

Attaining the 2030 Sustainable Development Goal of Responsible Consumption and Production

FAMILY BUSINESSES ON A MISSION



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Naomi Birdthistle
Rob Hales

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Attaining the 2030 Sustainable Development Goal of Responsible Consumption and Production

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About the Editors

Professor Naomi Birdthistle has entrepreneurship and family business running through her veins. She tried to work in her family business when she was four but was told she was too small. She came back year after year asking to work and eventually her grandmother capitulated and let her work in the family business when she was seven. After years of working in the family business part-time and having completed her studies at Stirling University, Babson College, Harvard University and the University of Limerick, Naomi established her own consulting business, consulting family businesses in her hometown. She is now a Professor of Entrepreneurship and Business Innovation at Griffith University, teaching future family business leaders and researching family business issues as well. Naomi is an award-winning academic having received numerous awards for her teaching and her research.

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Foreword

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The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in September 2015 provide a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that by 2030 all people enjoy peace and prosperity.

They also entail elements of importance towards a strategic business engagement with sustainability issues. These offer a framework that provides businesses with a systematic approach to identifying new business opportunities while contributing to the solution of the grand sustainability challenges facing the world today, including climate change. Each SDG, if achieved, will have a direct and significant positive impact on millions of people's lives around the world and the environment in which they live. Businesses have an opportunity to widen the purpose of business by adopting the SDGs as targets for their operations. Thus, they can make a meaningful contribution to the greater good by achieving their operational objectives.

Family businesses are uniquely placed to contribute to SDGs for many reasons. Firstly, family business models have longer time perspectives, which allows the family business to link with the longer-term SDG time frame – 2030. Secondly, family businesses often focus on aspects of business operation that do not have an immediate return on investment such as relationship building with stakeholder groups. Thirdly, family businesses tend to rate the importance of ethics higher than standard businesses and thus align well with the social dimensions of the SDGs. Lastly, family businesses have intergenerational perspectives which is a core principle of sustainability.

This book provides insights into how family business operationalises SDG#12: Responsible Consumption and Production. The book uses a rigorous case study approach for family businesses to detail aspects of their business that help to advance responsible consumption and production. The cases provided here are living proof that family businesses that operate for the greater good actually work! Non-family businesses can take a leaf out of the family businesses portrayed in this book as they can provide different perspectives on how businesses can successfully align SDGs and business strategies.

Despite many businesses having adopted environmental social governance strategies and environmental management systems, the effect of this activity has not been reflected in a healthier planet. Many ‘state of the environment’ reports indicate that planetary health is decreasing, and planetary boundaries are being crossed or are about to be crossed. Whilst the cause of this decline is not entirely the fault of the business, there still needs to be a greater effort to address the decline. The challenge for family businesses is to use their unique characteristics and set ambitious work programmes that contribute to achieving global goals. This book provides insights into how family businesses can achieve such a mission and how non-family businesses can be inspired to do the same.

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