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# **THE SUSTAINABLE MBA**

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**A BUSINESS  
GUIDE TO  
SUSTAINABILITY**

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**S E C O N D E D I T I O N**



**CISELLE WEYBRECHT**

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**WILEY**

# The Sustainable MBA

*A Business Guide to  
Sustainability*

SECOND EDITION

**Giselle Weybrecht**

**WILEY**

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# Preface

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I'm excited to be writing this preface for the second edition of *The Sustainable MBA*. The past few years since the book first came out have been a whirlwind, and it has been really encouraging to see how well the book has been received.

Sustainability is such an exciting and constantly evolving field, and is an area that I have been involved in now for many years. I was active at a very young age in sustainable development on a local, national, and international level. Throughout my undergraduate studies and for many years after, I worked within the United Nations system on sustainability issues. In 2002, when attending the World Summit on Sustainable Development in South Africa, I was introduced to a range of projects that the business sector was starting to carry out around this topic and remember thinking how effective it would be if we could combine their expertise, knowledge, reach, and budget with our work. The challenge was that we just didn't speak the same language. They had PowerPoint presentations and we had flipcharts.

So in 2005, much to the surprise of many of my colleagues who believed that the business sector was responsible for a lot of the problems we were trying to solve – and that the MBA was where these business leaders were being trained to do just that – I left Paris for London to pursue an MBA at the London Business School. I wanted to learn the language and see how to connect these different worlds in order to really move us forward in this field.

When I started the MBA I found that students were interested in sustainability, but didn't know how to balance that interest with their career plans. Many believed it was a choice they had to make,

you either go into business or you go into something more ‘meaningful’ for society, like an NGO or a charity. At the time, and unfortunately to this day, I am surprised at how little these issues are brought up in classes, and when they are they aren’t being brought up in a way that is useful or relevant to the majority of students (although this is slowly changing and there are some champions doing great work in universities around the world). This doesn’t just relate to the MBA, but equally to other disciplines as well as organized company training programs.

This is when I thought, imagine the impact we could have if all the students graduating from business and other programs around the world were not just learning what sustainability is but also how to put it into practice in any job or organization in a way that benefits not just the environment and society but, and perhaps more importantly, the business itself. These graduates – whether they are from business or other disciplines such as law, politics, architecture, etc. – find their way into virtually every type of organization, from business to NGOs to government. Imagine the impact they could have if they were equipped with the skills and knowledge to make sustainability a reality in all of those organizations. We would then, and relatively quickly, start seeing a change in organizations from the bottom up. This is when I started to get interested in the untapped potential of graduates and employees in making sustainability a reality.

During the second year of my MBA I decided to explore further the role sustainability had in business, but more importantly how to equip individuals with the skills to understand and fulfill that role. I looked at the curriculum and found that in order to really reach all students and not just the ones who were interested, the information needed to be embedded and stand alongside the material already being taught. So I started a booklet that could be made available to students and alumni about sustainability. It would be organized according to the different classes taught in the MBA, so that students could easily follow it and use it as part of their courses. The

idea was so well received that I started exploring how to scale up the idea. Rosemary at John Wiley & Sons believed in the project and provided the opportunity to turn the booklet into a book. So, post-graduation I set off to interview over 150 CEOs, business leaders, sustainability experts, and academics from around the world to make a resource for readers that was as relevant and useful as possible.

I put my heart and soul into the first edition of the book and was thrilled to see how well it was received. I wanted to create a tool that could be used not just to raise the level of awareness and understanding of sustainability, but also to provide guidance on how to make it part of any business or any job. The book is aimed at a wide audience: entrepreneurs looking to develop a new business idea, employees interested in seeing how this could be part of their job or organization, managers wanting to explore how it could help push their business forward, CEOs and upper management looking to understand what this all means, consumers who want to make more sustainable choices on a daily basis, and individuals who just want to understand what is happening in sustainability and business. There are also hundreds of faculty members who use the book to inspire changes in the way they teach their business classes and even more students who use it as core reading. Businesses around the world are using it to inspire and educate their employees to make sustainability a part of their job.

We – as individuals, as groups – have a lot more power than people think. At the end of the day businesses are made up of people just like us, who make decisions on a daily basis that affect the world we live in. The decision to change a supplier, to give your team members time to explore these issues, can have a huge impact. Our choices as a consumer send messages to companies about what we are and are not willing to buy and support. To make a difference you do not have to quit your job and volunteer with a not for profit. The biggest influence we can have is by changing the businesses and organizations we work for from the inside out.

We need to take sustainability out of specialized departments and make it part of everyone's job.

So here is the second edition. It contains quite a few updates, new resources, and trends as well as some new sections on topics that are becoming increasingly important in the field of sustainability and business. I have also developed a range of additional resources on my website ([www.thesustainablemba.com](http://www.thesustainablemba.com)) that may help with your journey.

I hope that this book will inspire and give readers ideas on how they can get further engaged in sustainability, and that it will help to develop a whole new generation of business leaders who speak the language of sustainability and are ready to really move things forward in remarkable new ways.

# Acknowledgments

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Between the first and second editions I have interviewed over 150 CEOs, business leaders, sustainability experts, authors, NGOs, international organizations, academics, and students from around the world. So many people have been engaged and supportive of this project, too many to list here. I apologize in advance for those names I will inevitably miss. Thank you to the following people for agreeing to be interviewed, for reading through drafts, for sharing your passion for these issues, and for providing various bits of inspiration: Roger Adams at ACCA, Stathis Gould at IFAC, Neil Earnshaw at Enviroman, Chris Tuppen at Fronesis, Rob Gray at CSEAR, Rachel Bird and Ilana Tabu at ICAEW, Michelle Molnar at David Suzuki Foundation, Anthony Pullin at Midcounties Co-operatives and the International Year for Cooperatives, James Gifford from UNPRI, Parvez Ahmed at the University of North Florida, Mark Hoffman at KPMG, Robyn Tomiko Tsukayama at the Harvard Office of Sustainability, Andrew Williams at Eighteen Rabbit, Nancy Furlow at Marymount University, Mary Gentile at Babson, Emily Horgan at CAO, Wim Vanderkerckhove at the University of Greenwich, Vincent Tophoff at IFAC, Phillippa White at TIE, Victoria Brooks, Lisa Calvano at West Chester University, Kofo Adeleke, Leticia Greyling, Rhodes Business School, Samantha Putt del Pino and Eliot Metzger, World Resource Institute, Scott Houston, independent consultant, Claire Thwaites at the Gordon Institute of Business Science, Kevin Roberts, Richard Hytner, Jane Kendall, Roger Kennedy and Fleur Diston at Saatchi and Saatchi, Sean Ansett at At Stake Advisors, Anders Aspling at GRLI, Roger Bancroft at GreenEarth Cleaning, Shima Barakat and Shai Vyakarnam at the University of Cambridge, Leeora Black and

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This book is dedicated to my grandparents (the dedication is written in Spanish): To my grandparents Elena and Antonio Paulino, for their lives full of enthusiasm, joy and generosity to others.

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