

## Book review

### Corporate Responsibility

M. Blowfield and A. Murray. Oxford University Press, Oxford, UK, 2011, 2nd edn, ISBN 978 0 19 958107 8, £39.99, 432 pp.

For many the issue of sustainability is seen as a technical issue 'meeting the needs of today without compromising the future': a relatively straightforward matter, albeit complex to evaluate. This book puts sustainability into the wider framework of corporate social responsibility (CSR). Authoritative, it won the textbook prize for Management and Leadership for 2011/12 (CMI, 2012). Thought provoking, it will challenge the reader to consider far more aspects of the issue than they may initially imagine. Valuable to the engineer, because this previously 'soft' topic is now a 'hard' issue: hard to ignore, hard to manage and hard to get right.

Policy managers, within the public sector, will already be accustomed to some of the issues discussed, but those from a mainstream operational or technical background are less likely to have been engaged in the various working groups that blossomed following the World Summit in Rio de Janeiro (LA21, 1991). This book will help newcomers get up to speed and help those with a longer experience reflect upon their framework of reference.

Although it is a long book (more than 400 pages) it is surprisingly easy to read with each chapter having a short introductory overview and a summary at the end. The book – although primarily aimed at business students, by the inclusion of case studies, and the private sector, by its extensive reference to business issues – will nevertheless prove valuable to experienced managers who need to keep on top of the developing CSR reporting and third-party verification agenda.

One weakness is that the public sector is not specifically singled out for discussion although it is peppered across many of the chapters. However, both social enterprises and small businesses (SMEs) do have chapters of their own.

The issues of executive pay and bonuses are covered along with investment strategies, but the former is not dealt with in depth and the latter is too limited to guide any pension fund manager. Even with these limitations, however, the discussion is valuable.

The book closes with three chapters that discuss the impact of, criticisms about, and the future for CSR. These final chapters are likely to prove the most valuable for experienced public sector managers as the trends highlighted are likely to impact upon the municipal sector.

The book will be especially valuable to any manager who does not want their time to disappear in a series of crisis meetings as they vainly try to fire-fight a debacle where some action of their organisation had unforeseen consequences that they could, with a little thought, have predicted.

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### REFERENCES

- CMI (Chartered Management Institute) (2012) *Book of the year 2011/12*. See <http://yearbook.managers.org.uk/winners2012.htm> (accessed 18/04/2012).
- LA21 (1992) *Proceedings of Earth Summit, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil*. See <http://www.la21.org.uk> (accessed 28/02/2012).