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CHIEF SUSTAINABILITY OFFICERS AT WORK

How CSOs Build Successful Sustainability and ESG Strategies

Chrissa Pagitsas

Apress Media (356 pp.)

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BOOK REVIEW

In this business book, a thought leader focuses on the wide-ranging mission of today's chief sustainability officers.

The title CSO may conjure a variety of associations, from reduction of carbon emissions to conservation of forests. But over the course of 24 illuminating interviews, Pagitsas demonstrates that the goals of CSOs are much broader. CSOs work within the framework of their companies' values and resources, integrating sustainability within current business strategies. To this end, the author outlines key themes that define the operations of a great CSO, from catalyzing processes and systems modifications to integrating products and investing in patience to support lasting change. To breathe life into these principles, Pagitsas profiles leaders who exemplify the characteristics of a modern CSO as well as the principles of sustainability and "environmental, social, and governance (ESG)" leadership. These executives include cutting-edge decision-makers such as Beatriz "Bea" Perez (Coca-Cola), Kara Hurst (Amazon), and James Gowen (Verizon). These profiles reveal that sustainability is more than environmentalism: It's a holistic process focused on collective responsibility and long-term thinking. Far from being a "feel good" initiative, this paradigm increases the financial viability of businesses, mitigates risk, and improves the consumer experience. Easy to read and deeply informative, the book offers a glimpse into the day-to-day work involved in social and environmental transformations. Though the volume will intrigue anyone hoping to learn about sustainability initiatives and corporate responsibility, it will be of special interest to business professionals looking to integrate green thinking into their company cultures and strategic plans. Challenging common assumptions that sustainability programs are cost-prohibitive, Pagitsas draws on the experiences of corporate leaders to show that ESG initiatives answer the calls of contemporary consumers and empower businesses to succeed in shifting the socio-economic landscape.

An illuminating exploration of the key strategies of CSOs.

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