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The Responsible Business

Reimagining Sustainability and Success

THE SUMMARY IN BRIEF

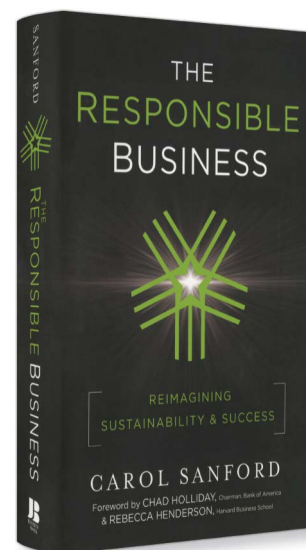
The Responsible Business offers a new and strategic approach to doing business that holistically integrates responsibility into all aspects of an organization, allowing for returns at every level, business and social. Author Carol Sanford goes beyond the often well-intentioned but limited attempts at sustainability, to present a framework that allows organizations to bring responsibility into everything they do and reimagine success.

From innovation, product development and production processes to business management, strategic planning and shareholder development, Sanford 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, which was never the best path, successful responsibility and business efforts start at the business level, are then taken to the strategy level, and then can be consistently applied throughout the organization. *The Responsible Business* outlines a framework for building a consciousness infrastructure that applies a living-systems view to the business and inspires all of its stakeholders, including shareholders.

IN THIS SUMMARY, YOU WILL LEARN:

- How to understand markets, corporations and businesses as living systems.
- The five key stakeholders in a Responsible Business and their dynamic links.
- How to start shifting practices in business and translate the results into corporate and ecosystem returns.
- Six hazards that can get in the way of an organization's transformation.



by Carol Sanford

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THE COMPLETE SUMMARY: THE RESPONSIBLE BUSINESS

by Carol Sanford

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Introduction

According to conventional business practice, responsibility has no inherent or fundamental connection to business, so responsibility needs to be added in. When added, it's usually in the form of a department or program assigned by management to an individual or group.

The very concept of "corporate responsibility" puts emphasis in the wrong place. Responsibility isn't a set of metrics to be tracked or behaviors to be modified. It is central to both the purpose and the prosperity of a business and must be pervasive in its practices. The question of how to be a Responsible Business is therefore relevant to all organizations — including nonprofits, governments and schools — that usually don't see themselves as businesses as well as those corporations that don't imagine themselves to be interested in responsibility.

If corporations and the businesses within them are to live and prosper, they must find ways to remain connected to their origins while cultivating and then adapting to changes in the world around them. Their long-term viability has as much to do with how well they create networks of relationships with consumers and other companies and industries that advance the health of all. In the long run, all living things must contribute to a world of expanding life. The alternative is a world where life steadily dwindles away to nothing.

By definition, therefore, a corporate or business entity is responsible to more than just itself. It exists in a larger whole — literally, as well as within the legal and operating framework of business — and it is responsible to the whole of which it is a part. How it governs its own existence influences every aspect of the whole.

The Responsible Business is itself a co-creative partner in ensuring the vitality and health of all the communities to which it belongs. All living beings either contribute value or receive it. The ones that endure are the ones that do both, even as the world changes.

The real challenge to becoming responsible is that most businesses erroneously see themselves as closed systems cut off from their environments — more like machines than organisms. Most businesses are unconscious of the real relationships that enable them to exist, and this blinds them to their responsibilities. Even worse, it blinds them to their opportunities. ●

PART I: REIMAGINING BUSINESSES OF THE FUTURE

Engaging Shareholder Value

Chad Holliday, who retired on January 1, 2010, from his position as CEO, chairman of the board, and president of DuPont Corporation, was one of the most sophisticated leaders when it came to managing the delicate diplomacy required for large-scale organizational change. Early on, Chad started making noises about the need to pay attention to the environmental effects of DuPont decisions and actions. He introduced changes in manufacturing procedures in each new business he headed, from Intermediate Chemicals to Fibers Group, first in the United States and then in Europe and Asia. He was subtle but determined.

In all that time, he never talked about corporate responsibility or sustainability. He just kept using the principle *Do what is right* to question and redesign work and production systems as well as product development.



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As a by-product, the effects on Earth and communities were reduced, and new relationships and partnerships were built.

Chad realized that one of his greatest opportunities for change was shifting shareholder understanding. He felt that shareholders were too disconnected from the effect of corporate decisions, so he launched a campaign to educate not only his own shareholders but also the investment world as a whole. Chad helped design the UN Global Compact — a voluntary initiative for multinational corporations focused on learning, dialogue and partnerships — and took a position on its board. As part of that effort he helped develop the “Global Compact Governance Framework and “The Ten Principles,” which articulate agreements that guide the global corporations’ efforts to hold themselves accountable.

He also believed that transparency was a meaningful and effective way to bring about change and to educate all of a company’s stakeholders. Toward this end, he set up a set of advisory boards for a number of DuPont businesses. The process of increased transparency served to educate investors on the effects of their decisions. It also had the effect of educating the DuPont leadership, which made deeper and more systemic understanding pervasive throughout the whole company. This forced management to question the usual business practices and get people reflecting with one another.

Panning for Gold

Five recurring themes or principles enable businesses like DuPont to go beyond corporate responsibility and become Responsible Businesses:

Reality: Evoke caring by connecting everyone in the organization to the real lives of its stakeholders.

Systemic Effects: Define responsibility in terms of consciousness of systemic effects rather than as best practices and programs. Systemic effects should be the only measures of success.

Systemic Wholes: Combat fragmentation by working systemically. Fragmentation is overcome by working with wholes, not parts: whole businesses, whole people, whole watersheds and whole systems.

Self-Direction: Redesign work to evoke self-developed people doing self-directed work that is self-evaluated within the context of business strategy.

Capability Development: Develop internal and external stakeholders through personal development and education in systemic approaches. ●

Stakeholders as Systemic Collaborators

Businesses are chartered to serve the common good by producing something of value that others seek but are unable to produce for themselves. Stakeholders are those who have an interest or *stake* in this production of value. Business aggregates a complex set of stakes, raises the value, and returns that value back to each stakeholder.

To honor a stake requires understanding and valuing it from the perspective of the stakeholder. It requires engaging in a relationship that is reciprocal: one receives the use of the stake, and in return one adds value to it. But that value needs to be in a form that is relevant to the stakeholder. Too often, in lieu of providing real value to stakeholders, companies offer self-serving interpretations of what they are returning and expect stakeholders to be satisfied with what they can get.

The only way to truly honor a stake is to have a deep understanding of what the stakeholders are investing in and what fair return they are counting on. A Responsible Business also consciously recognizes all the stakes that have been invested in it and works to increase value for all the stakeholders. This is its singular purpose. For a Responsible Business, the living entities — ecosystems, communities and individuals — that it affects are not externalities; they are part of the *body of the whole*.

Five Key Stakeholders and Their Stakes

There are five distinct stakeholder groups, each with a unique nature, that give a stake to a business in exchange for achieving the value they hope to realize. Taken together, the five stakeholders represent the whole context or universe within which a business operates.

Customers: Most companies tend to think of customers as *buyers* of products and services, but when customers are truly understood to be stakeholders, they are seen as *integrators* because they integrate products or services into their personal or work lives. The success of any business depends on how well that integration occurs.

Co-Creators: Co-creators include everyone who is involved in creating the product or service for the customer, including full-time and part-time workers, contractors and suppliers along the entire system of production all the way back to the original sources of raw materials. The focus is on the idea of creation rather than the narrower concept of employment, to underscore the extensive and diverse web of contributors to a company’s offerings.

Earth: Earth is the primary supplier and the final recipient of everything produced by human enterprise. Most

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companies still consider it a stretch to think of Earth as a stakeholder, but Earth is a way of symbolizing living systems interconnected in a seamless web of life and contributing to the evolution of the planet as a whole.

Communities: Communities are the social context within which businesses operate. To work in a systemic way, a business must take into account the effect it has on all of its communities. Anchoring itself to the stories, interests and concerns of specific communities helps a business become concrete and accountable in its decision-making process.

Investors: Investors get the output of a working system, which is ironic given that conventional business wisdom generally considers investors to be the beginning or preeminent stakeholders. But companies are not helping investors see themselves as part of larger wholes and making them aware of their effects. In the current business paradigm, the supposed needs of investors drive much of the decision-making process. For this reason, developing investors is a highly leveraged way to transform many destructive practices and promote health producing ones. ●

Geometry of the Responsible Business

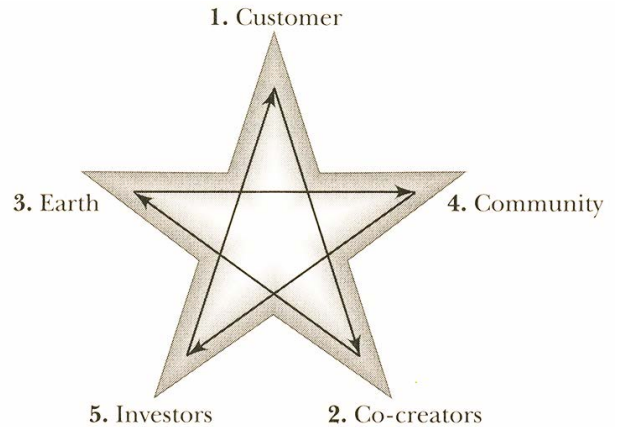
The five key business stakeholders are connected in interwoven dynamic relationships. Stakeholder groups are nodes in a dynamic system that connect and influence one another. The key to becoming a Responsible Business is to learn how to understand and work creatively within this system.

To get a true picture of an alive, complex and evolving business, one must be able to think not only about its activities but also about the interactions with and among its stakeholders. This can quickly become an overwhelming task, which is why a framework depicting relationships within a whole helps to understand and manage the complexities of business stakeholders.

Systemic Stakeholder Framework

The pentad framework involves a five-pointed star, with each point of the star representing the five interconnected business stakeholders. The lines of the pentad represent a structure inherent in the relationships among stakeholders that enables them to be in harmony. Working with the pentad involves moving from point to point along the connecting lines that form the star.

It is important always to begin with the customer — the people who will actually buy a business's products or



The Stakeholder Pentad Framework

services — and then move to co-creator — the range of people and services a business employs in order to provide its products and services to customers. From co-creator we go to the third point, Earth, the living source of energies and raw materials. The next step is to go from Earth to community, the local people and institutions who allow and are affected by the presence and activities of a business. The fifth point is the investor, the people who supply the financial capital needed for a business to evolve.

The business community should understand *all* stakeholders as necessary aspects of a coherent whole. Businesses build systemic understanding when they use the pentad to describe their relationships with their stakeholders. This understanding leads to higher levels of creative thinking and a constant upward spiral in the quality of relationships, which is the essence of Responsible Business. ●

Be Value-Adding, Not Value-Added

The fragmenting worldview that is now the default mode in business tends to treat each of the pentad's stakeholder groups as a "thing" — a box or category for pigeonholing individuals and institutions. In reality, each of the points on the pentad refers to a living process, a particular way of seeking to improve the world. To use the pentad productively requires shifting from a *thing-based* to a *process-based* way of viewing the world. It requires seeing the world in terms of a *value-adding* perspective, where the world is made up of living systems, all of which are working with the larger systems they are part of to create more value.

The deep flaw in the concept of *value-added* lies in its assumption that value comes from production of an offering rather than its use. If value is derived from the making of

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a product, then that implies that value can be added at a single point in time and that the creation of that value can be repeated over and over again. But the creation of value depends on continual improvement in how well and how holistically the product serves the user.

Five Stakeholder Imperatives

To work successfully with a stakeholder's value-adding process, a company starts by understanding stakeholder *imperatives*, the essential effects-in-use, which are the effects that products have in the lives of people who use them. The following are some guiding ideas that help portray stakeholders in terms of their imperatives and define business relationships that are genuinely value-adding to stakeholders and their world.

Value-Adding View of Customers: Customers and consumers seek to be fully alive. They nurture dreams and aspirations, and they engage in personal processes for adding value to what they care about. The product or service offering of a Responsible Business aims to do three things: enrich the lives of customers, their worlds and what they affect; create a better life than competing offers from other producers or companies; and be reliably there and reliably distinctive in the face of hazards and opportunities.

Value-Adding View of Co-Creators: A Responsible Business designs work systems that evoke expression of essence from all its co-creators. A Responsible Business therefore aims to pursue three purposes in this arena: enable co-creators to increase value to the lives of others; call on each individual to develop unique potential in a way that complements the working of a team; reveal and enable the worthiness of all people through fostering their creative expression.

Value-Adding View of Earth: Earth is made up of many living systems interconnected in a seamless web of life. A Responsible Business will aim to do three things: start from the essence of materials and their role in living systems; operate as a conscious member of ecosystems; improve the productive working processes of ecosystems.

Value-Adding View of Communities: Communities are living entities with coherent cores, and when properly engaged, they can be powerful allies in creating healthy businesses and economies. Within its communities, a Responsible Business will aim to do three things: design human systems to contribute to the evolution of uniqueness and health in a given place; inspire visionary leadership capable of manifesting integrative solutions through time; elevate the overarching principles that society chooses to be governed by in all of its pursuits.

Value-Adding View of Investors: What is imperative with regard to investors is to educate and engage real people and institutions in real wealth creation. In its work with investors, a Responsible Business will aim to do three things: generate durable returns and systemically beneficial effects; progress the industry's capacity, character and asset value; understand divergent forces, and leverage resources to create world-changing effects and business evolution. ●

PART II: THE MAP TO THE TERRITORY

Teaching an Organization to Star

To operate as a Responsible Business and to work with stakeholders in the way the pentad framework reflects, a company must face up to the limitations presented by its current culture, approaches to markets, strategic planning, workforce capability, and the way work is designed and carried out altogether. Although they will be approached differently in every business, the following four phases provide a path to follow to retrofit an existing business.

Phase One: Cultural Evolution. To begin, an organization must undertake a deep reflection on its culture, ideally going all the way back to its founding. This reflection is divided into four lines of inquiry.

1. Status: The questions, "How do we convey status, and how does that limit or advance us? What does it produce?" should be explored in a neutral way, without making anyone or any practice right or wrong. This can become a rich source of insight about which activities and behaviors need to change.

2. Symbol: A company needs to ask, "What is repeatedly held up to evoke an emotional response to a corporate ideal? What effect does that repeated evocation actually produce?" It is critical that all the symbols a company uses be authentic and meaningful.

3. Ritual: Next, a company asks itself, "What do we do over and over (probably unconsciously) to try to maintain form and uniformity? How do we need to transform our rituals so that they help people become independently creative in pursuing the path we are on?"

4. Taboo: "What taboos do we currently have that limit change and creativity? What taboos need to be put in place to unleash change and creativity?" When taboos become unconscious they can be counterproductive, even toxic, especially if they limit rigorous examination and discovery. However, some things need to be taboo, such as advancing an idea without rigorously examining it.

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Phase Two: Strategic Direction. During this phase, a company directs the energy it has unleashed in phase one toward setting a systemic and compelling strategic direction. First, one must understand how the company's markets work to produce success, especially with regard to targeted customers. This includes understanding the effects of global and supply dynamics on the business. Second, one must consider what is unique about the business and how this uniqueness can be employed to create a nondisplaceable position in the market. Third, one must determine what managing philosophy the business will use with regard to governance and engaging its people to enable them to work effectively with one another.

Phase Three: Capability Building. Capability development is not training but is always accomplished in the context of real and necessary work by existing teams or by cross-functional teams that have been formed to develop new thinking in critical arenas. It generates capabilities needed for a strategically defined future state. A Responsible Business uses regular and ongoing meetings that combine both business and education to build three types of capability: business acumen, technological competence and critical systemic thinking skills in conjunction with personal development.

Phase Four: Work Redesign. Most businesses start change processes by trying to change the way they design and govern their work, usually by reorganizing or altering procedures. In contrast, work redesign brings an organization's governing processes into alignment with its cultural aspirations, corporate direction and developing capabilities. It can take years to accomplish, and it addresses three key aspects of organizational governance: structures, systems and processes. ●

PART III: REFRAMING HOW CHANGE WORKS

Responsibility Running Backward

The pentad depicts a chain of logic that begins with the living image of a customer and flows organically through co-creators, Earth, communities and investors. This flow results in improved health and vitality for all stakeholders. Reversing it has the opposite effect.

More often than not, companies turn the logic upside down and start from the wrong point, the investors. This initiates a degenerative process called *spinning the pentad backward*. When this happens, mental and creative energies focus narrowly on how to extract return from the system,

and the process becomes extractive rather than creative. Assets and value that rightfully belong to others are appropriated in an effort to subsidize a return for a single stakeholder group. This is unproductive and unsustainable.

Spinning the pentad backward has resulted in periodic collapses in the U.S. economy. Investment banks, savings and loans, corporate giants like Enron and others have extracted inappropriate returns on investments through schemes that have left investors and ordinary people to suffer the consequences.

Not surprisingly, collapses of confidence often lead to community boycotts, lawsuits or demands for regulatory enforcement, costly for businesses in terms of both dollars and brand equity. Unbudgeted expenditures related to these community side effects then tend to push businesses into efficiency mindsets. They cut costs in order to free up the financial resources necessary to manage a situation that is spinning out of control.

The efficiency mindset eventually dooms a business to failure. Once efficiency and value extraction have set in, employees and co-creators become just another cost of doing business. It's not long before there are programs to reduce the size and cost of human resources, contractors, suppliers — all of the entities within the co-creative system. All of this results in a business that no longer serves its customers. Problems start to pile up.

It is never too late to reverse this state of affairs. There are two recurring themes in the methods for getting back on track. The first is to examine whether the business understands the stakeholder on each point of the pentad well enough to connect the stakeholder on the following point to it. For example, does the business understand its customers well enough for the co-creators to feel "fueled" with the spirit and inspired by understanding?

The second theme is an almost foolproof way to address any problems that arise. Go back to the customers and reconnect to them as living people. A company that does this key work reestablishes the basis for forward motion. ●

Design for Prevention and Cure

Continuous development is a lifelong process and a way of life for people and for organizations. In order to keep this work alive for years and decades, it's important to understand how things can go wrong and what to do about them when they do.

The following six hazards show just some of the ways that entropy can get the upper hand in an organization that's trying to transform itself.

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Hazard One: Leadership Voids. The highest level of hazard comes from a change of leadership at the top, especially if it happens too early in the process or if too many committed leaders leave at the same time. Visionary and selfless leadership is necessary for a significant cultural change, especially if the goal is a self-organizing company in which hierarchies would evaporate.

Hazard Two: Homogenized Human Resource Programs. Once a company has decided to change, it has a natural and healthy tendency to want to know what's possible. But people who are good at running a business are not necessarily also good at assessing programs to improve the running of the business. Human resource departments are often delegated to carry out the assessment. Although there are many excellent human resource professionals, it is the field of expertise most contaminated by unvalidated assumptions.

Hazard Three: Pilot Programs. The idea of pilot programs is based on a bad assumption — that what has proved to work well in one place can be made to work everywhere. This assumption is the antithesis of the mindset of the Responsible Business, which dedicates itself to designing live and in the moment. First, what is learned in one effort won't necessarily be applicable or relevant in a new context. Second, people will correctly point out the differences between themselves and the pilot group, and they will refuse to adopt what was learned.

Hazard Four: Packaged Program of the Year. In contrast to the more organic approach that fosters internal locus of control, a packaged learning process almost inevitably results in a conditioned state of external locus of control. In the Responsible Business, consciousness or different modes of behavior is an instrument for self-directed self-development. Packaged and mechanical change processes do not build the capacity for responsibility; they build capacity for compliance.

Hazard Five: Corporate Philistines. The corporate world is filled with visionary leaders who believe that business is a way to do something good for all and a powerful platform to accomplish things that could happen no other way. But not everyone will accept an invitation to engage in personal development and to serve something larger and more meaningful than themselves. A wise leader will be prepared for the occasional saboteur.

Hazard Six: Undeveloped Co-Creators. Responsibility requires conscious understanding and intention about choices at every level. Responsible Businesses

cannot develop without growing the sense of personal and collective responsibility in every co-creator. ●

PART IV: THE BIG PICTURE OF RESPONSIBILITY

A Responsible View of Capital

For better and for worse, the history of the modern era has in large part been defined by the emergence and development of the phenomenon of capital and the powerful energies it has unleashed. The problem comes from defining capital too narrowly in financial terms and accounting only for effects on one's own returns.

In recent decades the concepts of natural and social capital have been advanced by various economists and ecologists attempting to make economic theory more holistic. The stakeholder pentad extends this thinking to include five forms of capital, one for each stakeholder, and suggests some ways to build this enlarged perspective into successful business practices.

All stakeholders are investors — although they invest different forms of capital — and each expects some kind of return on investment. **Customers** invest their capital, which is an aspiration for integrity along with personal and business distinctiveness, in order to acquire what they are unable or unwilling to create for themselves. Customers and businesses also seek ways to express their distinctiveness, which is reflected in unique and appealing business offerings. Customer return on investment is a trustworthy relationship with a business and its offerings.

The **Co-Creators'** stake is to make a meaningful difference for people or purposes they care about. They invest their capital — intelligence and creativity — which is more than their existing knowledge or capability. The ROI that co-creators expect is the increased intelligence and experience that will allow them to invest in the next, more challenging application of creativity.

In pursuit of the capacity to regenerate itself infinitely, **Earth** invests the capital of resources that support living processes. Business activity is a small subset of Earth's larger natural economy of reciprocal exchange and maintenance. For all the green, sustainability rhetoric out there, the real work is to measure Earth's ROI by Earth's yardstick: resiliency, diversity, connectivity, complexity and capacity to evolve an increasingly complex web of higher-order ecosystems.

In pursuit of their stake in the vitality and viability of the places they live, **Communities** invest the capital of

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unique identity and vocation manifested through a social and cultural web of relationships. These webs and communities' distinctive relationships with local ecosystems are what make possible the unique work of a particular place, and they give rise to the unique economic potential that attracts people to a community and from which it can manifest unique business offerings. A community's ROI is the increasing opportunity for the well-being of and meaningful contribution by every one of its members.

Investors pursue their stake — the value that flows from supporting other manifestations of creativity and steadfastness — by contributing the capital of accrued equity. Return on financial capital can be measured at three levels, only one of which is generally reflected in the annual report. The first is functional, related to growth and income, and is the generally accepted understanding of ROI.

A Responsible Business also accounts for a second kind of ROI: the return to its other stakeholders. This return on other kinds of capital extends the meaning and nonfinancial consequences of the financial investment. Without this kind of accounting, investors have no way of knowing whether or not their passive income has been generated from value-extracting or value-adding processes. The third nature of return occurs when a business improves how investors and capitalism are perceived in the world at large. This is measured by the confidence of the citizenry in the role business plays in fostering a healthy society and planet.

Thus, financial capital moves to a new platform in terms of how return is measured. The Responsible Business is no longer content to report financial return without considering the investment of other stakeholders. ●

The Future of Responsibility

The business unit, which has direct responsibility for all of the activities that affect stakeholders, is often the most effective organizational level from which to engage in work on corporate responsibility. At the same time, there is a unique role for corporations in the evolution of a more responsible business culture in the world. They must lead the way to the future of responsibility.

As Chad Holliday found when he finally had responsibility for the whole of DuPont, the scale and complexity of a major corporation made it difficult to directly affect the financial, social and sustainability goals of individual businesses, but it gave him an important platform from which to create dialogues that shaped thinking and behavior choices globally.

The following are a set of responsibility-based directions through which corporate leaders can begin to leverage the work of Responsible Businesses into the creation of Responsible Corporations:

1. Engage broad communities in enlivening public conversations about what it means to go beyond sustainability and corporate responsibility as they are currently conceived.
2. Engage business leaders and governments in dialogue to articulate global imperatives and give businesses a richer source of support to guide and evolve their own development.
3. Report progress toward enterprise-wide responsibility in annual reports rather than in separate corporate social responsibility reports in order to foster public dialogue.
4. Use quarterly meetings to educate investors and the investment community as a whole on the global imperatives of society and Earth; encourage investors to learn how it is possible to develop systemic wealth and how their own future and enduring returns are tied to the development of systemic wealth.
5. Work at the global level to help evolve business practices in their own industries in order to evolve Responsible Industries.

A Responsible Business aspires to grow responsible individuals. Indeed, it can't achieve its full potential if it doesn't. Working with the pentad is more than just good business; it is a means to sustain healthy democracies and a healthy global community.

There is much that companies will do to strengthen society and address the world's problems, just by the way they conduct business, if they rise to the challenge to grow responsible individuals. It is not a separate piece of work to be responsible for society. It is the work we do when we do business responsibly. ●

RECOMMENDED READING LIST

If you liked *The Responsible Business* you'll also like:

1. ***The Responsible Entrepreneur* by Carol Sanford.** Responsible entrepreneurs seek to transform industries and even society itself. Sanford presents a blueprint for the kind of leadership that is required.
2. ***Good Company* by Larry Costello, Ed Frauenheim, Laurie Bassi, Dan McMurrer.** The authors created the Good Company Index to look at Fortune 100 companies' records as employers, sellers and stewards of society and the planet. The results are clear: worthiness pays off.
3. ***The Speed of Trust* by Stephen M.R. Covey.** Covey gives readers all the key tools for cultivating trust in their relationships, while offering up the wisdom of other great business leaders on the topic.