

Responsible

Capitalism

**Conversation with Horst M. Rechelbacher,
founder of Intelligent Nutrients**

By Karen Kim

However you define CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility), and whether you agree with the financial arguments in favor of it, as a cultural phenomenon the idea is here to stay. The intersection of business and society has always produced innovation that matters to the company and the world. Ideally, corporate citizenship reflects both brand and values by addressing some of society's most complex problems with game-changing business.

When business is booming and the bottom line comfortable, corporate responsibility seems an achievable goal. But in difficult times, "responsibility" and "accountability" are much trickier terms to define and employ. With that in mind, Responsible Capitalism celebrates the achievements of those who are more interested in the social consequences of their business transactions than they are in the pursuit of multi-million dollar payouts.

This series features enlightening conversations with corporate leaders who are dedicated to producing sustainable products through strategic initiatives. Over the years, we have interviewed many innovators such as Andrew Weil, Douglas Durst, Paulette Cole, and Walt Freese. It is our hope that each Responsible Capitalism interview will help you make informed choices by highlighting not only the economics behind a business, but also the environmental and social aspects as well.



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An Austrian by birth, and son of an herbalist, Horst M. Rechelbacher is an active environmentalist, innovative business leader, author, artist, and organic farmer. At age fourteen, Horst began a three-year apprenticeship in the beauty and salon industry. With an award-winning career as a hairstylist, in 1965, he started his own salons and product line called Horst. In 1978, Horst founded Aveda Corporation, a global plant-based cosmetic company. Nearly two decades later, he sold Aveda to Estee Lauder but remained a consultant until March 2003. Afterwards, he focused on his new

product paradigm, Intelligent Nutrients, a health and beauty product company, utilizing 100% food-based and organic certified ingredients.

Since the mid 1960's, Horst dedicated himself to analyzing the chemical constitution of plants, and pioneered flower and plant-based flavor-aroma-therapy, functional foods, and nutraceuticals to enhance personal health and wellbeing. He is the recipient of a honoris causa doctorate in Ayurveda from Gurukul Mahavidyalaya Twalapur, Haridwar University, India. In his continuing study of plant-based medicine, he collaborates with noted physicians, chemists and pharmacologists, as well as with experts and traditional healers throughout the world.

Horst has authored three books, Rejuvenation, Aveda Rituals, and Alivelihood. He was an executive producer on Hidden Medicine, an independent film that premiered at the 1999 Sundance Film Festival. He currently resides in Wisconsin and New York City. His organic farm in Wisconsin is solar, wind and geothermal powered, and he grows plant ingredients for Intelligent Nutrients products.

What is the purpose of a business?

It's an exchange of energetics (material and biologically), which is sustainable and where the trade is mutually beneficial for the participants. Also, where the philosophy, "the earth does not belong to us, we belong to it and we're borrowing it from the children" is applied.

In what ways does a business create value, and whom does it really serve?

A business must be based on transparency within the design of function, whereby the design benefits the earth and all species.

Do all corporations have an obligation not just to shareholders but also to social causes and local communities?

Yes, to all local and global communities, and to all of nature. The success of all living organizations depends on the contribution of its members. And, the success of the member depends on success of the organization as a whole.



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Currently in our society, there is a shift going on making responsible corporate behavior an imperative—what is driving those forces?

Spiritual and material satisfaction.

Who/what plays the critical role in keeping corporations “honest”—is it the consumers, employees, government, economics?

All of them, it is a collective, holistic process.

How important is it to build a brand that generates great customer loyalty?

Fulfilling the consumer’s personal desires is very important for customer loyalty. Every client knows exactly what he or she wants, when they smell it, taste it, see it, feel it, and hear it. It’s a total sensory satisfaction.

What are some of the biggest obstacles in trying to merge financial success with social commitment in today’s global economy?

The cost of organically grown food-based, carbohydrate chemistry versus petrochemical, toxic chemistry. Pure plant chemistry nurtures all of nature versus petrochemical chemistry poisons all nature. Petrochemical chemistry is less expensive but toxic. So where is the real cost? The answer is within each one of us.

Who/what do you see as the next wave of environmental leadership?

The next wave of environmental leadership will come from the ones who follow the Cradle to Cradle Design, creating two technologies utilizing biological nutrients and technical nutrients and all products can be safely consumed, disposed, or reused.

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