

## **Sustainable Business – Sustainable Planet**

*by Jon Craighead*

Any successful organization that is sustainable is so because it is staffed with people of good will doing good work. These enterprises provide excellent products and services. Their customers are pleased and willingly recommend the organization's services to their friends and associates. Such businesses remain thriving and feasible even in the most challenging of circumstances. They persevere through economic downturns, technological perplexities, and other maladies. These entities remain consistently sustainable in the public trust over time.

The fundamentals of a sustainable organization are generated by a basic core of organizational values. These are created and agreed upon values which will guide company and employee operational practices. These practices are applied in two categories. The first category outlines the public values – how the company will operate and be known in the marketplace. The second set of values are internal. The fundamentals of the second set of values specifically outline the operating principles regarding the treatment of and relationships among staff members, management, and customers and the commitment to the success of the organization. The basic intent of both values is to do great work beyond business as usual and to make a significant contribution to their customers, the communities they serve, and each other. Both sets of values are living organisms adapting to changing circumstances and demands. Accordingly, they are routinely reviewed and updated to insure the applicability and efficiency of these commitments.

As leaders, once we have established our sustainable businesses, our next challenge is to venture beyond our immediate needs and consider our responsibility to preserve and protect our environmental sustainability. In so doing we must accept our individual custodian responsibility for this magnificent planet we share.

Dr. Jeffrey Sachs is the Director of the Earth Institute at Columbia University. In his newly released tome, [The Age of Sustainable Development](#), he points out there are billions of people struggling to survive and find safe water, healthy food, health care, and shelter. This is not an attempt to address these problems from a guilt perspective, but instead to bring to our consciousness the threat we are facing and what possible solutions are available through a higher level of awareness. It will be our individual commitment that will make the seminal difference for our world. It is ultimately in our best interest to succeed because we all flourish when we all are flourishing.

Dr. Sachs is considered the world's leading authority on economic development and was a tenured professor at Harvard at the age of 28. He has developed a Master's degree program titled Masters of Development Practice (MDP) now taught at major universities around the world. In this program he lays out a broad vision for how the global economy can grow in a way "that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their anticipated needs." MDP programs develop solutions for dealing with these growing threats by addressing shelter, health care, poverty, food security, and clean water through promoting and developing scientific approaches. He makes a case that we can coexist using our natural resources wisely without using them up. This is accomplished by creating a methodology for harvesting and using resources so that they are not depleted or permanently damaged, thereby perpetuating a safe harbor for future generations.

Some skeptics question the authenticity of claims regarding these threats. Many are thwarted by the enormous efforts required. The frustration is also shared by people who sincerely care about the earth's sustainability but are resigned that the maladies are beyond any individual's ability to impact. Such frustrations are understandable, especially when there is a loss of hope and the presence of fear. These otherwise committed individuals may be strengthened by an awareness that successful work is being accomplished.

What is heartening about Dr. Sachs' work is that the successes are creating more successes. He delivers strategies previously considered impossible. There is no suggestion that everyone must now rush out in sandals and tunics in a redemptive zeal, but hopefully the disenchanted may reengage in a renewed commitment to posterity. There is also the possibility that, as individuals, we discover creative ways to be involved by contributing to our planet's future while simultaneously making this a better place to live today.