

PREFACE

This book aims to provide practitioners, academics, and students with a hands-on, yet theoretically based, introduction to corporate responsibility and responsible enterprise. Since the mid-1990s there has been a virtual explosion of interest in the issue of responsible enterprise, often labeled corporate responsibility. We adopt the term *responsible enterprise* to reflect the reality that responsibility practices go far beyond large multinational corporations; they are being implemented in small and medium-sized business enterprises, as well as in other newly emerging types of enterprises. Increasing attention to issues related to climate change and sustainability has only heightened the understanding of business's interdependence with the rest of society, its stakeholders, and the natural environment. In light of these major challenges, the goal of this book is to help those leading and studying responsible companies to understand the complex dilemmas that leaders face and the multiple perspectives embedded in every decision. The book also seeks to build awareness of the implications of managerial decisions for everyone they affect—the stakeholders and the natural environment with its manifold living beings.

In many respects the book reaches beyond the traditional literature on responsible enterprise. In discussing firms' social and environmental responsibilities, we rely on insights from other fields within the management domain (e.g., strategic management, human resource management, and organizational behavior) and on other academic disciplines (e.g., political science, philosophy, psychology, and sociology). The resulting reflections paint a picture of corporate responsibility that shows the field's embeddedness in other discourses, demonstrates its breadth, and, we hope, suggests its depth.

This book adopts a more personal tone than many other books on the subject. We do not want to provide yet another introduction to corporate responsibility/responsible enterprise without paying sufficient attention to the personal values and visions underlying the management of social and environmental issues. For us, managing a firm's responsibility is as much a personal journey as it is a management task. We hope that the discussions in this book reflect these more personal aspects and inspire readers to strive for change in companies and in themselves.

Let us be clear about two things. First, we do not believe that companies that start to address corporate responsibility will turn into paragons of virtue. Like human beings, every company makes mistakes. But responsible firms must be willing to deal with these mistakes and learn from them. Second, although we highlight the business case for responsible enterprise, we do not think that all corporate responsibility efforts will automatically create win-win situations. The existence of a business case for corporate responsibility depends a lot on what issues are addressed by whom and in what context.

Finally, we hope that readers will have as much fun reading the book as we had writing it!

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