

# The strategist's bookshelf

## Blueprint for implementing the UN's sustainable development goals

Gayle C. Avery

Gayle C. Avery is a Professor in the Department of Management at Macquarie University ([gayle.avery@mgsm.edu.au](mailto:gayle.avery@mgsm.edu.au)) and a Strategy & Leadership contributing editor. Her latest book is *Sufficiency Thinking: Thailand's Gift to an Unsustainable World* (Allen & Unwin, 2016).

Clive Wilson, *Designing the Purposeful World: The Sustainable Development Goals as a Blueprint for Humanity* (Greenleaf Publishing & Routledge: London, 2018).

Author and British leadership development consultant with the UK firm Primeast, Clive Wilson has written an easy-to-read, how-to guide to implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) issued by the United Nations. The 17 SDGs, which were signed by nearly 200 countries in 2015, are intended to markedly improve the world by 2030.

His book, *Designing the Purposeful World: The Sustainable Development Goals as a Blueprint for Humanity*, exhorts corporate leaders to build on the achievements of the United Nation's first set of objectives, the 2000-2015 Millennium Development Goals, which resulted in halving world poverty. Wilson points out that the world is already making great progress towards the goals of eliminating inequality, improving access to clean water, education and health services, and tackling climate change. But he warns that resting at this halfway point would be lamentable. He urges all leaders – of business and civil society, as well as governments – to get involved with the SDGs.

Wilson makes very clear how the SDGs provide an overarching purpose that most people intuitively

share, even before they learn about the SDGs themselves. *Designing the Purposeful World* takes the reader step-by-step on a journey to discover how to embed the SDGs into his or her own personal and professional life. By starting small, every company and every person can generate a ripple effect that magnifies their initial contribution.

The book opens by explaining what the 17 goals are about and providing simple examples of how different goals provide purpose in the lives of both ordinary and extraordinary individuals. Using his firm's change management model, Wilson then elaborates on the use of grand purpose, vision, engagement, structure, character, measuring results and success, and human talent in achieving the SDGs.<sup>[1]</sup>

Mini case studies and examples illustrate the book, providing an interesting read. My main concern with the book is that some of the cases are already becoming dated. For example, Finland's experiment with universal basic income had to cease for political reasons before its two-year trial was over. No mention is made of the current Trump presidency, which has changed many of the positive steps towards climate change made under the Obama administration, and it remains to be seen whether a corporate leader in the SDG-movement like Elon Musk will stabilize altruistic management in his businesses.

Nonetheless, *Designing the Purposeful World* provides those seeking to put their organizations on the path of doing well by doing good with specific ways of getting involved with the SDGs in a handy guide filled with exercises,

activities and copious suggestions for action.

### Note

1. His previous book on this topic is *Designing the Purposeful Organization*:

*How to Inspire Business Performance Beyond Boundaries* (Kogan Page, 2015).