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# The Green Rush

In the middle of difficulty lies opportunity.

—*Albert Einstein*

## THE TIMES THEY ARE A-CHANGIN'

You can't turn on the TV, read a newspaper, listen to the radio, or surf the Web without hearing about "going green," "climate change," and "sustainability." Obviously, the largest market crash since the Great Depression and fluctuating gasoline prices up to $4 per gallon helps to motivate people to conserve and consider alternative energy sources; but even before recent increases in the price of gas, consumers have been bombarded with a plethora of new advertising messages and images that assume we are concerned about toxins in our homes, organic and fair-trade ingredients in our food, and energy-efficient cars and appliances. I was struck by one Web site from a major facilities management firm that changed overnight from images of soaring skyscrapers and monstrous machinery to green fields and children playing in flower gardens. Why this sudden interest in going green among consumers and at every level of our corporate society? Is going green a real economic revolution, or is this yet another trendy topic that will burn out—until the next oil-dependency crisis? The winds of change are palpable not just by a few college students, environmental activists, political strategists, and consumer advocates; rather, the interest in green products and a sustainable lifestyle is becoming a major trend in the mainstream. For entrepreneurs, investors, corporate managers across all industries, there is a rush to become aware of all things green and to meet the new, emerging consumer demand. And behind this surge of interest to meet a market potential, there is a glimmer of interest in making a difference in the world: building a better community, making our environment a better place for all its inhabitants, and growing successful businesses.

## THE TIPPING POINT

During the past several years, like most people, I had noticed an increase in the debate about whether global warming was caused by humans or a natural, temporary phenomenon. Most of the information I was hearing remained in the background as white noise, drowned out by the news of the day and my own concerns. I read about greenhouse gases, the ozone layer depletion, polar bears trapped on melting ice flows, peak oil, increasing droughts worldwide, and more catastrophic storms. Every once in a while, the news about climate change would impact me directly: It has been getting increasingly unbearably hot in North Carolina in the summer (topping 100 degrees and 90 percent humidity for days on end). But like many people, I was too busy running my company, paying the bills, raising a family, and being a consumer to care about changing global conditions. So I turned up the air-conditioning.

Meanwhile, a quiet revolution was taking place and a new vocabulary was emerging without me being completely aware of the implications. Terms like *sustainability, fair-trade, locally grown, shade-grown, no GMO* (genetically modified organism), *rainforest-friendly, toxin-free*, and *organic* began appearing on products, not just in the local health food cooperatives but in mainstream grocery stores. Concern for the environment, which has been around for decades, was beginning to become commercially significant. After starting with a trickle, suddenly the floodgates seemed to be flung open with the change of language, introduction of new products, and images of age-old companies rebranding themselves as green. A real shocker that made me look was when Clorox bought Burt's Bees and released a green cleaning product line!

The tipping point for me to begin looking at sustainability as a focus for my personal life and business took place in the fall of 2007 as a result of small pieces of information coming together at the right time. This is how change actually happens: I had just completed a three-year contract with a firm providing software for physicians treating patients with HIV/AIDS in the developing world, so I was already connecting the dots of how and where things are made, the widening gap between the haves and have-nots, and the depletion of natural resources abroad. Like many people, I was deeply moved by Al Gore's movie, *An Inconvenient Truth*[1] and inspired to start looking at ways I could change some of my own practices. I viewed a short documentary called "The Next Industrial Revolution: William McDonough, Michael Braungart and the Birth of the Sustainable Economy"[2] about the financial benefits of redesigning products to be of high quality and not harmful to the environment from the time they are made to their disposal. Companies profiled in the McDonough/Braungart film demonstrated how it was possible to change the entire design of their product, be environmentally friendly, and make a profit.

As a business value analyst for the facilities management sector, I had observed many times how green initiatives such as changes to building design and reduction of energy costs benefited the organizations financially. For me, it wasn't just the cost savings in the short term—it was the long-term, measurable benefits of improved employee morale, which translate into better retention, less sick leave, and increased productivity. The myth about going green being too expensive began eroding with evidence of a meaningful return on investment (ROI). Also, at many facilities conferences I attended, an increasing number of facilities and production managers were coming with checks in hand to buy green products. (Even with the increased number of companies supplying green products today, a gap still remains between demand and the availability of a diversity of products that customers want.) The final contribution to my tipping point came from the book *Good News for a Change*.[3] I read about how businesses were changing and becoming concerned about the environment while still being financially successful, but equally important to me was the depth of change among the business owners, their employees, their customers, and their vendors. Against many obstacles, these businesses persevered in the belief that there must be a balance between being financially successful, a good steward of the environment, and committed to principles of social equity.

This interest in sustainability and all things green is actually a revolution in the same sense as the industrial revolution—a fundamental shift of our values and practices concerning financial means, how we interact with the environment, and how we treat each other. I was hooked. My background in international development, value analytics, and entrepreneurship found a home, and I'm now committed to inspiring others to find their own tipping points. The question is, will anything we do make a difference. Can the business community be an integral part of turning the tide of global public action to reverse many of the policies and practices in motion potentially accelerating rapid climate change? Many of the recent reports indicate there is a chance to avert significant disaster, but we have to act fast.

## CLIMATE CHANGE: "THE GREATEST MARKET FAILURE THE WORLD HAS EVER SEEN"

The time is over keeping our heads in the sand about climate change and the effects of global warming. In the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Fourth Assessment Report, "Climate Change 2007"[4] recommends immediate steps for stemming the tide of effects of global warming. The report asserts (supported by extensive peer review), "There is very high confidence that the net effect of human activities since 1750 has been one of warming." Their findings included the following:

> Earth's surface temperature has increased 1.33 degrees Fahrenheit since 1900 (0.74 degrees Celsius), mostly in the past 50 years, likely making this the warmest period of the past 1,300 years. Eleven of the past 12 years have been the warmest years in the instrumental record, dating back to 1850.
>
> Recent temperature and carbon dioxide ($CO_2$) emission trends are at the high end of the range forecast by the IPCC, with the global average temperature now rising about one-half degree Fahrenheit per decade. The frequency of heat waves, forest fires, and heavy-precipitation events has increased globally since 1950.
>
> Areas affected by drought have spread globally since the 1970s. The incidence of coastal flooding has increased since 1975. Arctic sea ice cover has shrunk 20 percent since 1978, when satellite measurements began.
>
> The rate of sea level rise has jumped 70 percent since 1993, compared to the prior 30-year measurement period. Rapid melting of the Greenland ice sheet is now raising new concerns that the amount of sea level rise that might occur this century will be measured in meters, not inches.

As startling and disconcerting as these statistics are, the most significant information from the report is the connection between these changes and that of human and financial losses increasing every day, and yet to come. From the rise of infectious diseases, loss of water sources, temperatures rising by 10 degrees Fahrenheit, sea level rising by two feet, worsening storms, and if $CO_2$ emissions are left unabated, "climate change could cause a 5 to 20 percent reduction in the projected global gross domestic product by 2050.5," according to *The Stern Review.* The former chief World Bank economist Sir Nicholas Stern called climate change "the greatest market failure the world has ever seen."[5] Add to this the global financial crisis and now more than ever there is a need for a shared collective vision for a new type of economics based on honesty, integrity, caring, and respect for each other, the planet, and our economic way of life.

## WHAT IS SUSTAINABILITY AND WHY SHOULD I CARE?

Shortly after my own tipping point for taking sustainability more seriously, it was as if a light was turned on throughout the country. No matter where I turned, green was in. I was able to buy cloth bags for groceries at Target, I found an entire cable channel called Planet Green dedicated exclusively to green topics, and I just bought an organic cotton fair-trade T-shirt made in Nicaragua from Wal-Mart! It was like buying a new car, having never noticed the model before, and suddenly seeing everyone driving the same one. But I think it's more than that, because most of the people I spoke with all over the country were experiencing something similar: Climate change is real, whether or not humanity caused it; the human race has to change its behavior of unharnessed growth immediately or the planet and its inhabitants will suffer; and our current sources of energy, food production, and raw materials are being more rapidly depleted than previously predicted as emerging countries strive for the Western lifestyle. An old term has been resurrected to give a new meaning to the rising interest in green: Sustainability.

According to Andres Edwards in *The Sustainability Revolution*, sustainability can be summarized from the 1987 Brundtland Report as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs," a definition that has evolved since then from discussions among business leaders, policy makers, and environmentalists from around the world.[6] The concept of sustainability has also been inclusive of conservation, the three Rs of reduce, recycle, reuse; and energy efficiency. From small, sustainable agricultural projects in the developing world to global conferences discussing economic implications of climate change, the concept of sustainability has been transformed to encompass three basic components, otherwise known as the triple bottom line (a term coined by John Elkington in his book *Cannibals with Forks: The Triple Bottom Line of 21st Century Business*),[7] which are inextricably linked to one another: people—the social equity aspect that implies ensuring the benefits of opportunity and equality for every human being; planet—the environmental aspect that implies preserving the natural qualities of our ecosystem for the benefit and health of future generations; and profits—the economic aspect that implies balancing financial growth with awareness and concern for the social good and environmental stewardship (see Figure 1.1).

As an entrepreneur, I noticed something different about the concept of sustainability: It unites normally contentious concepts such as social good and environmental stewardship with the goal of financial gain. If you are part of the business community or the environmental activist community, then you probably share my surprise at the implications of the widespread interest in this unity. Sustainability and the definition of the triple bottom line continue to evolve, being driven by a myriad of individuals, organizations, corporations, and government agencies worldwide toward an essentially common goal of reordering our existence as inhabitants of a planet with limited resources, a planet that is sensitive to our exertions of unbridled growth. No one group or interest owns the definition of sustainability or its application; however, an unprecedented number of individuals and organizations are adopting the basic principles and sharing results with others, inspiring a surge in innovation and new opportunities unparalleled in recent history—a sustainability revolution. Also, though the term "green" is interchangeable at times with "sustainable," there is a distinct difference. "Green" implies specific activities related to environmental impact whereas "sustainable" implies the inclusion of three activities that impact people, planet, and profits.

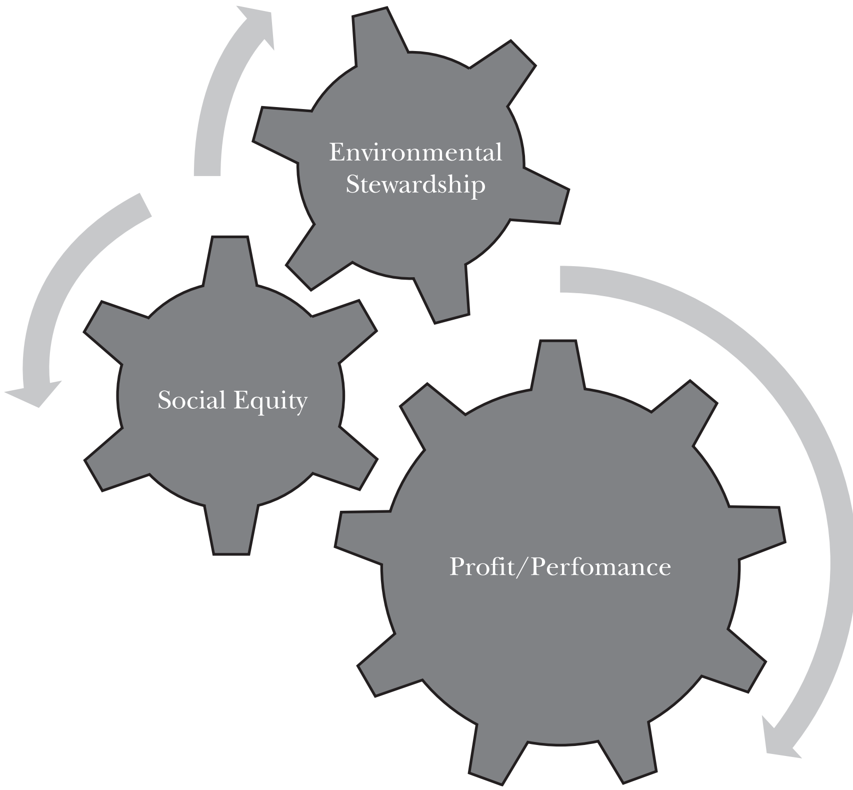


**Figure 1.1** The Triple Bottom-line of Sustainability is comprised of interdependent outcomes including Environmental Stewardship, Social Equity, and Profit/Performance.

Meanwhile, a myth continues to persist that needs to dispelled: that individuals and small enterprises make little or no difference in the face of global climatic and social problems. In truth, every action we take as individuals, organizations, and societies has huge ramifications for the rest of the world. For now, keep in mind that our thoughts, decisions, and actions, which include purchasing, consuming, building, expanding, and growing in our home and community, have reverberating effects on other individuals, organizations, and societies that we can change with one informed decision. Make no mistake—sustainability is here to stay; and as Danny Ocean stated emphatically to his potential partners in the film *Ocean's Eleven*: "You're either in or you're out. Right now."

## A PERFECT STORM

Actually, from an environmentalist perspective, the conditions for change toward a more sustainable society have never been more fertile. At the time of the writing of this book, the global economy was experiencing the greatest drop in value since the Great Depression, President elect Barack Obama promised unprecedented sustainability initiatives, and fuel prices were wildly fluctuating as the U.S. automakers were contemplating bankruptcy or bailout from the government. There has been a vacuum of accurate climate change data, while denials of the role of humans as the cause have been disseminated from the recent administration; however, new information is now rushing out to the public through every media channel. The price of a barrel of oil continues at record levels, affecting prices in every global sector. The American dollar and indeed American ideals are at an all-time low. People are feeling or seeing firsthand the effects of climate change: the melting of the ice caps, the loss of habitat for thousands of varieties of plants and animals, and the increased severity of the weather over the past decade. We're in a perfect storm for introducing options for significant change in our society. The old way was to target an offending company and litigate against it to change its behavior and for punitive damages—mostly led by regional environmental activist organizations. Now, these same offender businesses are taking another look at sustainability because it may be in their financial interests to do so. That's not necessarily the noblest reason, but it's a start. Since there is more push than pull in the marketplace toward sustainability, there is a need to help inspire and guide enterprises toward higher ground. The perfect storm of environmental, social, and economic circumstances pressuring individuals and companies provides a unique opportunity for normally contentious groups to join forces and effect meaningful change.

To illustrate this point: While working in sub-Saharan Africa over a three-year period, I noticed the difference between the nonprofit development organizations spending their limited-budget funds and the for-profit entities striving to survive in a difficult economic environment. Among the issues facing countries dependent upon foreign aid for infrastructure development, medicine, and other societal basics is the dependence on the foreign aid in the first place. Even if the grant-funded nonprofits help train local citizens to take over key positions, continued funding is still required to sustain the organization—but it is not guaranteed forever. Too many projects are completed without expertise, administration, and funding left behind to continue the work once the developmental funding dries up. For-profit entities look at solving problems through a different lens, that of finding a market that is able to financially sustain products and services sufficiently without dependence on external grants. This requires rethinking the cost of these goods and services in relation to the local economy; but more hurdles can be overcome by entrepreneurial planning than by budgetary planning alone. I found that the best of both worlds was to form public/private alliances to achieve greater goals of expertise, infrastructure, administration, and sustainability appropriate to the local economy. In like manner, I believe the public/private alliances that can be formed by the nonprofit environmental activist groups, social change organizations, and economic development organizations with regional companies will help generate a spark of ideas, better outcomes from joint initiatives, and, most important, financial sustainability in the long run.

## FROM THE GOLD RUSH TO THE GREEN RUSH

During another era in the United States, the young country was in the process of westward expansion into the frontier. Linking the two coasts together were the railroads and another new technology: the telegraph. On May 23, 1844, a message, "What hath God wrought?" was quietly tapped out across a wire miles away that unceremoniously opened the dawn of a new age—that of innovation and industry. But the message was also a call to a higher purpose since the world had become smaller with the symbolic flattening of mountains and drying of the seas. Similarly today, the Internet began as an arcane transmission of text messages between engineers and has grown to connect individuals globally to an extent previously inconceivable. Ironically, a year before the first telegraph message, the U.S. Patent Office reduced its staff and budget in the belief at the time that no new inventions were likely to be made. Little did anyone realize that an explosion of inventions was about to occur that would transform every aspect of people's lives and fuel the development of technology and systems for the industrial revolution.

The discovery of gold in California in 1849 attracted an influx of fortune-seekers from all over the world, and many did strike it rich; but the greatest impact was the connecting the industrial center of the East to the vast, untapped resources of the West by railroad and the rapid development of industries and communities with the newfound wealth. By the time the gold dried up and the dream of getting rich quick was gone, the new economy of the West was well on its way to unlimited growth from other industries. The entrepreneurial spirit brought freedom-seeking individuals from all over the world to the United States to fulfill a dream of self-sufficiency, of owning land and farming it, and of building businesses. Entrepreneurs tend to thrive in a down economy. It has been during difficult financial times that most of the successful companies were born, as their visionary leaders had to innovate or move on.

After the Civil War, the industrial complex in the United States that we still benefit from today was in an exponential growth mode. Vast resources were extracted—from the old-growth forests to the coal mines in Appalachia and iron ore from the West—to fuel the expansion of cities and industries that would produce the wealthiest nation in the world within a few short decades. By the early 1900s, the country's citizens were becoming consumers with an insatiable appetite for the new American dream: unchecked growth in wealth, home and land ownership, a car in every garage, inexpensive fuel and energy, and an ever-growing catalog of goods to purchase. Not until health concerns and lakes burning from toxins put the brakes on this illusion of unlimited access to resources and growth did the country get notice to regulate and curb this growth.

Unfortunately, few industries took the high road on their own to limit their growth and negative environmental and social impact.

In the 1960s, the first inklings of concerns about the end of oil, climate change, population growth, and ozone depletion were being introduced to mostly deaf ears. The rest of the world has begun to scale up their industrial complexes, especially India and China, and the pressure is on to meet the increased demand. Now we as a global community have reached an impasse. In 1999, in answer to a previous age of industrialism, Amory Lovins, L. Hunter Lovins, and Paul Hawkins' seminal book, *Natural Capitalism*, outlined "The Next Industrial Revolution," in which "limits to prosperity are coming to be determined by natural capital [water, minerals, oil, trees, fish, soil, air, etc.] rather than industrial prowess."[8]

The economic implication for investors, entrepreneurs, and companies that take notice of the shift in the need for new energy solutions is that they will benefit from a potential trillion-dollar energy market. In their book, *Earth: The Sequel—The Race to Reinvent Energy and Stop Global Warming*, Fred Krupp and Miriam Horn outline the means of "the reindustrialization of the whole planet" through innovations in green technologies—reducing energy consumption, increasing energy storage and transfer, and discovering new energy sources.[9] Now there is both a crisis and an opportunity for the business community to become aware of its critical role in helping to define the principles and to take positive action for a more sustainable world. Former adversaries are now uniting to solve the greatest challenge of our time; and by all indications, like the forty-niners during the Gold Rush, the eco-entrepreneur is at the spear point.

## EVIDENCE OF THE GREEN RUSH

So how do we know that sustainability is not just a fad and that once the pressure is off, once gas prices go back to a "reasonable" $3 per gallon, who's to say that we Americans won't slip back into our old ways of indifferent consumerism? It has happened before—for example, during the previous oil crisis of the 1970s, I recall my parents waiting in the lines at gas pumps, the reduction of the speed limit to 55 mph, and the advice to turn out lights when not in use. Many new green technologies such as efficient solar cells and wind turbines for collecting energy were started. But by the mid-1980s, green was virtually forgotten. The industrial complex expanded faster and farther than ever. The cost of gas at one point in the 1990s was so low, it was comparatively the same price allowing for inflation as in the early 1900s! By the end of the twentieth century, though, something had changed. There was more physical evidence that perhaps climate change was real, that our energy sources were more limited than we had thought, and that our economy was more vulnerable to global events and other counties' economies than we had realized. For entrepreneurs, business managers, and investors, the best evidence is what is actually happening on the ground. The concept of "Smart Green" is designed to look beyond the media messages, the marketing ploys, and celebrity endorsements.

You could always count on the media reporting on green issues during the period around Earth Day in April, until 2008 when it seemed Earth Day was every day. During the early part of the year it started: Headlines were abundant on new technologies, the need for innovation, worries about climate changes, and the new green labor markets coming about. No sooner were innovative eco-entrepreneurs creating the next efficient photovoltaic cell in their garages and boosting the gas mileage of their Priuses with laptop batteries than the media began reporting on consumer "green fatigue" and the looming "green bubble." The media's role is a double-edged sword. On one hand, it has the power to inform and inspire innovations in green technology and actions individuals and companies can take to become greener, but on the other hand it reports on how interest in sustainability is waning—from all the negative news about the slump in sales for gas-guzzling SUVs to the growing of algae in your pond to fuel your car. What gets lost is the real message about sustainability, the big picture of climate change and its effects on our daily lives, and the opportunity we have to do something about it in a meaningful way.

If sustainability is already a goal and a mission for you, great. For those of you who are skeptical, that's great, too. All I ask is for you to take a broader look outside of your familiar sector and analyze the trend for yourself. Run the numbers for investment. Observe consumer behavior. Follow the money.

## GREEN INVESTING

During this "early" period of the rise of green technology or green tech, the bulk of the investments being made are for the big win in replacing energy sources such as solar photovoltaics, wind turbines, biofuels, and fuel cells. According to world-renowned venture capitalist and environmental advocate, John Doerr, there is no chance of over-investing in green tech: "The energy market is $6 trillion. I like to say it's the mother of all markets. Compared to the Internet, which is a big deal, this is much bigger, much more exciting," he said. "But the challenge is much larger. Going green—solving that problem will be largest transformation on the planet." Even though green tech has seen the largest increase in investment over the past few years, Doerr believes there is still a long way to go.[10]

The trend is accelerating at a rapid pace: Venture capitalists in the U.S. invested $2.7 billion or 9 percent of their portfolios in 2006 in the clean-energy sector up from 0.6 percent in 2000! In just one year between 2006-2007, new global investments in energy technologies increased by 60 percent. In spite of these significant increases in green tech so far, these gains fall short of the $16 trillion needed to be invested by 2030 (or about $600 billion per year) to meet the growth in projected demand for new electricity and fuel sources worldwide, according to The International Energy Agency, an intergovernmental body focused on energy policy.[11] Also, it's not clear how the recent economic downturn will affect the trends and levels of investment into green tech. As the chart indicates below, the energy markets are expected to diversify and rise significantly as follows:

**SIZE OF THE OPPORTUNITY**

| | |
|---|---|
| $500 billion | Value of low-carbon energy markets by 2050 (Stern Report) |
| $100 billion | Demand for projects generating greenhouse gases (GHG) emissions credits by 2030 (United Nations) |

| | |
|---|---|
| $100 billion | Worldwide investment in clean energy by 2009 (New Energy Finance) |
| $18.6–$23.1 billion | Estimated solar industry revenues by 2010 (Solar Buzz) |
| $15 billion | Global fuel cell and distributed hydrogen market by 2015 (Climate Group) |
| $84 billion | Cumulative net savings from energy-efficient products in United States by 2012 (Climate Group) |

*Source:* Deutsche Bank, "Investing in Climate Change," October 2007.

The investment community is making it clear that there is an enormous emerging market in green tech or clean tech that will far surpass the peak investment levels of the dot-com era, and that green has moved from an interest of environmentalists to the mainstream, only now with life on our planet at stake.

## THE NEW ENVIRONMENTALISM

American consumers are more knowledgeable today about climate change, which is pressuring companies to adapt or lose out on this growing market trend. Rapid access to diverse information on the Internet has spurred this change, but there is also an increase in genuine concern about products on the part of the consumer. They will ask, "Where did this product come from?" "How was it made?" "How was it shipped?" "How will it be disposed of?" and so on. Ron Pernick of Clean Edge reflected that "We're no longer at the stage where people need to be introduced to these issues; we're at a stage where people are asking below-the-surface questions, devising innovative remedies, and creating new business plans to address some of the greatest challenges of our time: resource constraints, environmental degradation, energy security, and economic and job creation."[12]

A recent U.S. National Technology Readiness Survey (NTRS)[13] found that 71 percent of adults are interested in green technology. "About half of that is in transportation technologies, like hybrid vehicles, biofuels, and energy-saving vehicles—about $50 billion worth." Solar home heating comes in at the No. 2 spot in the survey, with a market potential of $20.6 billion. Other technologies that could get a piece of the potential action according to the survey are home automation systems for things like lighting, heating, ventilation, and air-conditioning, as well as solar water heaters, home water purification, high-efficiency cooling, high-efficiency heating, and energy-saving lightbulbs—"things that just support a green lifestyle."[14] To meet this demand, companies are increasing their budgets to accommodate consumer interest and demand for green products and sustainable companies. A study in 2007 by the Aberdeen Group demonstrates significant growth in retailers going green.[15] Moreover, 75 percent of enterprises have green-dedicated budgets that will remain the same or increase in the 2008–2009 time period and lists the six key focus areas for retailers indicated in the following chart:[16]

* Adopt enterprise-wide policies for green sourcing/procurement (59 percent)
* Institute eco-friendly mandates for waste management (54 percent)
* Institute eco-friendly mandates around packaging (48 percent)
* Redesign the retail supply chain to align with green/responsible mandates (41 percent)
* Offer eco-friendly end-of-life product programs to customers (41 percent)
* Redesign store facilities and infrastructure around sustainability goals (35 percent)

Companies are becoming more aware of a more demanding class of the socially minded customer and are increasing investments by an average of 22 percent to meet the new demand. These customers seek out information and share it with others virally via the Internet; they are more involved with issues and are less passive shoppers; they produce content themselves and want flexibility from suppliers of products and services.[17] At a recent conference for facilities managers, a vendor selling roofing tiles for a 30-year-old company told me how the company had redesigned its product to be less harmful to the environment. He described how they had to redefine what a roof is. This is fascinating, because if every company stopped to consider the definition and meaning of what it makes—a roof is an energy creator, a heat deflector, a garden, a protector from the elements, a rain collector, a beautiful design—our world would quickly become more sustainable. Think about what a car is. What is a building? We can redefine everything in terms of its function, purpose, design, and contribution to the web of life: Power companies will provide energy efficiency and low or zero carbon-emission energy sources (solar, wind, and geothermal power), rather than just cheap and reliable electricity. Instead of building inefficient structures, architects will design "living structures" that reuse water, that utilize significantly less energy or produce excess energy, and that are cleaner, brighter, and healthier. Garbage collectors will transform landfills as energy and fertilizer producers and sources of recycled and reused products instead of creating another landfill.

The roofing vendor said the business was thriving because of the CEO's foresight to see the trend toward sustainability four years earlier. According to IBM in its "Global CEO Study", the largest study of chief executives ever conducted, reveals that CEOs reported a surprising level of optimism about change as an opportunity to build new competitive advantage. Overall, "83 percent of surveyed CEOs expect substantial change in the future, an increase of 28 percent in just two years." The roofing company is now creating roofing materials that are not petroleum based and can be disposed of without harm to the environment. This new environmentalism is now dependent upon innovative, motivated entrepreneurs, green managers, consumers, and investors willing to see the financial opportunity and have a vision for a sustainable future. "The shift won't happen overnight; neither is it a fait accompli. Instead, it will take a concerted effort among enlightened policy makers, technologists, entrepreneurs, business titans, academics, financiers, citizens, and others over the next 10 to 20 years."[18]

The road before the global community to become more sustainable may not be clear, but the imperative to change and adapt in the face of challenging conditions is becoming clearer every day. Far-thinking entrepreneurs have the advantage of seeing these challenges as opportunities. Strategic planning in this evolving business climate transcends innovation and financial growth to include environmental stewardship and social equity. The next chapter discusses the first step toward thinking about the nature of this shift of thinking.