

Environmental sustainability vital for all businesses

LEAH SCHULZ AND MEGHAN WHIRLEY 4:33 p.m. EDT April 8, 2015



What is sustainability? Traditionally it is leaving the world a better place for the next generation rather than a worse one. We see it as a paradigm shift, not a cliché or green-washed statement. It's about supporting and integrating your community's strengths and needs into your business and vice versa.

It's about investing in the future and development of your employees. It's about looking beyond the walls of your business and into your supply chain, along with examining each aspect of operations. It's about changing the way you quantify and measure your success. Sustainability is embedded in each aspect of business.

Sustainability is not a niche specialization — it is a necessity to enhance a company's success and plays an integral role in community development. Sustainable practices transcend all industries and departments and affect us on both a professional and personal level.

The two of us, along with the 18 other values-driven individuals enrolled in The University of Vermont's inaugural Sustainable Entrepreneurship Masters of Business Administration (SEMBA) class, understand that we need to divorce previously mainstream ideologies and inspire innovative changes through the adoption of an entrepreneurial mindset.

More than 200 years of varied work experience amongst the students fuel lively and dynamic conversations in the SEMBA classroom. We are becoming pragmatic problem solvers. Together with world-class professors, experienced professionals, and engagement with both local and global entrepreneurs, we address major resource limitations and global crises facing our world today.

We are prepared to face skepticism regarding the value of sustainable business practices. In these situations the true value of our SEMBA education is apparent. SEMBA has offered each of us a knowledge network; an opportunity to seek support, ideas, and resources. Along with our classmates and the community, this network extends to leaders from our Council of Mentors and entrepreneurs we've been introduced to throughout the year.

Acknowledging that learning does not only occur in a classroom, we are immersed in corporations across the globe and charged with creating innovative business solutions. Both of us are focusing on waste reduction, resource utilization, and necessary infrastructure development; Leah in China and Meghan in Massachusetts.

With graduation on the horizon, our excitement to further apply our unique skillsets and create an impact is palpable. Motivated to drive change and bring a fresh perspective in embracing collaboration, we will be transformational leaders.

Successful companies of tomorrow are embedding sustainability into their business practices today. We ask you to reflect upon what sustainability means to you and how our businesses and communities would be enhanced with these values championed.

The authors are enrolled in the University of Vermont's inaugural Sustainable Entrepreneurship Masters of Business Administration. Contact Leah Schulz at leah.schulz@uvm.edu (<mailto:leah.schulz@uvm.edu>) and Meghan Whirley at meghan.whirley@uvm.edu (<mailto:meghan.whirley@uvm.edu>).

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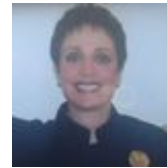


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