



## SUSTAINABILITY WILL BE THE NEW CREDO

### From an article that appeared in B2B Marketing June 2009

*B2B Marketers need to brace themselves for a “New era of sustainability” explains Lucy Purdy  
Director of RAINMAKERS CSI Ltd.*

As we batten down the hatches and work hard to sustain our businesses through the next few months, at some point soon, we are all going to start thinking about the future. How is the model of b2b marketing going to be impacted by these dramatic economic events, and what will that mean for the work that we do?

#### *Changed focus*

As the credit crunch drives consumers into the new age of austerity, business will have to enter a **new era of sustainability**. After the downturn ends, it appears we will enter a period of low slow growth. This will force businesses to focus on long-term value creation as the only way to grow profitably.

This will impact business marketing. Every investment in marketing will have to be sustainable, it will have to deliver profits over a longer period of time. Short termism will no longer be viable; without high growth rates there can be no get-the-payback-quick solutions.

#### *The implications for all of us in b2b marketing?*

Economic constraints will force us to see business growth as something that occurs only as a result of consistent and sustained long-term efforts. We have to think up smart solutions, but then stick to our guns when we implement them.

This will radically change our goals and behaviour:

- Innovation concepts must offer flexibility and adaptability as a key benefit as they will have to pay back over a longer time period
- And if customers don't see meaningful value in something they won't have a mind to invest in it, so customer needs will drive innovation more directly. NPD will become very much more “outside-in”.
- Business DMUs will become wider as more people in an organisation will be involved in planning expenditure, therefore
- Strategic ideas will be valued again in marketing over media buying tactics, as brand marketing must make a bigger impact across a broader audience of customers for longer. The discipline of a unified brand voice will be needed to maintain a coherent identity with the customer organisation over longer periods
- Marketing budgets will become more fluid as spend gets determined by what needs have to be filled now, rather than by what went before +x%.
- And of course, how we measure ROI has to adapt too, and will become (as Professor Tim Ambler\* has always argued it should) a much more complex algorithm of current and previous brand expenditures
- And, finally, marketing people will now stay in their jobs long enough to be personally accountable for their actions – so accurate predictability of outcomes will matter more.



So after we have survived the crunch bit of the downturn and can start to think about the future, we can expect to see customers and suppliers planning how to work together more closely for more sustainable profits. How we manage our customer relationships will become even more important to our business future.

Sustainability will mean thinking and planning for the longterm, making decisions and keeping to them, identifying our core business relationships and nurturing them. We're all going to have to change our ways.

\*Tim Ambler "Marketing and the Bottom Line", published by Prentice Hall