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**9TH ELEMENT GROUP**  
The Business of Thought Leadership



The Art of

# Visionary Thought

Leadership

White Paper on

# The Art of Visionary Thought

## Leadership

### ::Visionary Thought Leadership: The Definition::

*A visionary thought leader is a visible, vocal agent of evolutionary movement toward global good.*

### ::The Benefits: What's In It for You::

*As an individual, once you learn to think originally and transcend either/or thinking, you will be able to access more of your own creative wisdom and power.*

Once you bring your heart and mind into balance and experience the alchemy of transforming polarities into new possibilities, you will cross a threshold into a life of joy, meaning and unimagined abundance. You will find clarity about your life's purpose. You will find new roads to the destination you seek. You will find your true voice and the courage to use it.

As an organizational leader, you will become a center of gravity for individuals in pursuit of purpose-driven lives and principle-driven workplaces. Inspired yourself, you will become an inspiring force for others who are looking for opportunities to be of use, to make a difference as well as a salary. And joining forces, your potential for ingenuity

and innovation will expand exponentially, allowing you to usher into the world concrete realities that were conceived in the merging of your visions and values.

The journey to thought leadership is a bold and heroic journey inward, a journey into the gold mine of your self where you will find, beyond your own brilliant uniqueness, the exquisite commonness that you share with the rest of humanity. And it is the discovery of this commonness, this essential oneness with others, that will transform you, uplift you, and evolve you into your higher nature.

This is the nature of evolution. It is happening through us every day. Nature tends toward unity and complexity, and in human beings, it progresses through the medium of our awareness. The more aware we become, the stronger our tendency toward unity. Thought leaders are at the edge of this movement, pushing it ever outward with the vitality and vividness of their imagination. Every thought, every action is in the service of the whole, and the rewards are vast and commensurate with the commitment. As we give, so do we receive.

### ::The Corporate and Cultural Challenge::

*As a culture and civilization, we are more fragmented than ever before polarized in our personal lives, our political lives, our spiritual lives*

And the cost of this on ourselves, our families, our workplaces and communities is incalculable. More and more people are living divided lives and arriving half-heartedly at the

*The more evolved you are, the more of the universe is in your view.*

YASUHIKO KIMURA,  
philosopher

*Freedom is actually a bigger game than power. Power is about what you can control. Freedom is about what you can unleash.*

HARRIET RUBIN

*A new system of philosophy will only be built up by the collective and progressive effort of many thinkers, of many observers also, completing, correcting and improving one another.*

HENRI BERGSON



workplace. The statistics on workforce disengagement are staggering. According to the Gallup Management Journal's semi-annual Employee Engagement Index ([www.gov-leaders.org/gallup\\_article](http://www.gov-leaders.org/gallup_article))

- **29% of employees are actively engaged in their jobs**
- **54% are not-engaged**
- **17% are actively disengaged**

The Gallup Organization estimates that there are 22 million actively disengaged employees that cost the American economy up to \$350 billion per year in lost productivity, including absence, illness and other problems that result when workers are unhappy at work.

## **::New Times, New Stresses, New Expectations::**

*New generations are entering the workplace with entirely different mindsets and expectations and businesses need a new kind of leadership to meet the requirements of this challenge — a leadership that takes into account the whole person, the whole planet, the whole picture.*

The rules of capitalism have remained the same, while the global collective consciousness has been leaping forward. Not only are employees searching for meaningful workplace experiences, they're looking for organizations whose commitment runs deeper than the traditional bottom line. More and more workers these days want to align with their purpose with businesses that are purpose-driven as well as profit-driven and organizations that help them achieve this are emerging like new neural networks in the global brain.

Net Impact is a rapidly growing network of more than 10,000 new-generation leaders who believe that business can both earn a profit and create positive social change. Committed to using the power of business to improve the world, it is one of the most innovative and influential networks of MBAs, graduate students and young professionals in existence today with more than 115 chapters in cities and graduate schools around the globe.

Net Impact members have taken leadership in a wide variety of issues to link business to social agendas. Some of the strategies they are implementing and sharing include:

- How to launch a socially-minded business plan competition through your company
- How to start a socially-responsible investing alternative for employees via your company's 401(K) plan
- How to get an industry to address child labor/trafficking policies
- How to incorporate sustainable practices into a company's supply chain management
- How to convert a volunteer project at an NGO into a paid consulting study by your company

This is the kind of thought leadership that is evolving in response to the deep hunger for meaning and balance in the workplace. People come alive when they feel that what they do matters. They become fully engaged when they are in relationship and can feel and see the impact of their actions. This is what enlivens us and makes us whole. This is what connects our heart to our brain, our spirit to our bodies, and it is responsiveness to these desires that will foster full and vital engagement in the workplace.

*We are more than observers or even participants in nature. We are its conscious agents, responsible for choosing its forms.*

PETER MARIN

*The goal of discoverers is not to outdistance their peers, but to transcend themselves.*

ROBERT GRUDIN

*It is our business to become courageous enough to face the radical depth of our freedom, to accept it and to live with it creatively.*

BEATRICE BRUTEAU

*We all interpret events and data according to who we think we are. We never simply "know" the world; we create worlds based on the meaning we invest in the information we choose to notice. Thus, everything we know is determined by who we think we are.*

MARGARET WHEATLEY



## **::Evolution in Action::**

*It takes visionary thought leadership to instill a more holistic sensibility into the workplace.*

It is happening with great velocity all over the country as businesses retool and adapt to the changing needs of today's workers. Evolution is nature's way of adapting to stress. And the stress of these times is calling for business to evolve into more humanistic environments that respect the body, mind and spirit of every employee, all global citizens, and the earth itself.

Starbucks is one example of a company that's profiting from looking at the whole picture. They spend \$200 million a year on insurance for their 80,000 US employees — more than they do on all the raw materials needed to brew their coffee, according to chairman Howard Schultz who says, "you can make money and do the right thing by taking care of your people." He credited the company's employee benefits policy as a key reason for high productivity and low employee turnover, which has led to extraordinary profitability. According to Schultz, Starbucks' stock is up almost 4,000 percent in thirteen years, and surged 80 percent in 2004. Recently the company announced a contribution goal of \$10 million over the next five years to help children and their communities around the world get clean drinking water.

## **::Original Thinking: The Key to Thought Leadership::**

**Original thinking is a three-step process**



Releasing the Past

STEP ONE



Embracing the Present

STEP TWO



Creating the Future

STEP THREE

*In order to see, you have to stop being in the middle of the picture.*

SRI AUROBINDO

*No one person can answer the question of meaning in this world today. It is in thinking together, under strong conditions of serious search, that a new understanding can be approached. Group communication, group pondering, is the real art form of our time.*

JACOB NEEDLEMAN

*If we cannot express our assumptions explicitly in ways that others can understand and build upon, there can be no larger process of testing those assumptions and building public knowledge.*

PETER SENGE



3



## Step One.

# Releasing the Past

### ::Freeing Ourselves from Illusion::

*To be thought leaders in any arena, we need to be free and original thinkers, capable of focusing on how we are thinking as well as what we are thinking.*

We have to step outside of ourselves, put some distance between ourselves and our thoughts, so we can assess their heritage and test them for authenticity. Because the consciousness of a leader has a tremendous impact on the consciousness of the organization, every leader must do the deep and personal work of clarifying his or her own thoughts, so that when we speak, every word has a ring of clarity, every statement has a purpose and an air of authenticity.

Freeing ourselves from illusion may seem like an esoteric concept but it has everything to do with leadership. VISA founder Dee Hock writes in *Birth of the Chaordic Age*: “If your beliefs are based on the old model of top-down command and control, specialization, special privilege, and nothing but profit, your organization will, in time, turn toxic. It will become antithetical to the human spirit and destructive of the biosphere.” He has abandoned many old illusions, and advocates instead for a leadership rooted in purpose and principles, organizations that have, at their very heart, concerns that engage and enliven the human spirit, that call forth from the membership the essence of their fertile imaginations.

As we have evolved beyond the mechanics and rigidities of the industrial age in our buildings and businesses, so have workers evolved into beings who seek more purposeful lives, workplaces that require and inspire relationships, collaborative processes that stimulate originality and culminate in a sense of meaningful community. People want to engage with others, to feel the heat and thrill of creative combustion, the joy of originating new solutions from their diverse wisdom and experience.

It is an illusion that community is not important, that deep dialogue is not essential, that transparency is not an important function of leadership. When Jeff Dunn, former COO of Coca-Cola North America described why he named his new business, Grassy Lake Partners, after a lake, he said, “When you look at it from a certain angle, it reflects like a mirror. But then when you’re on it, you can see all the way to the bottom.” To Dunn, this is a symbol for how he wants to be as a leader — reflective enough to help others see their gifts and beliefs, and clear enough to allow others to see his own.

The French poet Baudelaire wrote that “True genius is the ability to hold two contradictory thoughts simultaneously without losing your mind.” Being able to do this is essential to original thinking. Just as we have to exercise and retrain our muscles after periods of non-use, so do we need to exercise and retrain our minds when they have atrophied into a state of habitual duality. When new learning occurs, it literally changes the architecture of the human brain. What we’re doing when we unite the opposites is rewiring our brains, creating new neural networks, new pathways in the brain that will re-route us from knee-jerk reactions to inspired responses.

And the heart needs to be involved in this process because, as Carl Jung reminds us, “There is no change from darkness to light or from inertia to movement without emotion.” Jung called emotion the chief source of consciousness. The practice of uniting the opposites involves opening the heart as much as the mind. It means feeling our way forward even as we’re thinking our way forward, for it is our feelings that rise up like

*If we can stay with the tension of opposites long enough — sustain it, be true to it — we can sometimes become vessels within which the divine opposites come together and give birth to a new reality.*

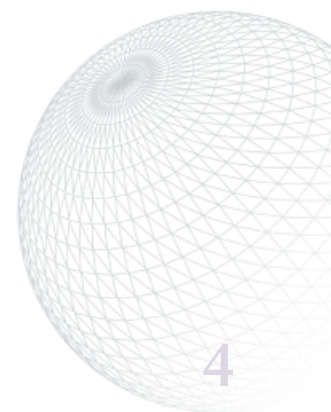
MARIE-LOUISE VON FRANZ

*Only by investing and speaking your vision with passion can the truth, one way or the other, finally penetrate the reluctance of the world.*

SOREN KIERKEGAARD

*Far better than a precise plan is a clear sense of direction and compelling beliefs. And that lies within you. The question is, how do you evoke it?*

DEE HOCK



caution lights, alerting us to the crossroads of old habits and new choices. Thought leaders do not present new ideas in a dry, intellectual fashion. They themselves are transformed by this process. Shifting from duality into a higher mode of synthesis creates excitement and an energy of confidence that is contagious and convincing. It leads to communication that is vital, alive, and impassioned. Thought leaders have moved beyond the common fear and prejudice against emotions.

Ideas that are born from the union of thought and feeling, that originate out of a desire for synthesis are evolutionary. They contain within themselves the DNA of transcendence. There is a momentary discomfort as we try to find the rightness in another's thinking or perceive the "enemy" as our self because it activates the same kind of emotional withdrawal symptoms that come with every attempt to give up an addiction. We are addicted to dualism and none of us can call ourselves free until we have rid ourselves of this dangerous habit.

*The ability to hold two contradictory beliefs simultaneously is not just a matter of true genius; it is a matter of true freedom.*

*If we cannot hear an opposing idea without a negative emotional reaction, we are not free. We are bound to an ideology that we have most likely inherited and never thoroughly examined. Authentic thought leadership follows on the heels of radical rethinking. It is a leadership that is sourced from and rooted in the merging of opposites. Just as a battery is charged by the union of positive and negative forces, or a thought springs from the union of right and left brain, original thinking emerges from the practice of joining "us" and "them" into a "we." Our imaginations are the most potent engines of change in the universe, and there is no doubt that we can convert these destructive patterns once we replace our old habits with thought processes that aim at convergence and tend toward compassion.*

## **::Questioning Our Assumptions::**

*Underpinning every action we take is an assumption that we've incorporated from somewhere, consciously or not.*

Individuals, organizations and businesses operate on assumptions that are rarely conscious, but that affect them dramatically. Questioning our own assumptions or the assumptions running rampant through our organizations is key to understanding why we're getting the responses we're getting from the people we encounter, our employees, or our customers. To think this has nothing to do with the bottom line is naïve and short-sighted, thus costly to human spirit and enterprise.

"You can see the corporation as a machine for producing money, or you can see it as a human community," according to Peter Senge, but if you prefer the community idea, you want people to be saying "we." And in order to foster this sensibility of community, every leader in the organization has to believe it, feel it, be it, and speak it. And underneath this must be a foundational assumption that is so rooted in reality that no one can mistake it. If you do assume that people are honest, that they give their best when they are most encouraged, that any expenditure of resources for their development will result in work and attitudes that benefit the organization, then those assumptions will be apparent in your actions and you will be seen as a person of integrity. If those are not your assumptions, but you try to act as if they were, your dishonesty will be discerned immediately.

*When they used the word 'they,' I knew it was one kind of business, When they used the word 'we,' I knew it was a whole other kind of business.*

ROBERT REICH,  
former Secretary of Labor, on time he spent visiting different businesses and talking with the employees

*Living in uncertain times, we need some kind of certain presence which is independent of our outside accomplishments, which is independent of any shallow definitions of what it means to be successful.*

DAVID WHYTE



## **::Evolutionary Self-Correction::**

*We become the most powerful communicators when every word and action is consistent with our root assumptions*

so for us to be clear on what they are, and to help others clarify what theirs are, is a critical part of thought leadership and original thinking.

While there once was an assumption that corporations could fly safely under the public radar, we now have a global posse of networked bloggers, citizen advocates, writers, and activists tracking down culprits of corporate misbehavior and posting their crimes in the non-local press of the World Wide Web. Instantaneously, news of transgressions passes across every border like lightning, and action campaigns are mounted at the drop of a hat. While this looks adversarial at first glance, we can also view it as an evolutionary self-balancing function. If the survival of the whole organism is at stake, these are self-correcting actions of the parts.

## **::Higher Consciousness Leads to Higher Returns::**

*Another assumption that is being challenged by recent research is that socially responsible investing is linked with underperformance.*

In 2004, a meta-study of 52 studies over 30 years proved a significant positive association between corporate social performance and financial performance. An international social research firm, Innovest Strategic Value Advisors, found that forest and paper products companies with above-average environmental performance had 43 percent better share price performance over four years than competitors with below-average environmental ratings. And in the oil and gas sector, the top environmentally rated businesses outperformed others in share price by 12 percent over three years.

The Social Investment Forum published a Report of Socially Responsible Investing Trends in the United States in December 2003 that revealed a total of \$2.16 trillion under professional management involved in socially responsible investment strategies — nearly four times the \$639 billion that the Forum identified in 1995. Stephen J. Schueth, President of First Affirmative Financial Network, LLC, writes in the newsletter SRI that the growth of socially screened portfolios in the U.S. has risen over 153% in eight years. “Wall Street did not cook this one up,” he writes. “The impressive growth of socially responsible investing is primarily consumer-driven.”

## **::It Pays to Be Good::**

*Businesses are discovering that it pays to be concerned about society.*

A growing number of companies are investing in ideas that have clear development benefits. Hindustan Lever, an Indian subsidiary of Unilever, didn't think of marketing to the poor until a competitor came up with the idea of selling laundry detergent in single-use packages that the poor could afford. They were hugely successful, and in response, Hindustan Lever came up with a new brand of detergent that was modified to work well in rivers and public water sources, where the poor most often do their laundry. They also devised a new distribution system to sell this product and created a host of new jobs in poorer rural areas. Both manufacturers currently have nearly 40 percent of the market. Triple bottom line thinking: good for the earth, good for the people, good for profits.

Businesses have always been on the cutting edge of creative innovation, and finding ways

*Socially and economically the late-20th-century emphasis on information is shifting in favor of the imagination. Leaders who want to discover new markets or radically transform their industries or perhaps test their own mettle need to explore uncharted waters. They need to sail into the imagination.*

HARRIET RUBIN

*Business is the only thing that will have an influence on the future of this planet.*

DALAI LAMA



of bridging their bottom line concerns with the basic needs of the poor opens up whole new avenues for triple win solutions. The 18 largest emerging and transitional countries include 680 million poor households, with a total income of \$1.7 trillion. There is a tremendous opportunity here to balance commerce with compassion, to reframe “the poor” from a category of charity to a category of collaborator, and find new ways of working with and in these communities so that everyone benefits.



## Step Two. **Embracing the Present**

### **::The Creative Enterprise::**

*The work of thought leaders today is to rouse people into consciousness, to awaken the drowsy imaginations of a sedated public and get them to turn on the lights of their own lives.*

To do this for others, we need to know how to do this for ourselves. We need to know how to resolve our own conflicts, how to manage our thoughts, how to dissolve the obstacles to our creativity. And as leaders, we need to know how to guide people through the portals of new possibilities — new ways of thinking, speaking, being. It is not our role to encourage people what to think, to convert people to our side, whether it is the right or the left. It is our role to become bridges between the two — to create a new thoroughfare for thinking that supersedes the binary and finds its strength in the whole.

### **::It Takes More Than a Vision to Make a Visionary::**

*It takes a rigorous discipline of thought management and a meticulous undoing of old habits.*

It requires the capacity to not simply withstand the tension of opposites, but to become the mechanism for their transformation, to contain and direct the power that is generated as they fuse and ignite. If we learn to bring the opposites together in our own lives, to welcome and work with ideas that differ from ours, then we become creative alchemists, practitioners in the art of generating power — authentic, unitive power — which is the medium of leadership itself.

### **::Prophets and Profits: Capitalizing on Wisdom::**

*Evolution is making a quantum leap and it is doing it through our consciousness.*

And just like in the fall, when the leaves start to change, each leaf changes in its own time, according to its nature and cellular composition. We too, are changing in our own time. Some of us have a complete and visceral sense of the “human community.” Some comprehend what is happening and are actively and consciously reaching out, creating networks, building community. And for some, the change is more subtle: a heightened interest in spirituality, a hunger for more meaning.

In 2002, more than five hundred executives, consultants, entrepreneurs, and spiritual leaders attended a three-day conference to launch the Spirit in Business (SiB) World

*The future will be one in which “the spiritual transformation of capitalism” will shift the American way of doing business “from greed to enlightened self-interest, from elitism to economic democracy, from the fundamentalist doctrine of ‘profit at any cost’ to the conscious ideology that espouses both money and morals.*

PATRICIA ABURDENE



Institute, and since then over four thousand individuals from thirty countries have been involved with SiB. Leading corporations such as American Express, Verizon, and Forbes have sponsored SiB events, and senior corporate leaders from Citigroup, Videophone, British Petroleum, Goldman Sachs, Hewlett-Packard, and Honeywell have stepped forward in support.

SiB facilitates a variety of events that allow business leaders to deepen their own wisdom and find ways to foster spiritual leadership in their organizations. Companies are learning to develop mechanisms that measure the human and business impact of spirituality-based programs, apply learning modules on compassion and trust throughout their organization, and improve decision-making by focusing stakeholders in a common vision through a broad concept of spirituality.

In their book, *A Spiritual Audit of Corporate America*, business professor Ian Mitroff and organizational consultant Elizabeth Denton present a compelling case that companies that foster a spiritual environment tend to have employees who are more creative, loyal, productive, and adaptive to change than companies that stifle spirituality. Mitroff and Denton conducted in-depth interviews with over ninety high-level managers and executives, collecting both qualitative and quantitative data. What they found is that spirituality is one of the most important determinants of organizational performance. People who are more spiritually involved achieve better results. In fact, they suggest that spirituality may well be the ultimate competitive advantage.

Participants of the study differentiated strongly between religion and spirituality, viewing religion as a highly inappropriate form of expression and spirituality as a highly appropriate subject for the workplace. Most believed strongly that organizations must “harness the immense spiritual energy within each person in order to produce world-class products and services.” And their perception of spirituality was that it pertained to the process of becoming, that it involved the continuing unfolding of the human spirit. If the company is not invested in the whole person — body, mind and spirit — then the person will not bring their whole being to the corporate enterprise.

## Step Three. **Creating the Future**

### **::Local Brain, Global Mind::**

Geneticists are discovering “unused” sections of DNA, which are thought to contain the blueprint of the future. Research shows that we can influence our DNA. With the power of our mind, we can cause our own DNA to relax and unwind, allowing us to access more of its codes. Scientific experiments at the Institute of HeartMath® have led to the discovery that the heart influences how the brain functions and that its language is found in the heart’s rhythms. By shifting our heart’s rhythmic beating patterns from chaotic to coherent we can produce profound and beneficial changes in the brain that lead to expanded imagination, more creative solutions, and peak performance.

The implications for heightened creativity and human performance have not been lost on the corporate world, and companies such as Hewlett Packard, Shell, Sony, Boeing, and GlaxoSmithKline are using HeartMath training for stress management and enhanced productivity. Howard Martin, co-author of *The HeartMath Solution* and the

*Deep down the consciousness of mankind is one.*

DAVID BOHM

*Kindness to others favors a nervous system that is kind to itself.*

BHAGAVAD GITA

*Life on Earth was not biologically, but informationally seeded.*

ERVIN LAZLO



executive vice-president of HeartMath, reported that in a group of 1,500 people from five different companies that went through a one-day HeartMath training program there was a drop in fatigue from 49 percent to 31 percent in just six weeks. Anxiousness dropped from 35 percent to 14 percent, sleeplessness from 29 percent to 14 percent and Boeing reported productivity gains of up to 12 percent.

*That we have an effect on others is a matter of fact; the kind of effect we have on others is a matter of consciousness.*

*We can radiate positive energy and light or negativity and darkness. It is in our best interests to be mindful of our energy as we scatter it about, because thoughts can produce effects only of the same nature. "Every negative thought I entertain in my head, which I think is my own secret place, actually strengthens the negative field that sweeps our world. Every time I bemoan the negative world out there that I must suffer, I have supported and contributed to it through my moaning. My secret place in my head is not so secret after all," writes Joseph Chilton Pearce in *The Biology of Transcendence*.*

This is global mind thinking. It is countercultural, but it is the very essence of original thinking and a prerequisite for visionary leadership. Before we can manage anything or anyone in the outside world, we must first learn to manage our energy and thoughts, to synchronize our mind and our emotions for optimal performance. Then we will be ready to enter deeper levels of consciousness, increase our intuitive bandwidth and tap into a creativity greater than we have ever known.

## **::The Triple Bottom Line- People, Planet, Profits::**

*Companies are finding that sound environmental practices and investment in employees and communities in which they operate can contribute to and drive competitive advantage.*

Geoffrey Colvin, in an article for *Fortune* magazine, writes that companies today are doing more of what the activists want than they ever have done before, but it's not because they're being socially responsible. It's because they're listening to the markets.

Triple bottom line reporting was devised in 1994 by a think tank in London. It is a method of financial reporting that takes into account not just profits, but people and the planet.

There are three forms of capital that contribute to the success of a business and they are all capable of producing returns on investments:

- Social capital (people)
- Natural capital (planet)
- Cash capital (profits)

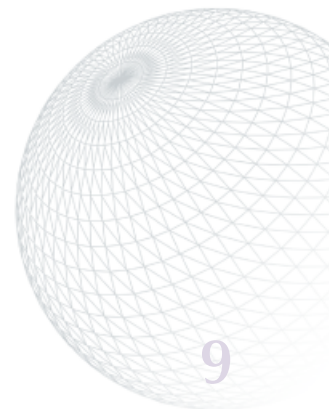
Businesses around the country are learning that they can get a higher return on their social capital if they value and respond to the needs of the people they employ. At Green Mountain Coffee Roasters in Waterbury, Vermont, employees can take lunchtime yoga classes in the company meditation center, and in Berkeley, at Clif Bar, they can improve their rock-climbing skills on the indoor climbing wall hovering over their cubicles. Discovery Communications in Silver Spring, Maryland opened an on-site health and wellness center complete with a nurse practitioner and physician. On opening day, one hundred employees signed up for physicals. The center also provides routine prescriptions during flu season and sponsors a skin screening day and special wellness programs for men and pregnant women. Last year one thousand employees took part in their annual healthy living competition and lost a total of five thousand pounds. The center has

*Being a sustainable company means that every corporate decision is based on how it adds value in the economic, social, and environmental arenas.*

DAWN RITTENHOUSE,  
Director of Sustainable Development,  
DuPont

*Companies are an integral part of the societies and communities in which they operate, and they cannot succeed if the society around them fails. The companies that do not manage their social issues in the same way they manage other strategic business issues will not stay in business long-term.*

BJÖRN STIGSON, PRESIDENT  
World Business Council for Sustainable  
Development



shown a good return on investment — a savings of \$600,000 in direct and indirect costs.

At SAS headquarters in Cary, North Carolina, the 4,100 employees are offered child care, dry cleaning, and health care. They can also get their car detailed, and a massage or a hair cut at the company salon. For eight weeks in the summer, SAS sponsors Camp Awesome Adventure on their nine-hundred-acre campus. Employees can bring their children to play soccer, softball, or swim in the huge pool. Or they can learn to cook, sign up for “Hooray for Hollywood” to perform plays, or join the “Mad Scientist Club” and conduct scientific experiments.

Hyperion, a software company in Santa Clara, California gives employees \$5000 toward the purchase of a hybrid or other fuel efficient car. The company set up a how-to guide on its website for other companies looking to launch fuel-friendly initiatives and now more than a dozen U.S. businesses are doing the same for their employees.

"If the economy is improving and now the options for where you work are a little bit more diverse, some of the soft touches are as important as the compensation," says Hyperion CEO Godfrey Sullivan. "One of the factors in where you want to work is how proud are you to work there." Hyperion announced record revenues and operating margins in both the fourth quarter and 2004 fiscal year.

## **::Turning Waste into Profit: The Competitive Edge::**

*It is well known that waste reduction represents direct cost savings to corporations.*

What is less well recognized is that waste represents a resource that should be recycled and reused instead of discarded. This approach is often called ‘cradle-to-cradle’ to represent a closed loop. Every company that has adopted the cradle-to-cradle philosophy in conducting their business has discovered significant gains on their financial bottom lines.

The United States Postal Service earned revenues of \$6.6 million in one year from the sales of recyclable materials. Bell Atlantic recovered 30,000 tons of material from obsolete equipment and sold it for \$25 million. Quad/Graphics recycled 146,000 tons of paper in one year, saving \$12.5 million in disposal fees. The public utility company Exelon generated nearly \$4 million in 2004 by converting landfill gas to energy, and recycling 100% of the by-products of coal combustion at their fossil generating stations.

IKEA requires all of its stores to reuse, recycle, or produce energy from 75% of their waste. In 1975, 3M began running its Pollution Prevention Pays (3P) program, which has generated over \$750 million in first-year savings over the last two decades. Procter and Gamble saved \$1 million with a variety of nationwide energy efficient plans, working with their partner, Cinery Solutions, a company that works with businesses on turning their energy challenges into cost-saving opportunities.

In their quest to turn waste into profit, Interface Carpeting has doubled their revenues, tripled their operating profits, and nearly doubled employment. Its latest \$250 million revenue came from mining internal waste, with no increase in energy or materials inputs. And Dow Louisiana Operations implemented over 900 worker-suggested energy-saving projects during the period 1981 to 1993, with average annual returns on investment of over 200 percent. Both returns and savings rose in later years, even after the accumulated annual savings from the projects had passed \$100 million.

*The green economies and lifestyles of the twenty-first century may be conceptualized by environmental thinkers, but they can only be actualized by industrial corporations. Industry has a next-century vision of integrated environmental performance. Not every company is there yet, but most are trying. Those that aren't trying won't be a problem long-term, simply because they won't be around long-term. That is the new competitive reality.*

EDGAR WOOLARD,  
former CEO, DuPont



## ::Easing the Task of Sustainable Reporting::

In September 2003, the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) was recognized as the best model for corporate disclosure on social, environmental and ethical issues. A look at its website (<http://www.globalreporting.org/>) today shows a membership of 791 members, including some of the world's top companies and a number of national governments. These are telling figures, given that as recently as seven years ago, the concept of sustainability reporting did not even exist.

Almost three-quarters of G-100 companies issued sustainability reports by 2004, whereas less than half had done so by 2003. The escalation trend is most conspicuous in the USA, where the percentage of companies involved in GRI reporting rose from 18 percent to 49 percent in one year.

Triple bottom line thinking is catching on, as well it must, if we are to preserve our interests, our planet, our future. The poet and philosopher Wendell Berry reminds us, "It may be that when we no longer know what to do, we have come to our real work, and that when we no longer know which way to go, we have begun our real journey. The mind that is not baffled is not employed. The impeded stream is the one that sings."

These are indeed baffling times, and we have come at last to the real work: to collectively create new systems, new businesses, and new partnerships that will result in a world that is healthy and whole.

The brightest and most spirited among us are taking their positions, plotting their courses and establishing new communities and networks of support. They have unleashed themselves from the shackles of the past, are embracing wholeheartedly the challenges of the present, and engaging mindfully in the co-creation of a humane and honorable culture and civilization.

Any of us can join those ranks. Any of us can drop our illusions, commit to unity, and become a driving force in the future that awaits us. The solutions to the crises of our time do not lie dormant in one individual. They live like seeds in every one of us, waiting to blossom and be broadcast across the human landscape.

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The Business of Thought Leadership

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*None of my books or ideas mean anything to me in the long run. What are theories? Nothing. The only thing that matters is how you touch people. Have I given anyone insight? That's what I want to have done. Insight lasts; theories don't.*

PETER DRUCKER

*The time is coming when people will be astonished that mankind needed so long a time to regard thoughtless injury to life as compatible with ethics.*

ALBERT SCHWEITZER

