

# THE SUSTAINABLE MBA



## THE MANAGER'S GUIDE TO GREEN BUSINESS

**GISELLE WEYBRECHT**

*The Sustainable MBA* provides the knowledge and tools to help you “green” your job and organization, to turn sustainability talk into action for the benefit of your bottom line and society as a whole.

Based on more than 100 interviews with experts in business, international organizations, NGOs and universities from around the world, this first of its kind guide brings together all the pieces of the business and sustainability puzzle including;

- The basics on what sustainability is, why you should be interested, how to get started, and what a sustainable organization looks like.
- A wide range of tools, guidelines, techniques and concepts that you can use to implement sustainability practices.
- Tools and tips on how to “green” your job, including how to sell these ideas to your team, how to make green choices as a consumer and how to organize green meetings.
- A survey of the exciting trends in sustainable business happening around the world.
- A wealth of links to interesting resources for more information.

*The Sustainable MBA* is organized like a business school course – allowing you easy access to the relevant information you need about sustainability and Accounting, Economics, Entrepreneurship, Ethics, Finance, Marketing, Organizational Behaviour, Operations and Strategy.

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**The education sector, and in particular business schools, provide the real key to sustainability. When we change the way that the next generations of employees, managers, CEOs and leaders think and act then this will lead to broader changes across industries around the world.**

In addition, the way that an MBA is structured makes it uniquely and ideally placed to train managers and leaders in sustainability issues. For sustainability to be successful within a business, all parts of that business need to be engaged, from the accountants to the HR departments, from the CEO down to the mailroom. Sustainability requires creating a culture where everyone contributes and everyone accepts responsibility for doing her or his part.

The problem is that most MBAs, indeed most business training programmes, do not provide a deep understanding of what sustainability is and, more importantly, how graduates can apply sustainability within their jobs and careers.

# grassroots

**Giselle Weybrecht** argues that business schools have a key role in preparing the next generation of business leaders to make sustainability the norm

Instead, sustainability is often taught as an add-on, presented in a way that is not connected to the key messages and frameworks in the mainstream MBA curriculum. The implicit message is that sustainability is only relevant to those managers who have the word “sustainability” on their business cards. General managers do not learn how to translate – and integrate – these ideas into the real world once they go back to work.

Incorporating sustainability into the MBA or other business training has not proven easy. Discussions on sustainability – or CSR (corporate social responsibility) – are often met with scepticism and sometimes even rolling eyes. Although some students want it many are not receptive, especially when they feel it is not directly useful to their careers.

Faculty are often not equipped to teach these issues or in a position to do so. Often the institution itself is not engaged in sustainability. Most recruiters and business partners do not yet require or expect their new employees to have this knowledge.

There are several reasons why business schools leaders ought to push sustainability.

First, many of them recognise the important role they play in shaping the next generation of leaders. Sustainability in its different shapes and forms is here to stay and is part of the new business reality.

Second, business schools are usually located within universities, many of which are now exploring how sustainability might be incorporated into their curricula and business schools can be at the forefront of that.

Third, business schools need to stay up to date. Some recruiters are already seeking to recruit leading-edge students with knowledge of sustainability and who possess the critical skills, collaborative abilities, open mindedness, sense of innovation and entrepreneurial spirit that are necessary to bring their companies successfully into the future in a challenging global environment.

Being green and understanding how to

integrate sustainability into their professional careers gives today’s business students and their school’s alumni base a competitive advantage in today’s marketplace. Business schools must seize this opportunity to ensure their graduates have the very best preparation possible to meet the challenges of the 21st century. If they do not, the best students will go elsewhere.

When I started my own MBA after working for many years on sustainability issues at the international level at and with the United Nations, students and alumni approached me because of my experiences in this field. They were interested in doing something more with their lives; they wanted to “make a difference” but they also wanted to know about work opportunities and what their interest in sustainability could bring them.

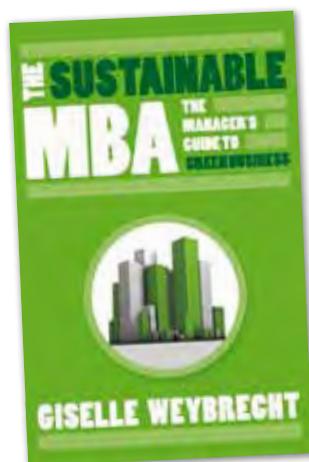
Because many students did not feel they were receiving enough sustainability teaching, I started a project in my second year to examine why such courses and ideas were not being taught and how they could be better incorporated into the MBA experience.

I interviewed faculty members, administration, career service representatives and students from London Business School (where I was enrolled) and also other universities in Britain and other countries.

I then started speaking with representatives from international organisations, NGOs and the business sector as well as sustainability experts and entrepreneurs.

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*Incorporating sustainability into the MBA or other business training has not proven easy. Discussions on sustainability – or CSR – are often met with scepticism and sometimes even rolling eyes*



## 120

120 faculty members, administration, career service representatives and students from universities across Britain and other countries were interviewed for research for the book

Over 120 interviews later, I realised that there were many challenges to be met before sustainability could truly be mainstreamed into MBA programmes. It is not going to happen overnight.

However, students want and need to get this information now. If we want to see changes in the future, we need to start educating the leaders of tomorrow today. Every year that another class graduates without the appropriate knowledge to bring sustainability tools to their companies is another opportunity missed.

This is how my book *The Sustainable MBA: The Manager's Guide to Green Business* was born. The book equips individual students and employees with the tools to take sustainability from talk to action, to understand what is happening, sell these ideas to others on their teams and implement them into their job.

It is organised like a business school programme, allowing readers easy access to the relevant information they need about sustainability and accounting, economics, entrepreneurship, ethics, finance, marketing, organisational behaviour, operations and strategy.

It also provides:

- the basics on what sustainability is, why you should be interested, how to get started and what a sustainable organisation looks like
- a wide range of tools, guidelines, techniques and concepts that you can use to implement sustainability practices with resources on how to implement them and links for more information
- tools and tips on how to bring sustainability concepts into your job (whatever job that may be) including how to sell these ideas to your team, how to make green choices as a consumer and how to organise green meetings
- the business case for each tool and idea introduced as well as a presentation of the challenges involved in pursuing different sustainability strategies in order to give managers a “heads up” on what to expect.
- a survey of the exciting trends in sustainable business happening around the world



- a wealth of links after the presentation of every tool leading readers to interesting resources for more up-to-date information, statistics and best practices

Educating students in sustainability issues is about giving them the tools to understand the issues and teaching them how to use and apply them in different business environments, especially in the traditional business areas that most will be entering.

Schools around the world are experimenting with different approaches for introducing the notion of sustainability into their programmes.

Here are a few tips:

**Be realistic**

Do not present sustainability as only being about saving the world or doing good. Prepare students to be able to understand the balance between business and society

- that sustainability is about good business

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*Sustainability should to be taught as it relates to what is currently happening in the business world. Presented in a way that allows students to understand how these ideas can be incorporated into businesses of all sizes*

