



SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS

Doing Well by Doing Good for the Planet

Business can be a leader in building a more sustainable world. As a pioneer in the field of corporate social responsibility, I've seen it firsthand. In this chapter, I've featured a wide range of ways passionate business leaders are creating companies with sustainability at the heart of their mission - and challenging others to join with them.

I first met Elliot Hoffman while consulting for the San Francisco Chamber of Commerce. Through my teaching experience, I'd seen how public schools were in dire need of support. After getting my masters' degree in business, I consulted with Fortune 100 corporations, Chambers of Commerce and the Business Roundtable to engage business executives to support innovative strategies to address their issues of workforce development. They began to see that investing in today's young people in their community was a wise investment.

Always ready to get involved, Elliot had signed up for the Chamber's new School-Business Connection I had developed to get companies to build public-private partnerships to improve the quality of education in the city's public schools. With over 120 languages spoken in the homes of San Francisco, the city was a bellwether indicator for the increasing ethnic and cultural diversity in the U.S. And with the ever-growing influx of immigrants into the country, it was becoming clear that the education system was ill-equipped to educate these children. Our Principal of the Day program increased business awareness of the challenges facing schools, and the Job Shadow Day program connected executives like Elliot with students who were curious about his company, Just Deserts. By connecting with these young people, business leaders discovered the joy of sharing their own journey while at the same time investing in their future workforce. Elliot had grown up in a housing cooperative in the Bronx, so the idea of being "a cooperative human being" has always just seemed natural to him. In fact, every day on his way to school he saw a motto painted on the wall of the electric power plant he walked by: COOPERATION EQUALS POWER. So when he decided to go into business, he



did so with sustainability in mind. “We just didn’t want to waste anything,” he says. “It was ingrained in us.” Those values helped make his family’s business, Just Desserts, not only socially responsible, but profitable. Now Elliot’s with his company, REV Sustainability, he guides small and midsize companies how to transition to a more just and sustainable way of operating.

It was the first Earth Day when Ben Cohen first became aware of what was happening to the environment. When, years later, he became a successful business owner he knew that if he and his partner wanted to really change things for the better, they had to take a critical look at their own business’s environmental impact. That’s why Ben & Jerry’s Ice Cream installed a solar array at their factory in Vermont, and a bio-digester that turns that waste into clean energy in their factory in the Netherlands. Today Ben invests in climate justice initiatives.

Ed Begley Jr. was also inspired by that first Earth Day in 1970. He began thinking about what the future could look like if the momentum from this event was leveraged to make an even broader impact. So he went to some of the leaders who had put it together and said, “It’s fine to have this one day—but as a movement, and a community, what are we going to do for the other 364 days?” Ever since then, he has championed sustainable living in a variety of ways, including running a business that features a line of green indoor cleaning products called Begley’s Best.

As a boy, Gary Hirshberg loved spending time on top of New Hampshire’s Mount Washington. On clear days he could even see the Atlantic Ocean far off in the distance. But when he returned home from college, he noticed a big change: the air pollution was so bad that you couldn’t see the ocean anymore. Later, he and his colleagues at Stonyfield Farms decided that 10 percent of their profits would be spent on initiatives to fight climate change. Since then, the company has spearheaded many measures to minimize its carbon footprint and to support environmental efforts.

Jonah Wittkamper was in high school when he learned about the principle of “radical inclusion” at a summer camp where kids came from all over the world. As a shy teenager who often felt out of place, that summer was transformative for him. As an adult, he’s still practicing radical inclusion in a variety of ways, including founding NEXUS, a global network of influential philanthropists and social entrepreneurs who are tackling a wide array of social issues, including disaster relief and humanitarian aid, especially in the regions most affected by climate change.



And Henk Rogers was in a hospital recovery room flipping through a newspaper when he saw a tiny news story that said all of the coral in the world would be dead by the end of the century. “This should be front-page news, not jammed in the back,” he thought. As a highly successful entrepreneur, Henk had had many profitable companies, but that morning he had found himself lying in the back of an ambulance, with a 100 percent blockage of the largest artery in his heart. “I’m not going, I still have stuff to do,” he said. In the following days, he decided to dedicate the rest of his days to making the world a better place by doing what he could to making Hawaii have 100% renewable energy by 2045.

Each of the business leaders in this chapter whose life journey led them into developing sustainable companies arrived by a unique path. I invite you to enjoy their stories and allow them to inspire you too to support sustainability, whether as a business leader, entrepreneur, or even as a consumer. We all need to work together on this!

