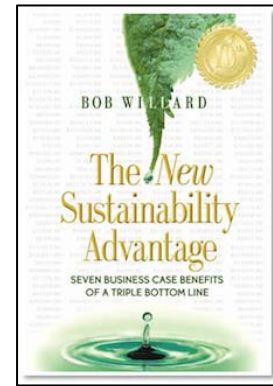


Book Reviews for *The New Sustainability Advantage*



Book Review from [Crosslands Bulletin](#)

By William D'Alessandro

April 7, 2013

The New Sustainability Advantage

New Society Publishers calls this the “completely revised 10th anniversary edition” of Bob Willard’s [The Sustainability Advantage](#). But the book reads more like a sequel than a second edition. Willard has changed so much. The author compares the work to a major remodeling job rather than to a simple home retrofit.

The first edition explains the business case for pursuing the triple bottom line to the audience of presumptively skeptical senior managers. Now Willard has moved on presumably with his readership. He spends more time in the new book quantifying the benefits for the executives he converted 10 years before and for the new breed who are already convinced. (He does have some words for managers with entrenched mindsets.)

The other big change is a completely new structure. Willard repeats the format he first used in [The Next Sustainability Wave](#), his 2005 book on strategic corporate environmental and social management. The formula is to write about a single topic per page with the opposite page showing a companion graph, table, or diagram.

The alterations sacrifice some of Willard’s special talents. He is an entertaining business writer and an excellent communicator (34 years with IBM Canada). In exchange for the more personal touch, readers get a larger dose of data.

At the heart, if not the soul, of both books are Willard’s Web-based worksheets. These tools provide data profiles of four sample generic companies as starter sets to initialize an Excel simulator. He recalibrates them here and makes them more robust. They are open-source and downloadable from sustainabilityadvantage.com.

The financial data for the sample companies are based on profiles of companies in the TSX 60, S&P 500, Statistics Canada, and BizMiner databases for companies of different sizes in various industry sectors. You can plug in data for a specific company. Everything can be tailored to fit your situation. If new evidence comes to light, Willard promises to update the worksheets online.

A speed-reading version is available free, too. The Sustainability Advantage Dashboard can estimate the potential bottom-line increases from sustainability-related strategies within three to five years. The author refers to the dashboard as “a five-minute version of the worksheets.”

Willard concludes that typical companies can raise their profits in the range from 51% to 81%. How? By reducing risks, hiring and attrition expenses, and expenses for materials, water, and energy, and generating less waste.

Unrealistic? Willard thinks definitely not. He writes: “It should be higher. Our biggest challenge has been to tune the assumptions so that the combined benefits yield a profit improvement of less than 100%. We have used cautious and conservative assumptions, and still the answer seems too good to be true.”

The sustainability advantage is a five-step journey, which Willard charted in 2009 in [The Sustainability Champion’s Guidebook](#). He is well aware that the final destination is beyond improving a company’s value. But the author knows to get there shrewd managers will embed sustainability strategies into their core business first. He says: “Companies that lag will be history, trapped in the hoax of an unsustainable business model.”

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Book Review at [Global Warming Is Real](#)

By [Richard Matthews](#)

March 28, 2012

The Business Case for Sustainability

The bottom line benefits of sustainability are making the business case for sustainability impossible to ignore. The evidence supports the observation that adopting sustainability strategies give companies a sustainable competitive advantage. In his new revised version of the 2002 book, “The Sustainability Advantage,” Bob Willard makes an even more compelling business case for the [adoption of sustainability strategies](#).

Business is the Best Hope

Willard makes the case that it is in the best interests of businesses to adopt sustainability strategies, he also suggests that the business community is both responsible for climate change and the best hope for the survival of our species.

“The only human enterprises that are large and powerful enough to affect the paradigm shift are enlightened businesses,” Willard said in his recently released book, “[The New Sustainability Advantage](#).” The case studies reviewed in the book make the business case for sustainability stronger than ever before.

Early in the book, Willard states, “the game of business as we have played it for the last 150 cannot continue.” Continuous growth is at odds with sustainability principles and business as usual will ensure that we continue to exceed the Earth’s carrying capacity. There will be grave consequences if we keep overtaxing the planet. This is a point that executives cannot afford to ignore, because as David Brower noted, “there is no business to be done on a dead planet” The late Ray Anderson boldly declared **business and industry** are the biggest culprits contributing to climate change. In the preface of his book, Willard quotes Anderson’s book “[Confessions of a Radical Industrialist](#).”

“Business and industry—not just American business and industry, but global business and industry—must change its way to survive—And by survive I do not mean maintain identity and

integrity within the context of a financial system in meltdown, either. By survive, I mean business must be steered through a transition from an old and dangerously dysfunctional model to a far better one that will operate in harmony with nature—thrive in a carbon constrained world, and put down the threats of global climate disruption, species extinction, resource depletion and environmental degradation. In a word, develop a business model that is sustainable.”

Goals of Sustainability

Willard states that all human activity needs to stay within the [ecological carrying capacity of the planet](#) and we must not consume natural resources in excess of the ability of the ecosystem to regenerate them. We need a business paradigm that includes a new approach to the consumption of basic goods and services, one that acknowledges that we are part of the whole, not separate from it.

Willard refers to the [Brundtland Report](#) to define sustainable development: “*Meeting the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.*” Even more succinctly, he quotes Charles Hopkins’ definition, “*enough, for all, forever.*”

Win/Win

Helping the planet is noble, but businesses are motivated to act when they have a vested interest. Willard points to his research which indicates that a typical company engaging best-practice sustainability approaches already being used could improve profits by at least 50 percent to more than 80 percent within three to five years. Doing nothing can erode profits between 16 and 36 percent.

Willard sees beyond the false choice between the planet and profits. He makes the point that it makes good business sense to address environmental and social issues. Willard describes it as a “Win/win approach for the corporation, society and the planet.”

The fully revised business case is organized around seven easy-to-grasp bottom-line benefits. Willard calculates the potential bottom-line benefits for both large corporations and small enterprises he also estimates the risks.

Dangers of Inaction

Willard suggests that businesses that adopt a wait and see approach will find themselves at a competitive disadvantage. He cites incentives for businesses to act quickly rather than wait, “*Whichever company captures these benefits soonest has a significant competitive edge. Companies that ignore this reality are squandering easily achieved bottom line benefits. Sustainability is a race to the top.*”

Businesses that engage sustainability improve their legitimacy and enhance their image while capitalizing on eco-efficiencies. Sustainability strategies improve revenue, reduce costs, and help them recruit and hold talent. Most importantly to executives, sustainability also helps companies acquire and retain customers which translate to increased revenues and profits. Companies that ignore sustainability are missing a powerful business opportunity.

Willard exposes and quantifies the value of being proactive in economic, environmental and social spheres. He makes the point that sustainable companies do more than just do more with less, they put into play forces which “nudge unsustainable competitors off the playing field.”

5 Stages of the Sustainability Journey

Willard goes on to review characteristics of a sustainable business model that includes new forms of company ownership and more equitable profit-sharing. The five stages of the sustainability journey are:

1. Pre-Compliance
2. Compliance
3. Beyond Compliance
4. Integrated Strategy
5. Passion and Purpose

To be a sustainable planet a critical mass of businesses will need to transition from Stage 3 to Stage 4. The intermediate steps between Stage 3 and Stage 4 are as follows:

- 3.1 Improve company eco-efficiencies and sustainable brand
- 3.2 Improve supply chain conditions and footprints
- 3.3 Create new eco-effective products, services and leases
- 3.4 Embed sustainable governance

Stage 4 involves maximizing shareholder value while Stage 5 sees sustainability as a goal in its own right rather than a set of enabling strategies. Stage 4 and 5 companies adopt a model of sustainable capitalism that injects sustainability principles into their cultural DNA. For these companies, sustainability expectations are aligned with the organization and across the entire value chain. They make cleaner, greener products and they embrace eco-effectiveness and life cycle stewardship.

As Willard points out, many Stage 5 companies do not go through the first four stages. They start and end in Stage 5. Many of these are small or medium sized business. Publicly traded companies can evolve into Stage 5 once the legitimacy of social and environmental purposes is embraced in the business community.

Familiar Metrics

In an effort to make the most convincing business case, Willard quantifies sustainability initiatives in the business language of bottom line benefits. To help the executive assess sustainability, he uses familiar business frameworks like the standard value chain. He also employs standard income statements used to calculate bottom line profit.

Willard shows how smart sustainability strategies and programs can help strengthen key links in the value chain. With the case study financial statements, he quantifies the benefits of smart environmental, social and corporate governance (ESG) approaches and programs. To help demonstrate the sustainability benefits of different organizations, Willard has developed a [Sustainability Advantage Simulator](#).

Willard offers tangible evidence that sustainability strategies offer real business benefits that are relevant to the bottom line. Willard may be selling sustainability, but his fact based focus on “enlightened self-interest” will appeal to a wide spectrum of business leaders.

“We need to equip enlightened executives with compelling numbers that show that sustainability related strategies are smart business—that the company can do better by doing good; that a more responsible form of capitalism generates higher profits.”

In the final analysis, executives who review the most current information will be forced to acknowledge that “the business case for sustaining the planet is stronger than the business case for trashing it.”

Source: [Global Warming is Real](#) Richard Matthews is a consultant, eco-entrepreneur, green investor and author of numerous articles on sustainable positioning, eco-economics and environmental politics. He is the owner of [THE GREEN MARKET](#), a leading sustainable business blog and one of the Web’s most comprehensive resources on the business of the environment. Find The Green Market on [Facebook](#) and follow The Green Market’s [twitter feed](#).

Book Review at [Corporate Knights](#)

By [Lloyd Alter](#)

September 17, 2012

The hard sell: making a case for sustainable business

The most fascinating thing about Bob Willard’s *The New Sustainability Advantage* is that it is not really a book. It’s more like a PowerPoint deck, with a slide on the right and a commentary on the left. Content is edited to fit exactly that page; not one goes longer or shorter. It’s probably also the last print edition; Willard has moved online with his Sustainability Advantage Simulator, which he calls a “real-time précis of the book and an ongoing 10th anniversary edition.” The book is sort of a foot in both worlds, recognizing the changing way in which information is now conveyed.

Willard’s knowledge isn’t shaped like a book, and he has had to work really hard to make it fit into one. Reading is linear, while looking at charts is not. I found it difficult going until I decided to ignore the right-hand side with all the charts and just read the left.

Others may have a different perspective. Unlike many books about sustainability, this one is all about the bottom line. The numbers people might love the right-hand pages and ignore the left. But in either text or slide, Willard makes the case that “sustainability strategies are smart business strategies.” The subtitle reads “Seven business case benefits of a triple bottom line.”

The first and arguably biggest benefit is the hardest sell: increased profit and market share. Willard suggests that customers are attracted to companies that have a better reputation for being environmentally and socially responsible; that there is a growing market for new green products.

Notwithstanding the surveys he shows from 2009, there is a lot of evidence, too, that more customers these days are attracted to cheap stuff. As Willard notes, “markets are fickle.”

He’s on much stronger ground on the expense side of the ledger, including reduced energy, waste, material and water expenses. Willard introduces a concept he calls “dematerialization,” perhaps one of the most important trends of the next few years. It is basically about reducing the amount of materials and energy used to make products. Examples include thinner pop-can walls and lighter cars. It can apply to people, too.

“In 2007 I dematerialized myself,” Willard writes. “I was doing about 75 talks a year and was appalled at my associated carbon footprint... I decided to clone myself. I made a DVD of my talk and began giving presentations using webinar and videoconference technology.” We can all look forward to Willard the holograph.

He then goes on to talk about the benefits of having a healthier, greener work environment. These include increased employee productivity, reduced hiring and attrition expenses, and lower operational risks.

In the end, Willard does the math and estimates that by following his strategies for sustainability, profits will improve between 51 and 81 per cent. He calls that cautious and conservative, and then asks: “If the potential results are this good, why wouldn’t all companies embrace more responsible environmental and social strategies?”

Herein lies the problem – you could write another book on this subject alone. But in a few pages in the last chapter, Willard blames the “lack of leadership,” “entrenched mental models,” and the notion within many corporate settings that “green” and “environmental” may have a left-wing or anti-business connotation.

In fact, it is so much worse than that. In North Carolina, legislators are actually proposing a ban on the word “sustainable,” claiming it’s a United Nations plot to take away their freedoms.

Big business, meanwhile, is spending billions to roll back environmental regulations. In Canada, they don’t have to spend; some companies just asked, and the federal government gutted legislation designed to protect the country’s fisheries. In both countries, workers are less secure and less engaged than they have been in decades.

This is all to say that sustainability is complicated. While reading Willard’s book, there were many times I stopped and thought, “Yes, but...” That said, Willard has done a decent job of distilling his ideas down to 90 pages of text, and the same in slides. Indeed, almost every page could be expanded into a chapter, every chapter into a book. Fitting so much information into the shape of a book is a feat.

I am having trouble fitting it all into the shape of a book review.

Book Review at [EcoLog](#)

By Colin Isaacs

April 27, 2012

New book about sustainability one of 'most influential'

If there is truth to the concept that the most important influencers of CEO behaviour are other CEOs, or at least other senior executives, then Bob Willard's book, “*The New Sustainability Advantage: Seven Business Case Benefits of a Triple Bottom Line*”, should be one of the most influential of the books about sustainability currently in print.

Whether or not this is the case, *The New Sustainability Advantage* has much to commend it. It is a book about sustainability and corporate social responsibility that approaches the topic from the perspective of conventional business goals, while providing a great deal of advice about how to do sustainability and triple bottom line in a way that wins praise and profits.

The book's style makes the book very readable and also easy to reference. Each chapter is like a two-page magazine article with text on the left-hand page and explanatory diagrams on the right. Chapters are grouped into sections according to their sustainability benefits:

- increased revenue and market share
- reduced energy expenses
- reduced waste expenses
- reduced materials and water expenses
- increased employee productivity
- reduced hiring and attrition expenses
- reduced risks.

The articles within each section cover a range of topics from green products to transportation, from new revenue sources to greening of capital infrastructure. The book is not about any particular industry sector. In fact, executives from virtually any sector would almost certainly find ideas and concepts that could be applied to benefit their company.

The emphasis tends towards environmental initiatives. There is less coverage of issues like human rights, supply chain management, and communication with communities than of the classic environmental challenges that should be addressed in a successful environmental management system. However, companies have to start somewhere on their sustainability paths and most of those working on a triple-bottom-line approach started with environmental initiatives and subsequently moved on to social responsibility initiatives.

In seeking to make the subject appealing to executives who have not yet embraced any type of sustainability initiative, Willard is probably right in positioning the environment as the place to start, having the biggest appeal and greatest short-term benefits for business.

One of the most interesting features of the book is its link to Bob Willard's own [website](#). There, one can find not only more about Bob Willard but also some of his presentations on the sustainability theme and some of the tools that can help a company with its sustainability program.

The website is well laid out, the presentations are compelling, and the tools are easy to use. Everything on the site is free to everyone, though one probably needs a copy of the book to gain maximum benefit from the tools provided.

This book may not be of so much value to experienced practitioners of sustainability, who may find some of its concepts a little outdated, though there is always something new to learn. For those who are new to sustainability and want to learn both the benefits and the tools of sustainability, it would be difficult to find a better resource.

Book Review at [ISSP](#)

By Marsha Willard, ISSP Executive Director (not related to Bob, strangely)
July 9, 2012

Building the Business Case for Sustainability

It's been a while since I read the first edition of this book, but just comparing the look of the two, this edition is cleaner, simpler, and easier to both read and use. The format of the book makes it useful as a reference document in aid to building a justifiable and financially defensible business case for sustainability. The reader can easily scan the table of contents for areas to dig into to build a case most relevant to his or her own organization. The areas addressed include:

- Increased revenue and/or market share
- Reduced expenses from reductions in energy, water and materials consumption as well as reductions in waste production
- Gains from employee productivity and retention
- Avoided costs from reduced risks

Each section includes instructions and examples for how to attribute costs, savings and earnings from each of these considerations enabling the reader to prepare a solid financial case for their sustainability vision. While the first edition did this as well, this addition makes it easier and, as Bob told me, the new edition has recalculated the figures because he became convinced that the numbers used in the first edition were way too conservative!

Also, he reminded me, that the calculations and considerations are NOT just about convincing leaders that they should attend to sustainability. It is also the basis for

- a) responses to stakeholder questions and concerns,
- b) the creation of meaningful metrics, and
- c) intelligent and defensible deployment decisions.

The "convincing" part is just the beginning of the uses of the calculations. After reading this you will come to Bob's conclusion - that not only can the business case be easily made, but that the numbers are almost too good to be believed!

Book Review at [Triple Pundit](#)

By [Connie Kwan](#)
July 9, 2012

Bob Willard's 10th Anniversary book, [The New Sustainability Advantage](#), is an update of the old with new examples. For sustainability non-believers, his book is a great first guide. It succinctly summarizes bottom-line benefits of sustainable practices in relevant business terms. In a Forrester survey of over 2000 executives regarding top 10 business priorities in 2011, 64% of executives selected revenue and customers, 44% selected cost reduction, while only 10% selected corporate social responsibility (CSR). For CSR professionals, messaging the revenue

increase and cost reduction benefits of CSR efforts continues to be key in driving CSR implementation.

Willard points out seven business case benefits of a Triple Bottom Line and provides short examples of how to implement these practices. The benefits are:

1. Increased Revenue and Market Share
2. Reduced Energy Expenses
3. Reduced Waste Expenses
4. Reduced Materials and Water Expenses
5. Increased Employee Productivity
6. Reduced Hiring and Attrition Expenses
7. Reduced Risks

For sustainability practitioners, these benefits are nothing new. For everyone else, Willard's guidebook provides a quick read to begin the CSR conversation. For every chapter, Willard first inspires the reader with examples of successes. For example, USPS reduced energy use by 29 percent from 2003 to 2010. Then, Willard provides first level information to trigger an analysis. For example, knowing that the top three energy use in commercial buildings are lighting (25 percent use), space heating (14 percent use), and space cooling (13 percent use) helps prioritize the energy reduction process. In some cases, Willard provides an illustrative financial analysis of potential savings at a small firm and at a large firm.

Since many of the seven benefits focus on energy, waste and materials, businesses with manufacturing and physical products will find Willard's book most relevant. Customers also pay closer attention to sustainability on physical goods. A Cohn and Wolfe survey of consumers' intent to buy green shows 53% support for 'green' groceries and 49% support for 'green' household products, compared to 15% support for 'green' restaurants and technology.

Although customers pay less attention to sustainability from service-only businesses, benefits still exist. Service-only businesses depend heavily on employee performance to succeed, and thus will find sustainability benefit five and six, employee productivity and retention, very relevant. For example, a green office building provides up to 34% or \$40 per square feet increase in productivity. Meanwhile, job hunters place a 30% emphasis on compensation and benefits and a 15% emphasis on organizational values and reputation. A business that cares about social and environmental returns will more successfully recruit and retain top talent.

Willard's book is a useful introduction to the business case for sustainability. Gifting it to the whole leadership team can be a great way to bring everyone up to speed on applied sustainability basics. The book is a great conversation starter and Willard's site provides useful slide sets and worksheets. For sustainability practitioners who are implementing, other books such Darcy Hitchcock and Marsha Willard's [Step-by-Step Guide to Sustainability Planning](#) is more applicable.

[Connie Kwan](#) is the founder and CEO of [RealMealz.com](#) in Silicon Valley, CA. She holds an MBA in Sustainable Management from Presidio Graduate School, and covers stories on food and health sustainability. Follow her on Twitter [@RealMealz](#) and [@conniemkwan](#).