



CSR International Book Review Digest

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CSR for HR: A Necessary Partnership for Advancing Responsible Business Practices

Author: Elaine Cohen
Publisher: Greenleaf Publishing
Year: 2010
Pages: 322



In *CSR for HR: A Necessary Partnership for Advancing Responsible Business Practices*, Elaine Cohen takes a ground-up approach to CSR that focuses on corporate engagement with individual employees. As Cohen says, "This book is both a wake-up call for the human resources (HR) profession and a tool-kit written to help members of that profession to act." Cohen develops a concept she calls corporate social human resources (CSHR) that redirects traditional HR responsibilities such as organisational development, recruitment, training and compensation toward CSR goals and practices.

To build her case, Cohen tells the story of Sharon, a fictitious HR manager from a medium-sized firm, who, over the course of the book, transforms herself from a CSR novice to a powerful CSR advocate within her company. The narrative approach may be distracting for some readers, but it makes the material accessible for those new to CSR. The book is about more than what HR can (and must) do for CSR, however. It is also about how managers and employees learn about CSR and begin to change their behaviour, as well as the

contribution that each employee makes toward a company's overall social and environmental impact.

Unlike many CSR books out there, *CSR for HR* is not preaching to the choir. It is intended primarily for HR managers who may have heard of CSR but don't really know what it means in practice, or how it relates to the job they currently have.

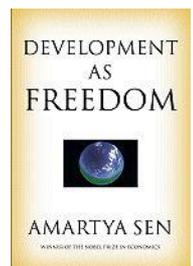
Elaine Cohen, currently co-founder and managing consultant of Beyond Business Ltd., has more than 25 years of experience in executive positions at various global companies, including 8 years as an HR executive at Unilever. As a result, she offers a unique insider-perspective that breaks CSR down into real terms. Through her narrative, Cohen shows HR managers how to engage employees, develop corporate culture, and communicate progress through CSR reporting. The story is informative as well as inspiring. As Cohen tells us, "Sharon realizes she doesn't need to sit around and wait for her CEO or executive team to develop a comprehensive CSR strategy for the HR function." HR managers interact with employees (a key stakeholder group) in innumerable ways. CSR strategy can come from the top down, but for it to really stick, the employees need to be ready for it.

Cohen's book gives HR managers the information and confidence needed to open their companies up to the opportunities that can come from CSR.

Review by: Matthew Maguire, CSR International

Development as Freedom

Author: Amartya Sen
Publisher: Oxford University Press
Publication Date: 1999, 2001
(paperback)
Pages: 384





In recent years, two books have provided interesting, and contrasting approaches to the challenge of global poverty. Jeffrey Sachs' *The End of Poverty* (previously reviewed [here](#)) made the headlines, both for the catchy title and the rock star status of its author. The other, Amartya Sen's *Development as Freedom*, drew less attention, but is potentially far more impactful. While Sachs' solution relies on the equal distribution of cash from the developed world to the developing through a complex multi-lateral framework, Sen's approach is far more compelling and has far more long-term potential.

Sen's starting point is already radically different. Poverty is not about GDP per capita, it is defined as 'capability deprivation'. Raising GDP per capita is only a means to the true goal which is to improve the real lives of real human beings - to make those lives longer, healthier, happier, more fulfilling - to let people be subjects of their lives rather than mere objects buffeted by forces over which they have no control. In Sen's words, our goal is to give people the "real capability to lead lives we have reason to value". This is what Sen calls human freedom, or 'agency'.

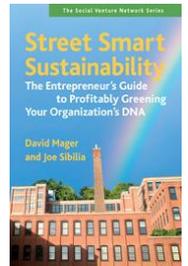
He identifies the 5 types of freedom necessary to offer the capability: political freedom, Economic facilities, social opportunities, transparency guarantees and protective security.

Women's development is identified as critical to achieving freedom. "Nothing, arguably, is as important today in political economy of development as an adequate recognition of political, economic and social participation and leadership of women," he says. This will not only help development, but is also one of the best indicators of child survival and reductions in fertility rates.

Paraphrasing the old adage, Sachs is giving the people fish, while Sen is helping them learn them how to fish. I know where my money lies...

Review by: Oliver Dudok van Heel, Founder, Living Values

Street Smart Sustainability: The Entrepreneur's Guide to Profitably Greening Your Organisation's DNA



Author(s): David Mager and Joe Sibilia
Publisher: Berrett-Koehler
Publication Date: 2010
Pages: 265

"Pursuing a sustainable enterprise is a noble endeavour," David Mager and Joe Sibilia advise, and they show how to do it in their collaborative book, *Street Smart Sustainability: The Entrepreneur Guide to Profitably Greening Your Organisation's DNA*. *Street Smart Sustainability* is a powerful and practical handbook that provides essential tools to understand and put sustainability into business practice using a cost-effective approach. The book uses best practice examples from a large variety of small and medium-sized organisations, including many with whom the authors have worked. Readers can learn from the experience of various companies in sectors ranging from soft drinks, office equipment, carpets, cleaning products to milk farming. The book features, among others, Xerox, Safety-Kleen, Marty's Soda Mix, Motherwear, Walmart, Qteros, Seventh Generation and Interface Inc.

What makes this book different and superior is how Mager and Sibilia manage to engage readers into learning from case studies and best practices; they back up their narration with outstanding statistical data, deep analysis and practical steps and initiatives, with recommendations summed up in the end of each chapter, making it easy for the readers to grab the core idea.

All this is packed within 11 well-organised chapters including topics such as leadership, metrics, design, energy, carbon, purchasing and waste. Mager and Sibilia also deliver The Top Ten Sustainability Talking Tips in the introduction, offering fundamental ideas to convince those relatively new to the idea of internalising sustainability into the DNA of the business.

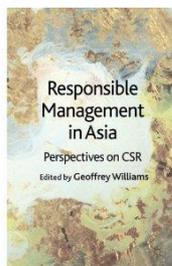


As part of the sustainability road map, Mager and Sibilia have dedicated an entire chapter to discuss how environmental problems such as waste (an output) can be transformed into something useful (an input).

In a nutshell, this book is highly recommended for those entrepreneurs seeking transformative ways to carry out their business with a greener future and sustainability in mind.

Review by: Mardian Marsono, CSR International

Responsible Management in Asia: Perspectives on CSR



Editor: Geoffrey Williams
Publisher: Palgrave Macmillan
Publication Date: 2011
Pages: 328

Many books on CSR focus on the developed countries of the world and feature all sorts of good practice and case studies from European and North American businesses. *Responsible Management in Asia* is here to mix things up a bit and focus solely on the largest continent and the trends in the development of CSR here.

More than twenty authors come together to present topics ranging from philanthropy through strategic CSR, the role of civil society, responsible investment, sustainable tourism, reporting and more. Case studies focus on India, China, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Hong Kong and other Asian countries. As the authors state, CSR in Asia does not mirror the standards and codes prevalent in Europe or North America and, in many cases, does not even acknowledge them. This leads to a misconception that CSR is not well developed in the region and it is this perception that the authors are out to disprove.

The book also explores to some extent the connections between religion and culture on one hand and CSR on the other. In a continent that has a large percentage of the global population,

belonging to a wide range of faiths and denominations, this factor cannot be ignored.

The chapters make for good reading and strike a nice balance between being academic and using simpler language. At the end of the book, the reader is left with an alternative perspective of CSR and the understanding that while the West is well known for its leadership in the area of sustainability, the East is really not far behind.

Review by: Nazareth Seferian, CSR International

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