

BOOK REVIEWS

Corporate Water Strategies

William Sarni Earthscan, London, 2011, 262 pp., ISBN 9781849711852
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With much of the media's focus, and in turn the public's interest, on the continued unrest in the Middle East and the erratic weather patterns associated with climate change, issues surrounding water conservation and stewardship have evaded frontline news. With nearly one billion people lacking access to safe water, the United Nations (UN), along with 75 participating nations, have identified water as one of the 11 priorities in a new post-2015 development plan that is currently being formalised (UN, 2014a). Sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation has been a priority of the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which were eight goals established in 2010 to help eradicate poverty and to '[build] a better world' (UN, 2014a). In 2012, the UN set out 'to forge a more robust and inclusive framework for development to succeed the MDGs post-2015' (UN, 2013). Through online and social media, individuals representing government, business and civil society engaged in a series of discussions to help define the role of water in the post-2015 UN development goals. This water thematic consultation went beyond a narrow approach of demanding toilets and taps for billions of still un- or under-served poor. Instead, it addressed water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH); water resources management; and wastewater/water quality management as three vital and interdependent dimensions that, taken together, can secure universal access to water, for all, forever (UN, 2013).

In *Corporate Water Strategies* author William Sarni takes the 'water issue' to the private sector with the aim to 'provide a roadmap for companies committed to building a global water stewardship programme'. A quick search on Sarni informs us that this book is not his only work on this topic. His 30 years of working in the consulting industry providing services to both the private and public sectors in the United States, Europe and Asia on corporate sustainability, and water and climate programming more broadly, has him recognised as a respected scholar in this field. He is also the author of *Greening Brownfields: Remediation Through Sustainable Development* (McGraw Hill 2009); *Water Tech – A Guide to Innovation, Investment and Business Opportunities* (Earthscan, 2013); in addition to being a columnist on sustainability, climate and water for Harvard Business Publishing's *Leading Green*, *The Guardian* and *Venture* magazines.

The objectives of Sarni's book are to point out to the private sector why water is a critical business issue for companies that are facing water risk to their operations and brands, and to present the long-term benefits of corporate water stewardship programs. As Sarni argues, such programs 'can assist companies in managing their physical, reputational and regulatory water risks'. Other interesting discussion areas in the book surround: how new concepts such as embedded water and virtual water are forcing companies to think differently about how they use water to manufacture products; how

companies need to manage water as a key business issue in order to capture the real value of water; and how companies can develop partnerships with non-governmental organisations to effectively implement water strategies.

Sarni organises the book in three parts: Part 1 — Key Issues for Business in Water Stewardship; Part 2 — Developing and Implementing a Successful Corporate Water Strategy; and Part 3 — The New Water Paradigm. While chapters in Part 1 and 2 have value in understanding the business (and technology) of water sustainability, and the opportunities that lie therein, it is Part 3 that that may have a particular attraction to the general, engaged and concerned reader. In Part 3, Sarni discusses the need for a new paradigm in water resource management to develop water stewards, and the ability to manage water risk and opportunities. With Singapore as a case-study, Sarni presents seven new rules for 21st century water stewardship that transcend the private sector: (1) All water issues are local, and the watershed is the building block; (2) Water is unique; (3) Companies can no longer rely solely on public water sources; (4) The value of water far exceeds its price; (5) Water use in the value chain is typically greater than direct water use; (6) Water risk can be managed effectively only with stakeholder input; and (7) Water is a significant business opportunity. All great topics of discussion in any classroom, or community, and therefore worth reading more about.

The book, as the titles suggests, was developed primarily for the private sector audience as a resource on corporate water strategies, and does an excellent job of doing that by providing a framework for forward-looking innovative companies to develop new products and services, and in turn a competitive advantage that is always so appealing in the business world. For the environmental educator in all of us, Sarni's book is an ideal reference to help introduce you to water stewardship and management, and advancing to the business of water; something we all should be prepared to understand, and do so, with Sarni's *Corporate Water Strategies*.

Additional Information

See UNwater.org and Water.org.

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Reviewer Biography

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