Hello friends:

Sailing seems the perfect metaphor for everything from leadership to direction to aspiration. Although not a sailor myself, I'm drawn to the richly visual nautical terms that so aptly capture the sustainability journey for many companies: navigating stormy waters, charting the course, raising and trimming the sails, and many more. As the winds of change continue to bluster, leading companies are reimagining their sustainability ambitions and strategies, and in so doing, creating powerful visions for the future.

I'm buoyed by the robust efforts of these businesses to tackle today's unsustainable global concerns – resource constraints, the unpredictable forces of climate change, rising income inequality and more. But, there are still too many companies setting sail poorly prepared for this dynamic environment. They merely tinker with their business models and strategies, instead of disrupting them. They're adrift with a narrow focus on today, rather than on setting a course to be a truly sustainable company in the future.

To stay relevant and thrive, while contributing to a strong sustainable society, they must take action – now!

In this spring newsletter, I share exciting visioning work I've been doing with some remarkable clients. They are articulating bold sustainability visions that are transformational in ambition and influence. These organizations are truly creating the future!

Wherever you are on your sustainability journey, you'll find something here to help you navigate the ripples or sea changes ahead – including tips, tools, trends and trailblazers.

Read about progress in the arenas of the social purpose company, the circular economy, the influential role of industry associations and the role of boards to steward the company towards a sustainable future. Anchors aweigh!

Progressive companies anchor aspirations with a compelling vision

I recently conducted ground-breaking research for a client on the "New Sustainability Vision" of leading companies. Through the research, we wanted to really understand the nature of vision statements adopted by companies with best sustainability practices. More practically, we wanted to find out what steps these companies are taking in their shift to a sustainable and compelling future focus.

In a nutshell, leading companies create a "vision story" where they:

- identify the long-term sustainability mega-forces that will affect their business, customers, suppliers and operating environment over the next 5 – 10 years;
- determine how their company can adapt to and influence these sustainability forces in a positive way; and
- set a long-term sustainability quest that benefits the company, its customers and the broader society.

For society and business to chart a sustainable course, businesses must pivot their sustainability models this way. Please download the full report here. For more on this topic, here's a GreenBiz article I wrote (which, I'm told, has received a lot of interest from North American readers).

And consider attending this upcoming Conference Board of Canada webinar on the topic of setting long-term sustainability visions. I'll have good company as Dow and Lafarge will describe their visionary approaches and lessons learned. Thursday June 22, 2 – 3 pm ET. (For a 50% discount contact publications@conferenceboard.ca and quote CORO.)

CSR Jobs - 2.0 is the way to go

CSR and sustainability roles are similarly evolving to enable their organizations to transition to sustainable business models and operating contexts. A number of my clients have transitioned from an internal operating focus to a more strategic and external facing orientation. Some have even seen their sustainability departments evolve from "doing the work" to supporting others to do the work. I call these positive and inevitable trends "Next Generation CSR Jobs."

Here is a short primer I developed for The Conference Board of Canada on the topic. Check it out to see whether your job description or department's mandate could use a 2.0 reboot!

The Social Purpose Company: A trend that's here to stay

I am thrilled to support businesses on their journey to becoming Social Purpose Companies. The trend towards adopting a bold, visionary purpose beyond profit – one that contributes to the betterment of society – continues unabated. Given Millennial workforce and consumer demands, I anticipate more companies will choose this route in future.

The United Way in Greater Vancouver understands this shift. They are exploring the establishment of a capacity-building institute to support corporate donors in evolving from philanthropic models to a holistic "for-purpose" business model. I've been providing training and materials and would be happy to share this story. Please get in touch.

If you're considering joining this change journey, start by checking out the briefing paper I created for The Conference Board of Canada's Corporate Responsibility and Sustainability Institute and the article I wrote for Sustainable Brands. I also moderated a webinar on the Social Purpose Company. (It is available for viewing in the Conference Board's webinar library. For a 50% discount, contact publications@conferenceboard.ca and quote CORO.)

For those who want a deeper dive, I encourage you to attend the upcoming Sustainable Brands '17 Detroit conference - May 22-25. It's a dynamic forum for 2,000+ brand, sustainability and design leaders to find inspiration, tools and partnerships to drive business success and positive impact. www.SB17Detroit.com. (To access a 20% discount register with this code: NWCoroSB17det.)

Beyond visioning: Becoming low-carbon, circular and inclusive

Companies need to set long-term sustainability visions, develop a social purpose – and then move on to the work of becoming low-carbon, circular and inclusive. Some tools to help you with these ambitions:

Low-Carbon

Transformational Climate Leadership strategies: Play your part to help business and society transition to a low-carbon economy. Here is a short guide on the essential steps. I advised on this Conference Board of Canada primer, which is based on the Qualities of a Transformational Company.

Circular

The road to becoming a circular company is still being paved but the circular economy is inevitable. Now is a good time to conduct some R&D to determine how it will affect your business, suppliers, customers or industry. In preparation, check out this case study I wrote on HP's circular route; it may help your organization to identify ways it can pivot to become a circular business, too.

Inclusive

I'm giving a talk at the upcoming BC Public Sector Pension Conference on the nature and imperative of social sustainability for institutional investors. Here is a list of the social issues which socially responsible investment funds have on their radar, for those who are interested in the investor perspective on this topic.

Sustainable sectors: Industry associations

I'm sure you'll agree that not only do companies need to become sustainable, but so do their sectors. That is why I remain focused on the role of the industry association to support its members to become sustainable. I have upgraded my industry association benchmark tool to help associations with this effort. If you know anyone who works at an industry association, please share with them.

Sustainable boards and Corporate Secretaries: Chief stewards

A continued focus of mine is the role of the Board of Directors and Corporate Secretary to steward the company toward a sustainable future. My long-time client, The Co-operators, won the first-ever award for Sustainability Governance from the Governance Professionals of Canada. For the scoop on their winning approach, read this case study.

And if you're keen to delve further into the role of the board and the many ways a governance professional can support them, contact me: I can refer you to a recent webinar I conducted for the Governance Professionals of Canada on this topic.

Finally, I'll be speaking on Sustainability Governance at the Responsible Investment Association Annual Conference, June 1 – 2 in Vancouver. If you'd like to join me, I can pass on a 20% discount. Email me for information.

Thanks for reading, sharing and being part of a force for good.

Coro

Strandberg CONSULTING

Coro Strandberg
6336 Burns St.
Burnaby, BC
V5E 1T2
604.433.7339
Email Coro