

# PERSONAL SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

by Will Marré

*Want to see big changes in the world?*

*Start with small changes in your own life.*

Nearly every day I speak, teach or write about corporate social responsibility (CSR). It is leadership's burning issue of the 21st century. That's because consumers and employees are demanding more from business than ever before.

A recent McKinsey and Company survey revealed that over 80 percent of today's consumers expect business leaders to actively contribute to the common good of society. The old notion that businesses can simply contribute to local charities to put a shine on their reputation is quickly passing. Increasingly, society is demanding that our core business strategies be redesigned to directly benefit humanity.

You see, CSR is only the first, "baby" step — a kind of "minimize environmental harm" and "sprinkle some good" ethic. But recent economic events are challenging leaders to pursue a much bigger vision. Specifically, leaders are being asked to create high-growth, profitable strategies by solving the very real problems that threaten our future. To make money by saving the world.

## **BEING SOCIALLY STRATEGIC**

I am constantly advocating a new model of leadership that is more than socially responsible; it's socially strategic. It seeks more than doing no harm. It seeks to heal, to restore, to create a robust world that offers future generations the greatest chance for an enriching life. And anyone can join in, wherever they are. Any job, any business and nonprofit, any government agency can all transform their strategies to create the Greatest Total Value with zero waste. Most of all, anyone can make an impact that matters.

For instance, today I am helping design a student video game teaching financial literacy and life-choice consequences for a group of banks that want to help their depositors' children make better choices. This isn't by chance. Consumer research is quite clear on what people want from their financial institution. Consumers want relational instead of transactional banking. They want to feel they have an advocate in their quest for financial autonomy. Consumers want their banks and credit unions to

invest in their communities. They want to know their deposits are helping the local businessperson create new jobs. Most important, they want a trusted advocate.

All of us are looking for institutions we can personally trust to be advocates for ourselves, our community, our country. Those leaders who step up to this call are the leaders of the future.

But this call to reinvent our future goes much deeper than business leadership. It touches all of us. Citizens of the 21st century are seeking to lead their lives, their communities, and their enterprises in a way that improves their standard of life, while nurturing environmental vitality and bringing dignity and opportunity to every human being.

## **ALL GLOBAL CHANGE STARTS LOCALLY**

The final frontier is personal social responsibility. Living sustainably starts with just being reflective about our choices. Everything we buy, where we buy it, who we buy it from, is a living vote. And we're either voting for a sustainable future for our children and ourselves, or we're not.

Everything counts. Every decision. What we watch. What we support. What we pay attention to. The foundation for the future we most desire starts with our willingness to be personally responsible. Responsible for our own lives, our own future, the quality of our relationships, and the moral culture of our circle of influence. This is not the time to throw up our hands, nor to exhaust ourselves blaming others for our problems. It is time to choose our lives. In so doing, we'll have a rippling impact that will make all the difference.

I hope you can see what I'm trying to get at. These are simply reminders that for every big overwhelming problem in the world, there is a version of it in our lives. If we focus on what we can control, our own lives will bloom and our influence will spread.

So right now, what huge world problem is most disturbing to you? How does a version of that show up in your life? How's the ecology of your relationships, the sustainability of your lifestyle, the humanity of your judgments? More than ever, I believe that when we change our own personal worlds, the big world changes accordingly.



## PERSONAL CHOICES FOR THE PUBLIC GOOD

*If you are sick of foreign wars, make peace with your personal enemies.*

*If you are concerned with our nation's debt, save your own money.*

*If you are sickened by materialism, buy only what you really value.*

*If you are worried about the environment, recycle. Plant trees. Grow something.*

*If you are angry with our leaders, propose and post real solutions.*

*If you are worried about health care costs, eat right, exercise and sleep.*

*If you are worried about terrorists, put some boundaries between yourself and those who treat you improperly.*

*Will Marré is an acclaimed speaker and co-founder and former president of the Covey Leadership Center, where he translated the concepts of The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People into leadership courses taught to millions of executives worldwide. He is currently CEO of the ReaLeadership Alliance, which helps organizations identify, adopt and communicate socially strategic business models for optimizing differentiation and value.*

*Marré recently received an Emmy Award for his writing of the documentary, Reclaiming Your American Dream, aired on public television stations across the country. He is currently launching CitizenOne, an educational campaign designed to teach social entrepreneurship to high school and college students.*

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