We live in a time of unprecedented change.

In business we face challenges and opportunities that are more critical and complex than ever - where the consequences of failure are unimaginable, and the impact of our decisions are felt instantly across the planet.

A fragile economy and a climate out of control, poverty across half the planet and scarcity of natural resources, the extinction of species a explosion in population, ethical dilemmas on every corner, and low confidence and trust in business: symptoms of a changing world.

Change is all around us. The cries for help at the end of an industrial age, the shift in power towards the developing world, from big to small, masses to niches, and the recognition that we can only sustain our livelihoods with new thinking, new behaviours, and new balances.

We know that the old short-term, sales and wealth-obsessed models of business are broken, and we are now beginning to feel the consequences. We struggle to balance our priorities and ambitions - the pursuit of personal and business success, whilst also seeking to make the world a better place. Is it possible to do both?
These are challenging times to lead and manage a business, even more difficult to create and sustain profitable growth.

Rethink

Social and environmental issues are more important than ever. For business, they represent some of the greatest opportunities to find new markets of profitable growth, more lasting and engaging sources of competitive advantage, and more effective ways to reduce cost and risk.

Consumers no longer feel conflicted by the issues, but committed to supporting change. Doing good is no longer about sack cloth and frugality, it can feel and taste good too. We realise that it is no longer a nice to have, but a must do. We realise that it is no longer a peripheral activity but fundamental to every aspect of how we do business, every day, for everyone.

*People, Planet, Profit* is about business opportunity, operational improvement and competitive advantage. It is a practical handbook for CEOs and business managers who are searching for new ways to create value, to make sense of business in a rapidly shifting landscape, to deliver profitable growth whilst also doing “the right thing”. It is about

- *Profitable growth*. Finding new ways to sustain growth in a world that is changing rapidly, and can seem threatening and uncertain.

- *Innovation*. Positively connecting capitalism and environmentalism, realigning issues and incentives, and making business a force for good.

- *Competitive Advantage*. Putting social and environmental impacts at the heart of your business, the basis of more engaging differentiation.

- *Leadership*. Inspiring business to be the creators of this new world - to rethink, reframe and reinvent your business for a better future.

This is not really a book about sustainability in itself, about the world’s problems, or about “being green”. The last thing business needs is another dysfunctional strategy, more complex initiatives, and distraction. Social and environmental issues should be at the core of a business strategy, leveraged as the best sources of improving efficiency and driving innovation, working with partners in new ways whilst also finding a more lasting difference, and a better way to engage people.

*People, Planet, Profit* is about inspiring leadership, more radical innovation and sustaining performance in the new business world.

Can business growth be good?

Of course the world faces immense problems, so great that few organisations have the power or scale to solve them.

Business is unique in this sense. Through engaging brands and thoughtful innovation it can mobilise consumers to change behaviour in positive ways. By adapting the resources
it uses, and the ways it works, it can make huge difference to the environment. It can be a powerful force of positive change.

There is no paradox or conflict, as some suggest. Business really can grow and be good.

People, planet and profit are not alternative goals, or a compromise result. A positive impact on people and planet can be achieved whilst delivering profitable growth too.

Indeed, a positive impact on people and planet is increasingly becoming the best source of profitable growth.

Despite a rapidly increasing global population and carbon emissions that threaten the air we breathe – it is possible to continue to grow economically, and replenish the resources we use. Of course it is likely to be a different sort of growth. It will be less about volume, more about profit; less materialistic production and more about supportive services, less self indulgent and more enabling people to live better lives.

Whilst the importance of social and environmental issues might seem obvious, they are not always seen as key to business success. Indeed, waves of restrictive legislation and anti-capitalist lobbying can put them in conflict. This is because we haven’t seen the connections.

However, as Ben Clarke from Kraft Foods says “Sustainability is now about profit ... it is the opportunity of the twenty-first century.”

1950s-60s Awakening
- Industrial growth delivers wealth and expectation.
- Western markets thrive whilst the East recovers more slowly.
- Migration to cities accelerated by travel and employment.
- Flower power hippies raise social and environment priorities.

1970s-80s Regulating
- Economic growth with increased consumerism and international trade.
- Product innovation supported by low-cost automated production
- Improved lifestyles, human and equal rights lead to new practices
- Government regulation on pollution and waste through taxation

1990s-00s Contributing
- Multinational brands serve more diverse, informed, and conscious customers.
- Digital innovation, creates virtual businesses, faster and more connected.
- Corporate governance improves the ethical and social behaviour of business
- Recycling, sustainable sourcing and disposal adopted as standard

2010+ Transforming
- Global markets, with instant connectivity, global trends and rising “base of the pyramid”
- Sustainable innovation puts social and environmental issues at core of business.
- Collaborative organisations and networked communities for new business models.
- Sustainable markets are most profitable, as “doing good” becomes the best way to grow.
**Sustainable agenda:** how social and environmental issues have moved from the organisation fringes to core business.

The business case for “people and planet and profit” is based on both the profitable new opportunities of sustainable markets – embracing these issues within existing markets, and investing in new marketspaces such as renewable energies - and also on the significant cost and risks likely to be incurred by unsustainable practices in future.

These growth opportunities are rapidly being embraced, the gold rush is on. Venture capitalists and entrepreneurs are now firmly focused on sustainable markets. Similarly the costs and risks are already hitting balance sheets. Investors are penalising “dirty” companies for their vulnerable future cashflows, and finance managers are calculating their liabilities.

The consequences of not changing are not just for the world we leave behind for our children, but more immediately through the liabilities of increasing financial penalties imposed by governments (for example, taxation on transport and industrial emissions), by supply chains, and ultimately by consumers (for example, the prohibitive cost of insurance in areas vulnerable to extreme weather).

Sustainability is no longer an adjunct to business. It is no longer a separate department, or even a team within the corporate affairs department concerned only about compliance and reputation. It is no longer enough to have some worthy goals, a sustainability strategy as an appendix to the business plan, or a sustainability report as an afterthought.

CSR (corporate social responsibility) strategies were typically peripheral compensation for the damages already done, relieving the guilt of companies that couldn’t see the light. They were the clean caring icing on the big dirty cake. They sought to protect superficial and increasingly fragile reputations.

“People and planet and profit” is much more than that. It is about moving the issues of sustainability from the fringes to the heart of business. It demands that business leaders rethink fundamental strategic questions – why we exist, where we should focus, how we are different, and why people will choose it, want to work for us, and invest in our business.

**People and Planet**

The social and environmental challenges are known and numerous. But by rethinking they also represent some of the best opportunities for business.

Consider just some of them.

As the global population mushrooms towards 9 million, cities like Beijing, Los Angeles and Mumbai will triple in size.

Whilst the global “middle class” is the fastest growing section of society, with its high aspirations and higher consumption, a billion people survive on less than $1 a day, 3 billion on less than $2 a day.

3 billion people have no access to clean water, 800 million are hungry, and 10 million children die before they are five.
Yet the “bottom of the pyramid” have dreams too, they seek better lives and demand more. Together, they represent an estimated $5 trillion market.

World changing: 250 years of population, economic and consumption growth, and the impacts on our environment (sources: WEF, WWF, New Scientist).

Add to this, the environmental challenges. Every ear we destroy 44 million acres of forest, creating an increasing imbalance in the way nature produces and absorbs carbon dioxide. We lose 100 million acres of farmland, cutting down trees, diverting natural irrigation, and creating 15 million acres of new desert around the world. We emit 8 billion tonnes of carbon into our atmosphere, only 3 billion tonnes of which can be reabsorbed. We use 160 billion tons more water each year than is being replenished by rain, enough to require a 450,000 km convoy of trucks.

As a result of this damage 200 million people will become refugees due to flooding and drought if the climate warms by 2-3 degrees by 2050. Or financially, insurance claims will increase by $320 billion due to storms and floods, if carbon emissions continue to rise at present rates – making insurance premiums too expensive for most individuals or companies. The deforestation will reduce crop yields across Africa by 33%, adding to the hunger. And a 5m rise in sea levels, caused by melting polar ice caps, will wipe out many coastal areas, with consequences including a predicted 11% decline in China’s GDP.

“In a world where the ideology of free enterprise has no real challenges, why have free markets failed so many people?” questions Noble prize-winning economist Muhammad
Yunus, arguing that “Instead they exacerbate poverty, disease, pollution, corruption, crime and inequality”.

Challenges and Opportunity

The challenges are complex and connected. Whilst we seek to reverse climate change, conserve water and relieve poverty, we also care about issues such as human rights, fair trade and supporting our local communities. Whilst we seek to act more ethically and responsibly, we also care about our own wellbeing and happiness.

People and planet and profit: Economic growth is only sustainable if business activities are integrated with social and environmental priorities (source: GeniusWorks).

Green is not enough. It requires a more joined-up approach. It requires business to do more than improve, but to think differently, to change its game.

Maybe blue is a better colour.

The new business world demands “blue sky” thinking, ideas that open up new “blue oceans” of opportunity, and redraw the blueprints for business practice.
It is not just about “reducing, recycling and reusing”, as the mantra goes. It is about rethinking.

Climate change is most effectively addressed by rethinking and redefining the resources we use, rather than seeking to limit the damage by belatedly planting a few more trees. Similarly, in business it is not about product enhancements and campaigns that jump on the bandwagon. People quickly see through the greenwash, demanding real transparency in return for trust.

Business needs to address its economic, social and environmental challenges holistically, and to understand how they can combine as positive forces in creating a better world.

“They and planet and profit” is a more connected approach to business. It demands systems thinking, seeing the bigger picture of why and how we work. It will require us to reject many of the conventions and conveniences of business that created past success - taking new perspectives, finding new solutions, and even finding new measures of performance.

It requires us to reconnect with consumers who have lost faith, suppliers who feel beaten up, and sometimes even with competitors where together we can have more impact.

**Inspired Leaders**

It demands the vision and courage of business leaders, and every manager across the organisation, to release business from the shadows of a failing world, to realise a new spirit of entrepreneurship and innovation through which we and others can prosper.

Crisis is the prelude to change. Whilst some see change as a threat, others seize the new opportunities. If we look to the East, perhaps to learn a new language as well as find new markets, we would find that the same character in Chinese script represents both ideas, threat and opportunity.

Welcome to the dawn of a new business world.

It’s time to think and act differently.

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Peter Fisk is a global thought leader in strategy, innovation and marketing. Starting his career as a nuclear physicist, he went on to work for and with many of the world’s leading brands – from Concorde to Coca Cola, Red Bull and Santander, Virgin and Vodafone. He is founder and CEO of GeniusWorks, the London-based strategy and innovation consulting firm, and visiting professor at IE Business School in Madrid. He has authored 7 books including “Marketing Genius” which has been translated into 35 languages, and is included in the Thinkers 50 Guru Radar of the best business thinkers. He is an inspiring keynote speaker, highly experienced facilitator and practical coach. Find out more at www.theGeniusWorks.com

His new book “Gamechangers: Creating Innovative Strategies for Business and Brands” explores the world’s 100 most disruptive innovators, and then interprets 10 paradigms for success in today’s business world. From enlightened vision to finding new markets, bolder brands and innovative business models, new customer agendas and enabling experiences, realtime marketing and social movements, inspiring leadership to deliver more profitable growth. It includes 16 practical one page canvases, workshops and executive programs. Explore more about the book at www.Gamechangers.pro