
Foreword

My students once asked a friend of mine, Jeffrey Cherry, an entrepreneur who is involved in helping create and accelerate responsible businesses from start-ups to successful going concerns, what kind of conscious and responsible business would you start. Jeff thought about it for a minute and then said that he would start a fork business. The students pressed him about what was so responsible about making and selling forks. He told them that he knew something about the restaurant industry, and that he would make really good forks that filled a customer need. He would pay his employees well, and treat them with dignity and respect. He would pay attention to how the forks were made and what the supply chain was doing and how sustainable it was. He said he would be a community builder where he was located, not a community destroyer, and if he did all these things he would make money.

Far too often small and medium enterprises are simply left out of the corporate responsibility equation. There is often the assumption that this is something to worry about when a company is more stable, more of an ongoing concern. With this current volume this weakness in the corporate responsibility literature is finally addressed. The essays in this book put small and medium businesses into a proper context, as they are much greater influences on our daily lives than the iconic brands we think about. There are papers on “responsible finance” an idea that is crucial to building a responsible company. And, the discussions on supply chains, social enterprise, sustainability, and a host of other issues are both informative for managers, and help move the scholarly literature forward. In addition there are a number of case studies that will help us think about how to harness the power and scope of such businesses to engage in solving our societal problems.

This is exactly the kind of book, and collection of essays that we need. As the narrative of business is currently undergoing a virtual revolution, and as ideas like CSR and stakeholder value creation are becoming second nature to businesses around the world, we must find a place for understanding our small and medium sized businesses.

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