

**Review: Sustainability Strategies for Industry: The
Future of Corporate Practice**

Editor: Nigel J. Roome

Reviewed by [John Lowe](#)

CH2M HILL

.....
Roome, Nigel J. (ed). *Sustainability Strategies for Industry: The Future of Corporate Practice*, Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 1998. 322 p. US\$30.00 ISBN-1-55963-599-1. Recycled, acid-free paper.

After you have read *The Ecology of Commerce* to understand why it needs to be done, and have read *Natural Capitalism* to see that it can be done, here is a book to start learning how to transform your business into a sustainable enterprise. The topics addressed in the book are oriented around several questions: what is the difference between environmental management and sustainable development? What are the changes in social and environmental expectations, and how does an individual firm respond to these? What changes need to be made in a firm's management and in its relationship to other stakeholders? What skills are needed to respond to these challenges?

The book does a good job in responding to these questions. One limitation is that the chapter discussing tools for companies to use in repositioning themselves, "A Dinosaur's Survival Kit - Tools and Strategies for Sustainability," does not provide sufficient detail or a bibliography adequate enough to be a roadmap for a firm. In fairness, the topic is sufficiently broad to warrant its own book. It does make the important point that moving towards sustainability is not simply a matter of implementing an environmental management system, but requires changing the mind-set at all levels in a firm. The chapter on shaping corporate culture to promote sustainability focuses on the Body Shop, an example that might not be useful for a producer or resource-intensive industry such as an automobile manufacturer or petroleum refinery. It still provides a valuable case study about the importance of cultural and institutional factors in moving towards sustainable practices. While this topic was not specifically addressed, reading the book helped me to understand that efforts to achieve sustainability are not free of potentially adverse consequences. For example, dematerialization in the agricultural chemical industry (reduction in pesticide manufacturing) has resulted in a shift to marketing genetically modified (GM) seeds for corn and soybeans. This has also provoked controversies in Europe over food

safety of GM foods, and concerns about potential ecological impacts to Monarch butterflies. For me, this highlighted the continued need to assess potential consequences even while moving towards sustainability.

Sustainability Strategies for Industry will be most useful for executives and environmental managers in businesses that have already initiated some environmental management activities and are looking to take the next steps towards sustainability. It is also a useful resource on sustainable development as applied to industry, for the general reader.

.....

John A. Lowe <jlowe@ch2m.com> is an Environmental Scientist at CH2M HILL, One Dayton Centre, Suite 1400, One South Main Street, Dayton, OH 45402 USA. TEL: 937-228-3180 ext. 247. FAX: 937-228-7572.

.....