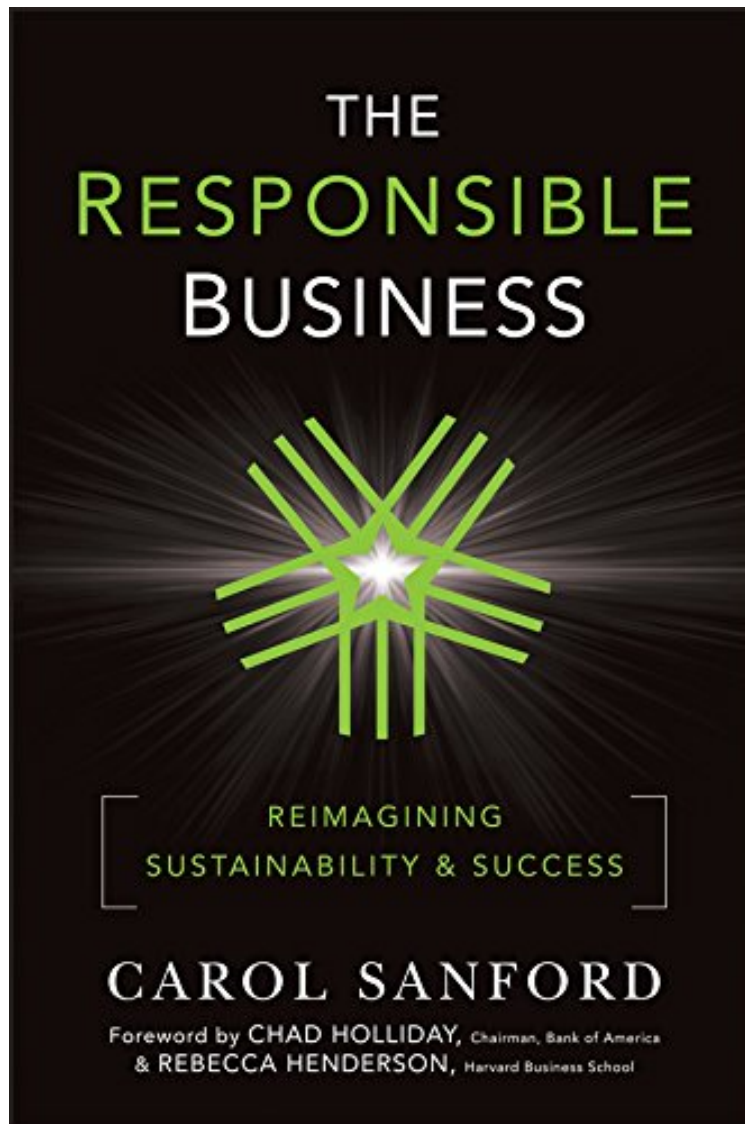


The Responsible Business: Reimagining Sustainability and Success

Carol Sanford

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Carol Sanford : The Responsible Business: Reimagining Sustainability and Success before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Responsible Business: Reimagining Sustainability and Success:

18 of 18 people found the following review helpful. The Most Useful Management Book Today By Thomas Sprimont This book goes beyond anything available today on structuring companies for success. This is not just a theoretical treatise, but addresses case studies and implementation methods. In today's highly dynamic business environments, executives struggle to create value across an array of stakeholders; customers, employees, shareholders, and so forth. The model Sanford defines identifies not only the traditional actors, but those that are traditionally

excluded from business planning, such as sustainability partners. In an unlikely, but entirely predictable scenario, people become center stage as they work to their potential under a new structural paradigm. By engaging the business in both an inward and outward vision, complete relevance is created ensuring products and services are developed in a sustainable construct. As businesses continue to try new theories and implement cumbersome disconnected "best practices," Sanford provides a very useful package for any size business. In fact, examples from Fortune 500 to startups give credence to her well thought out approach. This book is for anyone from management theory aficionados, to executive leaders, to people who want to realize their own potential. Going beyond business, many of the precepts within this work can be applied to anyone who values human potential in any environment. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful.

A WAKE UP CALL WE'VE BEEN WAITING FOR By Max Shkud

As a committed practitioner of organizational learning and change, I consume plenty of books, articles and posts covering various developments in the field. Carol Sanford's "The Responsible Business" is in a league of its own. I am convinced that it is by far the most important book written on the subject in decades.

WHAT MAKES THIS BOOK SO IMPORTANT AND SPECIAL?

The harsh reality is that the field of organizational learning and change has rarely lived up to its promise. With the billions of dollars invested in organizational learning and change efforts around the world, the true ROI of these efforts remains incredibly poor. (Just consider that close to 70% of all change initiatives fail, and over 70% of US employees are disengaged — a whopping 89% worldwide, according to Gallup. These statistics have remained relatively constant over the years.) "The Responsible Business" is a wake up call that the field so desperately needs, in at least two ways.

First, Sanford very convincingly (and unapologetically) demonstrates that many of our dominant approaches to organizational learning and change are fundamentally flawed. She turns much of conventional wisdom on its head, arguing against widely accepted packaged programs and best practices such as reward-and-recognition programs, performance reviews, 360-degree feedback, and focus on predefined leadership competencies — because these practices are counter productive in growing autonomy, responsibility and self-direction in people.

Second and perhaps most importantly, Sanford shines the light on a pragmatic path forward for those courageous business leaders and organizational practitioners who are truly committed to growing their organizations' capacity to thrive in today's volatile and increasingly complex world — even if it means pioneering entirely new organizational territory. If building a culture that nurtures self-governing and self-determining human beings who exercise their own will and creativity toward improving and evolving the world of their stakeholders energizes you, this book is for you.

Below are a few major themes that stood out for me in Sanford's groundbreaking work:

- The critical importance of wholeness-centric view** Most talk about wholeness in the context of inviting the whole employee to work. Sanford goes far beyond the individual. Wholeness in her view is also about redrawing the organizational boundary to include all of its stakeholders — its customers, employees, partners, suppliers, communities, etc. The reason is pragmatic: in doing so, the organization can unleash new and unprecedented levels of caring, meaningful innovation and co-creative collaboration among and within all its stakeholder groups, thus generating significantly more value for all.
- Putting living into systems thinking** Systems thinking has become an increasingly popular notion in the organizational world, but when applied to organizations it often reinforces a mechanistic way of seeing. Sanford draws a compelling distinction between mechanistic systems thinking and living/regenerative systems thinking. The latter sees an organization and its stakeholder groups as nested and overlapping living wholes interconnected by dynamic relationships, each distinguished by its unique essence and an innate desire to evolve toward its unique purpose. This is a fundamental paradigm shift — a dramatic reframing of how we think about organizations and organization change. Fully embracing this shift is the challenge and opportunity of our times.
- Programmatic/packaged/fragmented solutions and best practices** can create more damage than good Sanford debunks the common (and often unconscious) assumption that a packaged program successfully implemented in one organization would also succeed elsewhere. She makes a compelling case that every organization is a unique living social organism, and thus the design of any change and development effort must be unique to the organization's particular challenge, culture, environment and moment in time. In addition, Sanford makes a brilliant point that packaged and mechanical change processes do not build the capacity for responsibility; they build capacity for compliance. In other words, packaged programs breed passengers, not leaders. Having experienced many such programs, I could not agree more.
- Developing people is perhaps the most pragmatic [business] growth strategy** The organizations in Sanford's case studies developed people not because it sounded like a good idea (or because they had a developmental budget to spend), but because they simply couldn't meet their significant business growth challenges otherwise. Development here goes far beyond training (i.e. acquisition of skills); it is about growing the capacity of people and teams to lead and learn, to think and act more inclusively and systemically, to care deeply for the organization's stakeholders, and to take full responsibility for the whole. Consequently, development was not something that happened episodically and on the side, away from real work (through packaged programs deployed by traditional learning development departments.) Rather, it was fueled by very real challenges and was carefully woven into the fabric of every day operations. Also notably, all of development was owned and managed by the learners themselves.

BOTTOM

LINESanford's contribution is monumental — a rare breath of fresh air in the field cluttered with increasingly sophisticated advice on how to fix or improve traditional organizational machinery. Those who expect easy-to-follow recipes and best practices will likely be disappointed. The book is not about what to do as an organizational practitioner — it is about how to think like a true architect and craftsman engaging with organizations as complex living social organisms. And that's precisely the kind of contribution the world of organization design and change needs so desperately at this time. 13 of 13 people found the following review helpful. Really excited about business again

By C. Vandemore
This is an amazing book for business people and if enough of us read it this will be an amazing time for business. Carol Sanford reminds us that business is not just a way people make money - it one of the primary activities our whole species does here on earth and we have the potential for it to be so much more effective, meaningful, interesting and fun than it is now. I am not sure how we have backed ourselves into a corner, volunteering to feel helpless and limited. But I am sure what Carol Sanford says makes beautiful and obvious sense. If we want to improve lives and the health of the planet business can do that (in fact good business always has) but it will NOT be as a side project that doesn't involve the whole of the business. We need original thinking, a little courage and some faith in each other. Just pointing this out would be enough for one book, but this book contains an explicit "how to" and many illustrative case studies. I can't wait to put this into practice.

"When most people think of corporate responsibility, they are focusing on a business's effect on and relationship to stakeholders. A Responsible Business sees stakeholders as full partners and meaningful instruments for the evolution of healthier communities and more successful businesses." — from the Introduction

The Responsible Business offers a new and strategic approach to doing business that holistically integrates responsibility into all aspects of an organization, allowing for returns at every level, business and social. This book goes beyond the often well intentioned but limited attempts at sustainability to present a framework that allows organizations to bring responsibility into everything they do and re-imagine success. From innovation, product development, and production processes to business management, strategic planning, and shareholder development, the author shows how being a Responsible Business is a practical skill that can be applied day-to-day at every level of the business. No longer just the role of a department or the job of CSR professionals, successful responsibility and business efforts start at the business level, are then taken to the corporate level, and are finally applied throughout the organization. The Responsible Business outlines a framework for building a responsibility and consciousness infrastructure that applies a living systems view to the business and inspires all of its stakeholders, including shareholders. Throughout the book, illustrated by examples from technology to manufacturing, large and small, public and private, Sanford demonstrates how to make responsibility integral to all aspects of a business as an engine for innovation, profitability, and purpose.

Praise for The Responsible Business

"This is a very significant book. It makes it clear that businesses have a single boss with five interrelated aspects. The stories are among the crispest, most evocative case histories I have seen. The book is for any corporate leader trying to do the impossible: create a business that recreates the world." — Art Kleiner, editor-in-chief, strategy business, and author, *The Age of Heretics*

"Carol Sanford offers us a proven, practical, and systems-based approach that integrates five stakeholder groups into a business system working as an integral whole. Essential reading for leaders wanting a system framework for sustainability and business success!" — Otto Scharmer, MIT Sloan senior lecturer; author, *Theory U: Leading from the Future as it Emerges*; and coauthor, *Presence*

"The Responsible Business challenges many assumptions corporate leaders, investment advisors, and sustainability experts have long taken for granted. It provides a road map that can help innovative businesses think about how to be truly transformational." — Sam Ford, Fast Company expert blogger and director, Peppercom

"The powerful concepts in The Responsible Business have changed the process of sustainable development and how communities truly thrive. Indeed, these proven approaches will be the roadmap to truly achieve the deepest level of living communities." — Bill Reed, founding member of LEED System and coauthor, *The Integrative Design Guide to Green Building*

"Critical for re-imagining the future of business. Rarely a day goes by that I do not call on this way of thinking and looking at the world. It is useful for taking on the big business decisions that so many of us face every day.