

EDITORIAL

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The Sustainability Age Takes Shape

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It does not appear too long ago since the digital age began. It can be traced to post World War II when most devices were analog to the early 1950's when calculations and business processes could be accomplished with the first generation of computers. Now, some 50 years later, the digital age is being implemented in almost every firm and every home. It has led to the creation of a host of new firms, new jobs, new careers, new degree programs, new professions, and has impacted almost every aspect of our lives. We are living through the digital age and adapting to the ever increasing opportunities as the digital devices allow us to be in communication all the time, shop with the click of a mouse, and manage our own web-pages, bank accounts, and social networks. The 3D digital tools are beginning to show us how we can work in 3D, communicate our needs and wants for products, accomplish virtual try-on and visualize ourselves wearing a product before we agree to allocate money to make the product. The digital age is not over but is showing us the path forward as its impact registers throughout the world. The major theme being our ability to access all forms of information using smaller and smaller devices capable of reliably storing vast amounts of information and soon will be able to enhance every aspect of our daily lives. In other words the great 'world flattening' will become the signature of the digital age. The subject of this editorial is to examine if Sustainability will become the next major age?

Sustainability, in its truest form, is frequently defined as taking from the earth only those resources that can be easily renewed, while doing no harm to the environment. Resources should not be consumed faster than they can be replaced and the pace of waste disintegration or reuse should not be slower than the rate at which waste is generated. Just like the Digital Age, Sustainability must be viewed as a global issue with many opportunities in every aspect of our lifestyles.

More recently, Sustainability has taken a broader framework that considers the "triple bottom line" of Social, Environmental, and Economic resources. Some practitioners think of these framework components as People, Planet, and Profit. The Triple Bottom Line view of Sustainability has brought a balanced perspective for firms and consumers to advance on multiple fronts. Each part of the Triple Bottom Line requires an in depth knowledge of the salient issues confronting our products and practices. Most likely, knowledge of Sustainability will come from a "sustainability team" as a way to optimize and implement sustainability practices.

There is evidence that the academic community has begun to respond to the educational needs of the broader view of sustainability. As more institutions integrate courses, minors, majors, and degrees in the curricula, the next generation of graduates will be more and more prepared to intelligently advance sustainability and contribute to the issues facing businesses, consumers, and the global environment. It will take time to develop a critical mass of knowledgeable "sustainability professionals" in the global population but, I believe, we must all begin, first by

doing our part in our everyday lives, and then by seeking information on all the products and services that we acquire. Of course, with information accessibility already a result of the Digital Age, the Sustainability Age promises to be even more productive in terms of new jobs, new careers, new curricula, new knowledge, and new professions.