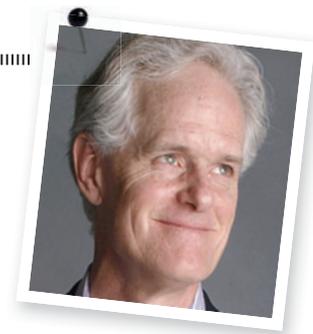


Peter Henderson



Eco-food will be more than a mega-trend — Part 2

Envisioning your business model in an ecosystem context can spark new opportunities, and identify potential risks

This is Part 2 of an article series designed to encourage you and your colleagues to reframe where there is transformational and collaborative opportunity, while de-risking your business and considering what's right for societies, in Canada and beyond.

Let's start with considering the sustainability of the food supply chain for a moment.

Is the food supply chain at an environmental-sustainability tipping point? It's hard to say precisely, but a growing number of leaders of major corporations have already realized their entire business model (and lack of supply chain ecosystem) is ultimately unsustainable. Could the same be said of the entire food supply chain, and the companies within it?

To consider this, suggested reading is "Model Behaviour II — Strategies to Rewire Business" (released in June 2015 by SustainAbility). The report presents four solid case studies on major corporations that have innovated their business models. In summary, it suggests "in a more complex, resource-constrained world, companies need to move past



merely creating more sustainable products and processes to generate new, fundamentally more sustainable business models. For any one company, such innovation will derive from a confluence of three key elements:

- » evolving external conditions,
- » the company's underlying culture and capacity to innovate, and
- » the actions and intentions of the sustainability innovator."

While the case studies are not for food or beverage companies, lessons can be learned, and this can be a helpful background reading for an envisioning exercise.

Envision this

Let's say you're CEO of your company at a foresight strategy retreat with your key employees. To spark new business ideas, your facilitator poses some or all of the following questions:

- » What if eco-food becomes more than a mega-trend? What would it look like?

- » What if, in 10 to 15 years, Canadian retailers, distributors, foodservice operators, agri-businesses and consumer activists collectively (industry led) impose a new real-cost pricing system? The intent of such an approach would be to enable a healthier and more cost- and eco-conscious supply chain, which serves to dramatically lower the environmental and societal footprint of Canada's entire food system.
- » What if the real cost of carbon/GHG and water intensive products doubles or perhaps triples by 2030? Will some category consumption be cut in half, or more? What other edibles will fill the void?
- » How would this affect your products, and how should you prepare?
- » Would you take a lead role and collaborate with other like-minded Canadian businesses? If yes, why?
- » What are the risks to our business and how could we overcome them? Are there other new business opportunities? Envisioning (foresight) exercises can open the door to new ideas, connections and opportunities. These questions scratch the surface, but can lead to a deeper dive and co-creation with key customers, suppliers, partners and competitors.

The SustainAbility report can be downloaded from www.sustainability.com.

Your feedback and comments are always welcome! 🍎

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