

PREFACE

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is presently at the fore of much public and political debate about the nature, scope, role and purpose of business and its relationship with society. That societies of the 21st century very much depend on businesses is very much taken as accepted but the relationship between the two is not always easy. Increasingly civil society expects and in some cases demands that businesses behave and operate in a way that is ethical, good for the environment and good for people (employees, entrepreneurs, consumers etc.). That said, the public are only too well aware of businesses behaving in ways that are not good for the environment, that are unethical and not beneficial to the wider society of which they are a part. Do we expect businesses to do too much? Or are businesses not doing enough with regards to their wider societal responsibilities? Given recent crises around food safety (horsemeat scandal), finance and banking (irresponsible lending, LIBOR rigging, financial mis-selling) and retailers sourcing goods from suppliers with poor health and safety standards the public demand for intervention has grown. Intervention must of course be fit for purpose, measured, appropriate and relevant to the problem at hand. The public call for politicians and businesses to do something should not be allowed to drown out the underlying truth that businesses do much that is good and without them we would all be the poorer. This point is important and should not be forgotten. Indeed different channels of communication should be used to reinforce the message that businesses, by and large and with minor exception, do good. Communication is an integral part of CSR and it is important that businesses and politicians communicate effectively on this theme. This is especially so in a post financial crisis/great recession period. CSR can help businesses to rebuild the bonds of trust they have with their various stakeholders. Just as importantly CSR can serve to help businesses innovate, thrive and prosper and can be one of the building blocks used to help repair national and international economies. The building of a good society is something that can only truly be done in partnership with communities and businesses. Working together in a way that is good for the environment is ethical and is good for people is something that has firm roots in

Labour history. The future for CSR and businesses that incorporate it and communicate about it has much promise. Those with a social conscience should find much appeal in working with, adapting to and communicating CSR. This book makes a valuable contribution to discussion of the communication of CSR. I am delighted to have been asked to write this preface and recognise that this book will be of value to communication practitioners, those working in CSR, as well as students and academics.

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