

The CSR Media Boom: We Got What We Deserve

By Wayne Visser

Having just spent a morning reading the latest issue of *Time* magazine (one of my favourite mags, when I get a chance to read it), it really got me thinking about how far the world has moved since I started out in my CSR/sustainability career nearly 20 years ago.

20 years ago, finding credible media coverage on environmental or social responsibility was like hunting for a needle in a haystack. Now CSR/sustainability issues *are* the haystack. For example, in this week's *Time*, there are stories on:

- The President of the Maldives and his Cabinet holding an underwater meeting to urge UN leaders to pass climate change legislation in Copenhagen in December
- California's "new gold rush", namely its scramble to be the world's clean-tech leaders, making the state "America's future"
- Research showing how the least healthy cereals do the most marketing, i.e. questioning the ethics of advertising & greenwash
- How jellyfish are taking over in overfished, fertilizer polluted areas of the sea and "shifting from a fish to a jellyfish ocean"
- How China is fast becoming the world's largest alternative energy markets - including hydro, solar and wind power.
- Booming barter schemes - including the Barter Card - that allow cashless exchange during the recession (a movement long advocated by so-called "new economics" types)
- And how "our obsession with gross domestic product is unhealthy - and misleading" (another pillar of the new economics and sustainability movements)

I remember Stuart Hart, Chair in Sustainable Global Enterprise at Cornell and author of "Capitalism at the Crossroads", joking with me last year that "we got what we deserved", meaning that we were crying for change all those years, and now we have so much that it's hard to keep pace.

That's true. My inbox is awash with daily CSR & sustainability stories - no longer tucked away in specialist publications, but making headlines on the front pages of the world's conservative business and news press. Quite simply, the social and environmental challenges - and solutions - have become so dramatic that "green is the new black", so to speak.

Now the challenge for those of us working in the R&S (responsibility and sustainability) space is to separate the wheat from the chaff. Which issues being reported are noise and which are genuine breakthroughs? Which solutions are peripheral chatter and which are scalable game-changers?

Whichever way you look at it, this is an exciting time to be in the thick of the R&S revolution. It's a privilege to be part of making a real difference in the world - at a time when nothing less will do. And yes, Stu, it's what we deserve, in more ways than one.

Source:

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