Principle for Responsible Management Education #3: our learning experiences create responsible leaders

Case study: Entrepreneurship, start-up
When they graduated from business school, idealists Sébastien Kopp and François Ghislain Morillion launched an NGO to help big corporations adopt more ecological business practices. And as sometimes happens, their research led to something unexpected. It triggered what screenwriters call a plot point, an event that changes the direction of the hero’s life. For Kopp and Morillion, the running shoes they saw during a business trip to Brazil transformed them from consultants to entrepreneurs. These are the coolest sustainable sneakers we’ve ever seen is in the January 2016 edition of Wired.

Case study: Supply chain, established business, animal rights, collaborative voluntary standards
Three years ago, The North Face combined forces with Textile Exchange and Control Union Certifications to create the Responsible Down Standard (RDS). They analyzed and certified every step of the supply chain to ensure a comprehensive, global, third-party certified animal welfare and traceability standard for down and feathers. Down comes from geese and ducks that are grown for the food industry and even with all the techno-textiles available, it’s still one of the highest quality, best performing materials for clothes and cozy bedding. The RDS ensures that down and feathers come from ducks and geese that have been treated well on farms that allow them to live healthy lives and express innate behaviors, free from pain, fear or distress. The standard follows the chain of custody from farm to product, so consumers can be confident that the down and feathers in the products they choose are truly RDS. “We firmly believe that by driving positive change across the global supply chain, the RDS will benefit the industry at large,” said Adam Mott, The North Face’s Director of Sustainability.

Break out the bubbly
Even Queen Elizabeth II is serving English wine! The industry produced more than six million bottles, two-thirds of them sparkling, in 2014 and at the rate it’s growing that should reach 12 million bottles by 2020, according to How English wine went from a joke to sales of 6m bottles a year in The Guardian. The benefits in the UK are boosts to local businesses and rural economies; globally, the good news is the smaller transportation footprint. “The greatest climate impact from the wine supply chain comes from transportation,” according to Red, White and “Green”: the cost of carbon in the global wine trade, a working paper for the American Association of Wine Economists by NYU’s Tyler Colman and Pablo Päster of Sustainable Solutions Group, URS Corporation. It’s a quite astonishingly detailed analysis of the wine industry, from where good grapes can now be grown thanks to climate change to the age of the Limousin oak trees from which the best barrels are made. There are statistics and charts for those who love such things, and generally a plethora of cool info. Salut!

Business case: fresh thinking
Don’t bother asking “What’s the business case for sustainability?” That’s old thinking. Entrepreneurs no longer have to prove there’s a money motive for adding sustainability to their product lines or operations decisions. Meet the nine billion-dollar companies turning a profit from sustainability in The Guardian on January 2, 2016. These firms generate a billion dollars or more in annual revenue from products or services that have sustainability or social good at their core. The so-called green giants–Tesla, Chipotle, IKEA, Unilever, Nike, Toyota, Brazilian beauty company Natura, Whole Foods and GE’s Ecomagination–manufacture products that range from burritos to beauty cream, sports shoes to sports cars. They do what used to be thought impossible: they’ve made sustainability itself profitable.

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