

The Sustainable Organization™

“A guiding doctrine, an orienting approach, a comprehensive tool”

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The Sustainable Organization™

“A guiding doctrine, an orienting approach, a comprehensive tool”

The coming age of entrepreneurship – Sustainability and entrepreneurship are essential partners

The world's economic landscape is changing. The economy is suffering, competition is becoming global, careerism is giving way to lifetime job diversity, and corporate security is dead, fueling an unprecedented rise in entrepreneurship, the innovative role that individuals take as a result of an idea, a passion or a purpose, or that they must take in the face of shifting trends such as unemployment, loss of retirement, health care expenses or lifestyle changes. Even within larger organizations, entrepreneurship, the spirit of newness, change and innovation, is taking hold as new younger generations enter the workforce with broader lifestyle expectations and as the global workforce is provided with massive amounts of new tools and resources for independence and alternative forms of collaboration, fueling independence and innovation.

The cycle of sustainability, from innovation to maturity, depends upon entrepreneurship and the sustainability of organizations that fulfill it. Our natural and economic world operates within and depends upon the fulfillment of the ideal of sustainability actualized in the realities of organizational survivability. And all of it is rooted in a hierarchy of sustainability, where needs and resource utilization are enmeshed in a development process across stages.

The ideal of sustainability is now a part of human consciousness and it is here to stay. Those who were the radicals of the past are now the entrepreneurs and experts of the here and now. Those who dreamed of energy independence, alternative energy, organic products and green housing, efficient infrastructure and social good are now becoming the world's leaders, taking action, making change and mandating new social imperatives. Books on entrepreneurship, ecological innovation, and the new realms of quantum physics, spirit and consciousness have never been more popular or more well read. And change now spreads at the speed of the Internet.

If we can make this process easier to understand, easier to map and easier to teach, connecting the intrinsic components of human need and organizational needs with the psychology of entrepreneurship and the pragmatics of resource utilization, then perhaps, we can accelerate the change that is core to sustainability in an accelerating world.

The Sustainable Organization™ is a new approach to organizational design and management. It is a model resulting from decades of work in starting, owning, operating and advising organizations at many stages of development in a range of industries, including over 20 years in the environmental and alternative energy industries.

The approach inquires into the concepts, principles and practices of sustainability as they have emerged over the years. It explores how sustainability can be viewed through the lens of public perception, social myth, economic cycles, organizational development and the sometimes confounding realities of the complex value systems that create and are shaped by our systems of commercial enterprise and resource utilization.

The Sustainability Organization™ is based upon the need for an applied system of learning, teaching, research, consulting and coaching which can provide simple common perspective and understanding of sustainable economics. Teachability, ease of communication, and simplicity are keys to bringing actionable relevancy to diverse stakeholders in our world of increasing complexity and diversity. Hence, this approach is designed to simplify the complexity of the term “sustainability”. The approach also meets a need for leadership doctrine that can present and empower a vision of a sustainable future and ground this vision in the realities of the here and now.

The Sustainable Organization™ is rooted in the crucible of entrepreneurship. New ideas are given birth in entrepreneurship, leadership is entrepreneurship in action, and the transformation of maturity into innovation is the renewal of entrepreneurship. New social movements are founded in entrepreneurship. The very fate of our planet rests in entrepreneurship, the birthplace of the new ideas, concepts, services, beliefs, processes and technologies that will sustain our ability to survive, to grow and to thrive as globalization and resource utilization become increasing challenges to the balance of our global environmental, and our social and economic systems.

There are thousands of dialogues underway about sustainability across all aspects of our society, from Main Street to Wall Street and in our local and national policy debates, both new and old. Core to all of these dialogues is the use and interpretation of the word sustainability itself. Semantics, the meaning of words, in this case the meaning of the word sustainability, affect the very nature of the dialogue, as well as the worldviews of those who are participating in the dialogue. This includes their values, priorities and outcome orientations and expectations, and ultimately becomes manifest in organizational evolution, from entrepreneurs to governments, and from nuclear family to communities.

Taking the time to critically examine the concept of The Sustainable Organization™ is not simply an intellectual exercise, but instead a mandatory cornerstone in the foundation of critical inquiry that will help build a sustainable vision of what "sustainability" really is.

Benevolent change is the ideal intended outcome of sustainability. Change is organized through actionable vision as the anchor for leadership. Integrity and simplicity are keys to the leadership of change. The Sustainable Organization™ is designed to be a simple, actionable, integrity-based leadership view of sustainability.



The Ideal of Sustainability

Sustainability is an ideal. It is not a thing or actions or models or definitions. Instead it is a word used to embody and describe the conduct of people and organizations and ecosystems in all stages of their development toward survival.

In a world of increasing consumption, need, and self-interest, challenged by those who seek a more benevolent future, it is all too easy to iconify words, or movements as a thing, and to project felt needs upon a word giving it meaning driven by sentiment and particular perspectives. And it is all too easy to adopt a word as an icon of idealism, a flag upon the field of battle against both real and mythic oppression. At worst, a word can become a "buzz word" to herald a trend or social movement. At best, those who lead social movements hope to find words that can rally emotions and galvanize sentiment toward a cause. Words are the tools of thought leadership.

"Sustainability" has emerged as the iconic word now used in the English speaking world to describe a host of concepts such as greening, environmentalism, ecosystem balance, development with the preservation of the natural environment, beneficial resource utilization, conscious community, indigenous community development and environmental management, to name just a few. With roots in the notions of "sustainable development" and in its broadening iconic use, the word has become a righteous symbol of correctness, a ubiquitous characterization of good vs. bad, restoration vs. destructiveness, collaboration vs. hegemony and enlightenment vs. ignorance. It has become mythic in its scope and reach.

A "catch-all"

Over the past generation we have learned a great deal about environmentalism and "sustainability". We have seen that progress toward a sustainable future is intimately enmeshed in the philosophy, experience, knowledge, attitudes and vested interests of those who are leading the dialogue toward its implementation. We have also seen that this progress is deeply enmeshed in sentiment and idealism and ignorance often at odds with pragmatism and critical thinking. One of the chief dilemmas of sustainability is its inherent complexity and its inherent links to intangibles such as how individuals from different worldviews, orientations and perspectives apply the term. For example, one man's "unsustainable" trash is another's sustaining treasure. And one group can view oil as their sustenance, while another can see it as a global cancer. By whom and how is it decided what is most important in understanding "sustainability", when everyone has a differing perspective?

A valuable but potentially misleading icon

The word sustainability is multi-definitional and frequently adapted to suit the particular perspective of the user. There are countless interpretations of the word, its meaning, its articulation and its architecture. Some would argue that it describes the "triple bottom line", of social, environmental and financial return-on-investment; others argue it describes a theoretical ecological homeostasis. Some simplify its definition in a

corollary to "self-sustainment" or balance or harmony; some relate its definition to resources utilization. Others simply see sustainability in terms of survivability. The definition is situation-driven by a host of variables such as time, fear, leadership, economics, politics, education, science, awareness and information, in a relatively young, self-serving consumption-based social system of competing identity groups, each driven by wildly differing value systems. Hence sustainability is a generalization, a mythic icon to an ideal, where even the ideal is elusive. And yet, when asked, most might say they know what sustainability is, while at the same time being unable to define it.

In the absence of clear definition of "sustainability", and faced with stupefying differences of opinions and daunting complexity, average people will abdicate their own uncertainty about the word to a gross generalization. At the same time, leaders who stake claim to authority in defining the word or causes related to the word use it consciously or unconsciously as an icon, like Teflon® in its unassailable righteous benevolence, which can serve to rally sentiment and build action.

A natural outcome of overwhelming need

This is understandable and natural, because those who have concerns for the well-being of our world are confronted with the overwhelming scientific and anecdotal evidence of planetary ecosystems degradation, from whatever cause, and they indeed need a word, something to generalize and embody the need and direction for change. Sustainability is such a word.

Unfortunately, with benevolent generalization also comes misuse, misinterpretation, overidealism and the hegemony of righteousness, and dangerous, confusing misinterpretations and often misleading contraindications resulting from applying a generality to specific situations. Sustainability is a holistic word, able to envelope and surround the impossible complexity of ecosystem management with an implied ideal of benevolent homeostasis. But if applied without an objective holistic perspective, it can become a dangerous semantic trap, filled with unspoken but implied conclusions and judgments. It can be used willfully and disingenuously to appear philanthropic or knowledgeable; and it can be used ignorantly, without any true understanding of the meaning of the word.

Understanding is key to overcoming outcome bias

Therefore, it is very important when using the term sustainability, that there is awareness of the applied use of the term rather than the generalized use of the term.

For example, the use of the term sustainability can be applied to species longevity or used synonymously with fecundity; or the efficacy and survivability of a species. In this context sustainability means survivability.

In terms of "business" or public policy, the term can mean a broad range of approaches and measurements of ecological, social and financial performance, depending upon the

outcome orientation and available resources of those who choose to engage in the debate.

Like many other conceptual arenas, such as the study of leadership, much of the research and definition of sustainability is lead by those who have the resources to commit to such endeavors, often with biasing outcome orientations.

Leadership, for example, is poorly defined at the entrepreneurial level, because few entrepreneurial organizations have the funding, resources or luxury to study it. Moreover, much of the literature on leadership is focused on productivity improvement, because large organizations have the funding and objectives to study leadership in order to improve productivity and performance. Hence the term "leadership" often has an implicit bias in its generalized outcome orientation toward productivity improvement.

Similarly, those who have the funding, resources and luxury to study sustainability, such as industry, rating agencies, governments and advocacy groups, engage in a complex and diverse debate. A Fortune 500 company can afford to study sustainability and, as a large user of resources, has the most vested interest and public image tied to studying and being at least viewed as "sustainable".

And yet for the entrepreneur, sustainability is not necessarily of interest or value or even fully understood, because the entrepreneur is often more focused on surviving and acquiring resources in order to succeed or pay the bills than on complex iconic generalizations such as sustainability.

Generalizing sustainability is misleading

The specific value and use of the term sustainability can therefore vary greatly across size, stage and type of organization. But it is all too easy for those who understand, espouse, teach and apply the ideals of "sustainability" either from a felt need, a social imperative or a benevolently biased perspective to generalize its use. But this generalization can be misleading because sustainability is different in its applicability, teachability or relative hierarchy of value and need across differing organizational types, stage and needs. Generalizing sustainability can be misleading, overlooking the fundamentals of organizational sustainability in biased intellectualism of the ideal of "sustainability".

Hence when using the term, "the sustainable organization" in looking to guide the growth and future of organizations across the spectrum of size, stage and industry, one needs to look at the elements and definitions of sustainability that are relevant. Sustainability must be relevant to the organization as well as the people within the organization in order to assist the organization with its stage-specific needs. The challenge is to accomplish this in the moment while keeping a holistic view of the life-cycle evolution of the organization's needs and being mindful of a constantly "morphing" definitional value of "sustainability" over time.

For example, a startup company needs to know how to construct a revenue plan and how to hire and let go people and how to market before it can consider the multivariable complexity of triple bottom line accounting and management systems.

Moreover, basic leadership skills and management systems take precedent over notions of sustainability for most small businesses who are just trying to build a dream and stay afloat.

If one considers that in the early stages most entrepreneurs are fending for their lives, perhaps having mortgaged their house for a dream, then notions of sustainability take back seat to the need for good counsel in sound business fundamentals. Similarly, a local government, a social group or a little league are all faced with the dilemmas of how to be "sustainable" while at the same time surviving as organizations.

Sustainability can range in meaning from "startup, growth and survival" to simply "doing one's part". For those who struggle to implement the ideal, where does sustainability start and where does it end?

Missing the forest for the trees

Is sustainability a token, an iconic buzzword being used to capture and mobilize social idealism? Is it an icon to help stem the tide of environmental degradation at the cost of detracting from or covering over the timeless basic principles of good stewardship, human dignity, fair practice doctrines, prudence, integrity based leadership™, fiscal management, diligent planning, environmental awareness and good governance? Is the ideal of sustainability creating a distracting dictionary of hegemonic idealism that obscures the basic mastery skills of diligent disciplined inquiry into emerging best practices and principles of positive human development and learning?

Sustainability is a noble, crucial ideal and a leadership value, but reaching it requires a host of pragmatic considerations that affect all aspects of an organization's operations. These considerations differ significantly with the size, stage and type of each organization.

Fundamental to this is the understanding of how sustainability is relevant to each entrepreneur and each organization at each stage of its developmental life cycle, (including how the term sustainability is viewed and applied), spanning from organizational design to the fundamentals of leadership within the organization. If the value and understanding of "sustainability" is a leadership value embedded in the values of an entrepreneurial organization, it can be pursued at very early stages as part of a values based-approach.

“Sustainability” can simply mean survival

In entrepreneurial terms, sustainability means staying in business, meeting payroll, hiring the right new employee, avoiding liability and learning how to sell one's wares in increasingly difficult and competitive marketplaces, or simply avoiding burnout from



working seven days a week. In the crucible of entrepreneurship, generally the arena of small business, sustainability is often regarded as best left for policy makers, government and those who have discretionary budgets.

Indeed, when one looks at “sustainability” from startups, to advocacy groups, to large corporations, amongst the dizzying complexity there is one common theme: *survival*.

What is the primary motivator in the worldwide debate about “sustainability” relative to global warming? It is concern about human *survival*. All of the other words that are used to describe “sustainability”, such as preservation, conservation, restoration, homeostasis, balance, in concert with nature, etc., point to one core human need; *survival*.

It is vitally important to expand the debate and dialogue about all facets of “sustainability” but it is all too easy to get lost in the chorus of opinion and discourse and to miss the “forest for the trees”. This forest becomes clear from the trees if one asks the rhetorical question, “what is un-sustainability”?

Nonetheless, “Words have no meaning. People give meaning to words”. And the meaning, interpretation and complexity of the concept of sustainability varies widely and changes situationally, particularly as more and more people use it as a generalization. It truly is a word whose meaning lies in the “mind of the beholder”. Therefore, part of the challenge in promulgating sustainability is addressing the meaning and context of the term sustainability situationally, specific to the needs, stage and circumstances of each situation.

Hence, “the Sustainable Organization™” as a philosophy, doctrine and consulting methodology is holistic, addressing the ideals and pragmatics of sustainability differently throughout the developmental stages of any organization with a focus on one orienting context; *survival*.

This could be a daunting task; balancing ideals, hard reality, and leadership in the crucible of organizational transformation particularly when each case needs to be individualized for specific individual organizational structural and cultural profiles. However, it can be made easier with the use of models that integrate the stage specific needs of organizations with the fundamental of best practices and the ideals and emerging best practices of sustainable organizational design.

The Hierarchy of Sustainability™

“A new paradigm for building The Sustainable Organization™”

Sustainability is a noble ideal. Visualizing it and actualizing it in reality and in every day circumstances is a daunting undertaking. The fabric underlying the idealism of



sustainability is as complex and as dynamic as any ecosystem. Indeed, one could argue that the conceptualization and actualization of global and/or organizational sustainability is orders of magnitude more complex than multivariate ecosystems, because of the confounding intangible variables of sentiment, knowledge, capitalism and governance that enmesh the critical inquiry into sustainability in seemingly intractable complexity and immeasurable and irresolvable dynamic human variability.

Contained within *The Sustainable Organization*TM is a new paradigm for conceptualizing sustainability as it is applied to all types of human organizations, be they public, private, non-profit or social enterprises.¹ *The Hierarchy of Sustainability*TM is a new model that attempts to simplify the complexity inherent in applying concepts of "sustainability" across the diverse spectrum of organizational situations.

*The Hierarchy of Sustainability*TM, is an orienting framework that acknowledges the divergent practicalities, differing needs and diverse developmental stages of a sustainable organization. It is an operating model that defines, categorizes and prioritizes the elements of organization sustainability, ranging from base level survival needs to the broader context of the ubiquitous ideal of sustainability. This model simplifies the complexity inherent in the ideal of sustainability and allows easy understanding, common language and a framework for assessment, critical thinking and the development of applied solutions for sustainability at all levels of organization stage, size and circumstances.

This model also serves as a methodology for organizational consulting and management. It integrates the developmental and resource needs of an organization with a focus on stage appropriate assessments, and design and implementation of best practices. These then become the foundations for growth and prosperity, addressing the very practical needs of the organization and its leadership from the very early stages of an organization's development through to maturity and continuous innovation.

*The Hierarchy of Sustainability*TM provides a platform for teaching and training leaders and their organizations the meaning and practice of sustainability in both ancient and modern terms. It provides a framework for the use of the latest tools and methods to measure and evaluate sustainability performance as a function of integrated resource utilization. Integrated resource utilization can be viewed from a holistic perspective, ranging from human resources utilization and natural resources utilization to process improvement and leadership, community collaboration and global footprint responsibility from startup to multinational strategic planning.

¹ "Paradigm" is almost an overused word in the last generation, redefined by Thomas Kuhn, in the "Structure of Scientific Revolutions" to mean, roughly, ... "a set of practices that define a scientific discipline during a particular period of [time](#)." Notice the focus on "a set of practices." We conceive of the *The Hierarchy of Sustainability*TM in just this way. Thomas Kuhn articulated a "paradigm shift" as a type of injunction to inquire in a new way. For further explanation see <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paradigm>.

Bringing the “sustainability” target within reach

When the concept of sustainability is generalized, much like the proverbial carrot on a stick in front of a horse, a motivator overcoming reluctance in moving forward, "sustainability" is an unreachable shifting target for humanity, always out of reach. Moreover, due to the incredible diversity of leadership, design, type, stage, resources, circumstance and competitive differentiation of the world's millions of organizations, the path to "sustainability" is infinitely variable in applied deliverability.

There are many approaches to modeling sustainability such as:

1. The Triple Bottom Line: Now almost becoming a “proverb” of sustainability discussions the so called TBL, or “people, planet, profit”, provides a tangible, though limited window on defining and modeling sustainability of business organizations.²
2. Ecology of Commerce: Used as a book title in 1993, by Paul Hawken, it was one of the most profound approaches in this field, viewing commerce as an ecosystem, and thereby allowing it to potentially integrate with the larger natural ecosystem, upon which all economy derives its fundamental resources.³
3. Natural Capitalism: Coined by Amory Lovins, Hunter Lovins and Paul Hawken in their work and websites of that title, provides a new paradigm for viewing “capital” in a broader context.⁴
4. Cradle to Cradle: Another important work based on the paradigm shift from conceiving the economy as being linear (resources, processing, use and waste) to being in fact circular. It focuses on the “design for environment”, i.e. “remaking the way we make things”.⁵
5. The Circular, Zero Waste, Economy: In the 1960’s Eugene Odum, credited as being one of the main “fathers of modern ecology”, in one of the final chapters in his book “Basic Ecology” text, titled “Environmental Studies” used the term “circular economy.” This was the forrunner to the “cradle to cradle” concept of design, and applies to the entire economy. The basic elements of this approach can be found in the emerging “zero waste” movement.⁶
6. Global Reporting Initiative: In more recent times, methods of corporate reporting, based on a rigorous reporting standards and the TBL elements for any organization have been, and continue to be developed. These can be in the references provided.⁷
7. UN System of Environmental and Economic Accounting: Within its ongoing effort to create “harmonized” industrial classification codes, as well as policies and practices for free trade of raw resources to finished products, the United

² For a paper and references on TBL see: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Triple_bottom_line

³ For further information on Paul Hawken see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_Hawken

⁴ See also http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Natural_Capitalism, and www.natcap.org.

⁵ See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cradle_to_Cradle and http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cradle_to_Cradle:_Remaking_the_Way_We_Make_Things

⁶ See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eugene_Odum, and http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zero_waste, <http://www.zerowaste.ca.gov/>; www.zerowaste.org

⁷ See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Global_Reporting_Initiative, and www.globalreporting.org

Nations continues to work on measurement and accounting systems that are more “sustainable.”⁸

All of these are valuable and represent vital components of the broader ideal of moving toward a more benevolent future.

Several of the leading approaches look at measurements as indicators of sustainability; guiding metrics against which action can be designed. The triple bottom line is such an approach. It measures social, environmental and financial return-on-investment as the means of identifying, clarifying and prioritizing the key components of "sustainability".

Each of these models moves us forward toward better understanding and implementation of benevolent organizational management, and has differing benefits, limitations and constraints. Nonetheless, all are meant to motivate or mandate improved organizational behavior, much like either the whip or the carrot on a stick for a horse. Organizations are expected to be incentivized to find the means to improve themselves and hence improve the greater good of world as a whole. The ideal is benevolent, but the "how-to" remains elusive in a sea of metrics, perspectives, and regulatory, economic, social and governmental priorities. And therefore much of the benefits lie less in immediate action than in the increasingly powerful shifting of awareness these approaches have brought to leaders, policy makers and organizations in general.

In a world of increasing complexity, "flattening"⁹ and globalization, measurements and motivators are essential. Indeed, they are fundamental to good science, process management, leadership, organizational management, accountability and governance. Sometimes, however, the "forest can be missed for the trees", and new measurements can obscure fundamentals and time-proven wisdom. The complex elegance of rose-colored modernity of metrics can obscure the wisdom that lies in adherence to basic and timeless principles of entrepreneurship, basic economics and good common sense. And sometimes metrics can miss the humanity that lies at the root of all actions. Left alone, Nature will find balance. But when exploited by humans, nature is challenged by intervening unbalanced resource utilization driven by human need. Hence, all of "sustainability" is a function of harnessing human nature and human need to take action toward balance.

And if action is what is required to convert the ideal of sustainability into reality, then models which address our basic humanity and bring to bear timeless principles may have a significant place in the future of "sustainability". If we can bring together better understanding of the nexus of human needs, organizational development and right action, we may be able to more effectively understand and practice the ideals and essential steps toward implementation of "sustainability".

⁸ See <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/envaccounting/seea.asp>

⁹ Thomas L. Friedman, *The World is Flat*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York, 2005



The challenge of any such model is to simplify the complexity inherent in "sustainability" yet at the same time incorporate assessment and diagnostics perspective, frameworks for strategic planning, communication mechanisms, teaching doctrines and metrics that also incorporate the subjective determinants of sentiment and leadership. The Hierarchy of SustainabilityTM serves as a simple yet utilitarian model for a broad variety of personal and theoretical debate as well as teaching and consulting domains, and in such, has merit as a framework around which to build collaborative dialogue about the ideals and actions of sustainability across the spectrum of organizational development, stage and industry.

Themes and Principles

The Hierarchy of SustainabilityTM is based upon a generalized operating definition of "sustainability" and further upon several themes and underlying core principles. . However, it rests on a more fundamental leadership methods of *the Discipline of Inquiry*TM, and *Integrity-Based Leadership*TM.¹⁰

Operating Definition - Sustainability

Any operating definition of "sustainability" should be useful across doctrine boundaries including, but not limited to: science, psychology, business, economics, entrepreneurship and politics. And rather than having specific or "new" meaning such as the meaning derived from the term "sustainable development" from the United Nations beginning in the late '80s, requiring long and difficult to remember explanation, the best operating definition is that which holds the broadest, simplest, easiest to understand, most teachable, most memorable and easy to communicate meaning for the most stakeholders. Furthermore, the operating definition must hold its water in any critical debate in diverse forums. For example, the definition of "sustainability" can simply be "survival", meaning both long-term and short-term survival, encompassing the realms of ecology, human systems, organizational systems, local and regional community systems and economies. If something, anything, is not sustainable, i.e., it is not maintainable, it does not survive.

This simple definition anchors the meaning, importance and overarching multicultural, multi-situational and multidisciplinary meaning of "sustainability". Sustainability = survival; unsustainability = failure and death. Anyone, from a child to an octogenarian can "get it".

In the context of the "circle of life", the concept of life, death and renewal, this definition of sustainability includes individual death as an inevitable consequence of life, but it highlights instead concepts of group, species and organizational survival. In nature survival is the outcome of sustainable evolution which depends upon biological renewal, adaptation and transformation. In society this is the outcome of sustainable

¹⁰ See www.disciplineofinquiry.com and www.integritybasedleadership.com.

economics and organizational development which depends upon innovation and transformation, namely entrepreneurship.

Domains of Use

The domains for applied use of this definition are broad. For example, evolution is a stark representation of selective species sustainability, otherwise termed "fecundity", in the "survival of the fittest" model. Species that are not fit, do not survive. Similarly, economies that are not sustainable collapse. Leadership behaviors that are not sustainable ultimately fail. Technologies and industries that mature and do not innovate are unsustainable and fail. Even governments, such as democracies, if not governed wisely, suffer from moral hazard and are corrupted. This broad diversity of meaning gives the term, sustainability, when interpreted as survivability, great depth and reach.

In the context of the Hierarchy of Sustainability™ model the theoretical applied domains, the places the model is used and taught, are focused toward organizational design, operations, management and leadership, and particularly entrepreneurship. This is because the "organization", a group of two or more people organized either ad hoc, for an affinity or common purpose, is the nexus point and crucible of organized resource utilization, and the fulcrum of human sustainability. Moreover, new businesses, or entrepreneurship, is the root of growth, or sustainability, of our economy.¹¹

Hence, focusing on a model that serves to both better understand and to guide the sustainability of "organizations" particularly entrepreneurial organizations, targets the foundations of our micro and macro sustainability. Indeed, the cumulative behavior of our individual organizations' sustainability is, by consequence, our overall sustainability.

Themes

Any model must be broadly applicable, able to be applied with versatility and relevance to a diverse and multicultural constituency. Decades of experience in managing and advising organizations has led to the development of several foundational themes that are used to guide the development and refinement of *the Hierarchy of Sustainability*™ model. These include:

- Diversity is the norm in organizations. Hence the model has to cut across disciplines and domains. Sustainability, like entrepreneurship, is not homogenous.
- Sustainability is in the eyes of the beholder. Hence the model has to be simple, the operating definition of sustainability must be as universal as practical, and the model

¹¹ Reynolds, P. D., Carter, N. M., Gartner, W. B., Greene, P. G., & Cox, L. W. (2002). The Entrepreneur next Door: Characteristics of Individuals Starting Companies in America: An executive Summary of The Panel Study of Entrepreneurial Dynamics. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. Retrieved June 16, 2003, from Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation Web Site: <http://www.entireworld.org>



must appeal to common sensibilities and basic understanding across a diverse audience

- Sustainability is stage relevant. Like humans, organizations have developmental stages, creating a spectrum of differing needs and perspectives. A model for sustainability must consider these stages and be developmentally applicable across all of them.
- Every circumstance is different. Factors such as size, location, inertia, complexity, governance, leadership, information, critical dependencies, stakeholders and knowledge are critical variables in each individual organization's perspectives on sustainability.
- Intangibles drive much of this. Intangibles such as; sentiment, needs, value systems and organizational psychology are confounding yet fundamental to any notions of sustainability.
- Sustainability is dynamic, a moving target. Constant variability and transformation is the steady state.
- Sustainability is about integrated resource utilization in the crucible of commerce, a highly complex organizational challenge enmeshed with sentiment. Hence, the challenge of this model lies within the applied Discipline of Inquiry™ into simplifying innate complexity into a visual representation that tells the story of sustainability, models the major elements, links key conceptual points and allows greater understanding and right action with high utility and simple explanation.
- Sustainability, when defined as survivability is amoral. It is not righteous, political or discriminatory, particularly when viewed from a holistic and time insensitive standpoint. Things or actions are either sustainable or not. It is the theories, definitions, solutions, values and predictive and causal debates that become moral, ethical and theoretical battlegrounds in the struggle for collaboration and the natural competition for thought leadership over "sustainability."

These themes guide the inquiry and dialogue that accompany *the Hierarchy of Sustainability™* model.

Principles

When developing a model or a theory it is also important to codify fundamental underlying principles, otherwise they stand to become implicit or unspoken assumptions unavailable either for those new to the model or for those who would engage in critical debate, or they can be taken for granted and potentially misunderstood. The Hierarchy of Sustainability™ is based upon several basic principles:

The Discipline of Inquiry™ is a universal skill and essential doctrine
Inquiry and the applied philosophy of Radical Inquiry™¹² are essential in the development and use of any theoretical model, and the model should then serve as a

¹² Borie J. S., *The Discipline of Inquiry*, 2008, Defined as "Inquiry beyond apparent reason. The entrepreneurship of the mind"

orienting perspective that facilitates disciplined inquiry and guided learning. A good model should simplify complexity without losing depth and reach. It should be short in form, but long in substance. Moreover, any good model is simply a portal for disciplined inquiry and critical thinking. Conclusions are short-lived.

The Ecology of Commerce¹³ is all around us

Paul Hawken wrote a masterful book titled the Ecology of Commerce. *The Sustainable Organization*™ takes a different perspective to both defining and articulating *the Ecology of Commerce*SM as a theoretical model for applying critical inquiry into the nature of commerce as it relates to our ecosystem as a whole.

The Ecology of Commerce is, very simply, *the commerce of value*, the exchange of systems of value between natural as well as human (non-natural) systems. All things that are valued and exchanged are therefore currencies (mediums of exchange) of value. Anything that is valued is a resource, and all resources are *currencies of value*. Money is only one of an infinite number of currencies of value on an ecological scaled hierarchy of value, from sustenance and shelter to the extremes of ego actualization.

The *commerce of value* is the innate nature of systems, ranging from natural systems to human systems to economic systems, wherein resources are exchanged and utilized based upon hierarchies of need. Photosynthesis, where energy is exchanged; or termite symbiosis with fungi, where digestion of cellulose is exchanged, are examples of ecological commerce of value between species, which allows survival. As value systems increase in sophistication from basic nature to more evolved nature, the systems of value evolve from survival exchanges to exchanges of sentiment, such as emotional satisfaction and self-esteem. Accordingly, advanced systems of value exchange have emerged to form incredible complexity in systems of discretionary consumption of the currency of consumables, driven by the sentiment of humans and the natural evolution of organizations formed to harness resources (build currencies) to meet sentiment-driven demand, building economies of *the commerce of value*.

Sustainability (survivability) is built upon the ecology of commerce, namely, the commerce of value, which in ecological terms is based upon a hierarchy of resource value. In human systems the ecology of commerce is based upon the hierarchy of needs and manifest in the organizational systems that build value (harness and convert resources) to meet that need. Understanding sustainability is about understanding the ecology of commerce seen as systems of value exchange.

The nature of organizations – organizations are our nature

In human systems, the "organization" is the root system for the harnessing of resources for their conversion into value. Organizations of all shapes and forms develop from the foundations of human need in order to move ideas into action, converting resources into

¹³ The Ecology of Commerce is trademarked and owned by Inquiry Universe, www.Ecologyofcommecre.com

value, and to exchange value for survival. This is the essence of survival (sustainability) in the ecology of commerce. Hence, understanding and guiding the development of organizations toward sustainability is key to overall sustainability/survivability.

It is all too easy in the theoretical debate about sustainability to overlook the very foundational elements of our world; namely, that all things done and undone by humans begin with an idea and are then actualized in organization and therefore from organizations. Organizations are natural and inevitable identity groups that reflect the needs, intents and purposes of their constituencies. Organizational leadership, design, management, psychology and ultimately, sustainability, are therefore core to sustainability overall. Organizations are our nature.

Developmental ecology and psychology are key tenets

When the theories of evolution and developmental psychology were introduced to the world, they fundamentally changed the ways people view how the world and people evolve. We now better understand how people, organizations and the planet evolve developmentally, in stages. We understand also how much of our world and its systems evolve in developmental sequences from early stages to later stage, with each stage built upon the foundation of earlier essential developmental stages. Natural selection is a relentless and inevitable form of developmental ecology, witnessed in the tiered levels of the food chain for example, where no one developmental level can be ignored without consequences for the others.

Similarly the development of individual and group identities form according to stages of development such as those highlighted in Erikson's Psychosocial Development theory¹⁴ or Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs¹⁵. People progress through a series of psychological, physical, emotional and social developmental stages to reach maturity, and if one or more of these stages is interrupted, developmental pathologies can arise, leading to unhealthy later stage personality, behavioral or physical problems.

Organizations are no different. They develop in stages, with the people, identity group(s) and the structures and forms of organized complexity evolving from idea to organization to action and ultimately to results. The evolution of any organization is a symphony of intertwined variables where the interruption or improper development of any one stage can dramatically affect subsequent stages, ultimately affecting the survivability (sustainability) of the organization.

The principle understanding of “developmentality”, the perspective of developmental stages, is that building, shaping, changing, or fixing organizations in a direction toward sustainability must be approached developmentally, where a focus on fundamentals is essential.

¹⁴ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Psychosocial_development

¹⁵ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maslow's_hierarchy_of_needs

The economics of entrepreneurship – entrepreneurship is survival

Many look to large organizations and government as the engines of change and "sustainable development". It is interesting to realize that the true engine of long-term economic growth lies in entrepreneurship. As of 2006, 197 of the top Fortune 200 companies began as entrepreneurial ventures.¹⁶ Sustainability, the survival of people, planet and economies lies in the economics of entrepreneurship, the ecology of value creation and the systemic survivability of innovative ideas, actions and entrepreneurship. Hence the foundations and economics of sustainability lie in the economics of entrepreneurship.

There are foundations of organizational success

The Foundations of any organization's success are rooted in fundamentals: needs, resources, leadership, management, communications, stakeholder management and environmental awareness. The organization's purpose is to meet the needs of whatever its task, mission, vision or affinity attraction dictate. In order to accomplish anything an organization needs to acquire and harness resources into value. This requires both leadership and the management of complexity. Nothing happens without communications, the exchange of information value between individuals. And if the organization does not meet/tend to the needs of its stakeholders, it will ultimately fail. Similarly if an organization evolves unaware and unresponsive to its environmental circumstances, it will fail. Any organization simultaneously is affected by its environment and affects its environment at the same time. Constant awareness of and response to this essential interdependence is the lifeblood of survival.

This is a fundamental tenant of strategic planning for competitive organizations. It is also a fundamental tenant for ecological homeostasis among biological systems. Environmental awareness and stakeholder management are not new. They are ancient wisdom manifest in basic fundamentals of survivability.

Principles of leadership – everything depends upon leadership

Organizations and organizational development depend upon leadership. All actions in the ecology of commerce are derived from leadership in some form. This leadership will ultimately determine the sustainability of an idea's efficacy and an organization's sustainability.

Unfortunately, there are over 200 definitions and notions of the nature of leadership,¹⁷ and there is continuous and ongoing debate in professional, academic and government circles regarding the "best" forms and way to lead. This is further confused with the differing concepts of management versus leadership. Everything depends upon leadership, but leadership is an elusive concept.

¹⁶ Reynolds et al., 2002

¹⁷ Yukl, Gary A., Leadership in Organizations, Prentice Hall, 2002



If however, one asks the question "what is sustainable leadership?" namely the type of leadership that is most sustainable both long and short-term, the debate gets easier.

A host of factors affect leadership, such as authority, power, language and values. But in terms of long-term survivability of both leaders and organizations, only one stands out as consistent and reliable, namely, *integrity based leadership*¹⁸.

*Integrity-based leadership*TM describes leadership based upon authenticity, personal congruence with espoused values. Over the long term one metric of leadership, trust, the foundation of confidence, dominates the effectiveness and long-term survivability of both leaders and their organizations.

Trustworthiness, the psychosocial criteria of comfort and emotional resonance of followers for a leader and an organization, is the dominant characteristic of lasting leadership sustainability. Within this framework, the primary determinant of trustworthiness is integrity, the authenticity and congruence of the leader and the organization.

Hence, sustainable leadership, whether taught or innate, rests in the fundamentals of integrity, namely congruency of values.

The results of dis-integrity are unsustainable leadership, evidenced in inevitable crises of confidence and either leadership or organizational failure or both.

Thought leadership, an essential concept

Throughout the stages of personal or organizational development, everything depends upon *thought leadership*¹⁹, the influencing and shaping of perspective, of point of view.

In humans, this is both taught and "caught" from the influence of families of origin and families of influence, ultimately shaping the perceived needs and values of the individual throughout their development stages.

In organizations, the same is true, with the added complexity that each individual brings unique individual values and needs to bear in an environment of organizational needs and values.

In every organization, there is an ongoing drama of thought leadership, shaping the culture and identity of the organization and affecting the organization's needs, resource acquisition and utilization and ultimately its progression through the stages of development from the idea stage through to maturity, and beyond.

¹⁸ Borie, J. S., *Integrity Based Leadership*, 2007

¹⁹ Borie, J. S., *Thought Leadership*, 2007



The sustainability of all organizations is based upon a simple premise; if the thought leadership of an organization develops and transforms successfully through its stages of development, the leadership is sustainable and the organization can be sustainable. If this leadership cannot transform, to meet the evolving and maturing needs of the organization, it will not be sustainable and the organization will not be sustainable.

Valuing History: There is wisdom in time-honored fundamentals and the sky has been falling for many years

History is our ally. People, leaders, organizations and civilizations that adhere to fundamentals survive over the long term. They are sustainable. Those that skip developmental steps or do not transcend needs, or that cast a blind eye to basic and simple fundamentals such as managing their stakeholders, their environment, their leadership or their hierarchy of needs are simply not sustainable. It is all too easy to lose sight of these basic principles in the increasingly complex world where all of the world's problems are now visible and infinite solutions are now possible in this dawning information age. Supercomputing has given us the ability to analyze issues down to their nanoparticles. And yet, throughout all of the complexity, there remains simplicity, such as using a virus to fight a virus, acknowledging common sense vs. fancy rhetoric; and that change begins with and ends in human nature, human needs and in the organizations that translate ideas into actions.

The Hierarchy of Needs is essential to understanding sustainability

The relative need for anything creates its value as a resource, and its place in the Ecology of Commerce. In such, sustainability (survivability) has its roots in the hierarchy of natural system needs and in the hierarchy of human needs. This is also true for organizations. Organizations form and grow based upon the needs and values of their leaders and their stakeholders, ranging from base level survival needs to higher needs including intellectual and spiritual needs.

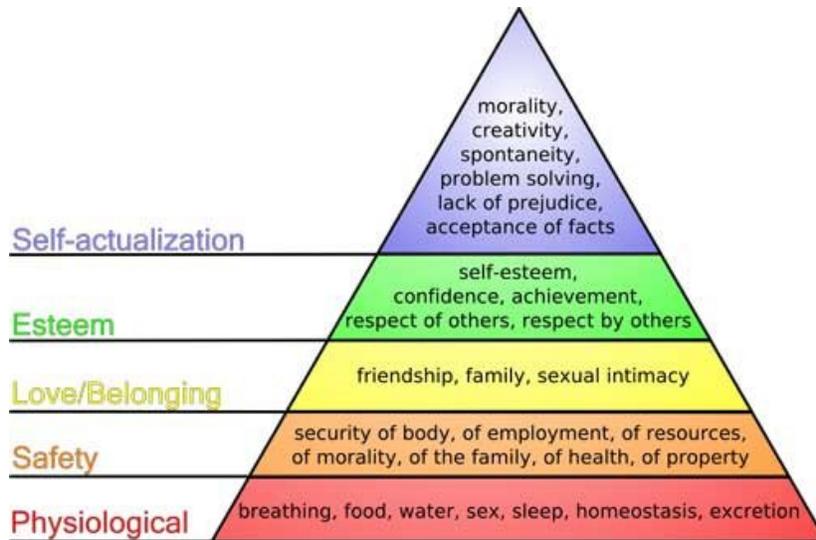
Abraham Maslow created a brilliant analysis of the framework of human psychosocial development in his model the "Hierarchy of Needs"²⁰ which sets forth a developmental model of human needs. This model categorized human needs layered in a hierarchy from simple survival to self-actualization. The base level needs must be satisfied in order to develop and progress to satisfy subsequent higher level needs. All levels of needs fulfillment are essential for the complete psychosocial health of humans, and are hence needed for long-term human sustainability. This theory has survived the tests of time and exhaustive critical review and serves as an accepted foundational theory upon which to both understand and to model human behavior, developmentally, situationally and holistically.

The theory also takes a humanist approach, looking at the holism of needs in each person. It suggests that if all of the needs of the person, including the highest,

²⁰ Maslow, Abraham, *Motivation and Personality*, New York, Harper & Row, 1954

transcendent self-actualization needs, are not met, that that person is not fulfilled or complete. That person is ultimately not healthy psychologically, developmentally and holistically in their life. In the context of sustainability, or survival, that person is therefore not sustained.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs



Maslow, Abraham, Motivation and Personality, New York, Harper & Row, 1954

Maslow's model highlights the dominance of needs in all of human development and behaviors. We as individuals and as a collective are driven by a hierarchy of needs. These needs, both real and perceived, drive all of our activities, our attention, our consumption and our attitudes and beliefs. In the context of the Ecology of Commerce and the Commerce of Value, one can see that needs drive perceived value, and value drives commerce. Sustainability is therefore intimately linked to the hierarchies of human needs and the subsequent hierarchies of values.

In organizations, the hierarchy of needs dominate organizational design and management because stage-specific leadership and stakeholder needs and values drive organizational resource acquisition and management in a developmental evolution from concept to maturity.

The Hierarchy of Sustainability™ Model

The Hierarchy of Sustainability™ model is relatively simple in its conceptual framework, examining the relationship between needs and resource utilization in the stages of organizational development.

It is based upon the premise that sustainability can be viewed both in the natural world as well as the economic and organizational world as survivability; and that the human ideals of sustainability, whether simply notions of survival or theoretical ideals of

economic and ecological homeostasis are rooted in hierarchies of human needs and hierarchies of basic organizational needs (driven by human needs) for increased resource acquisition and utilization in order to grow from startup to maturity.

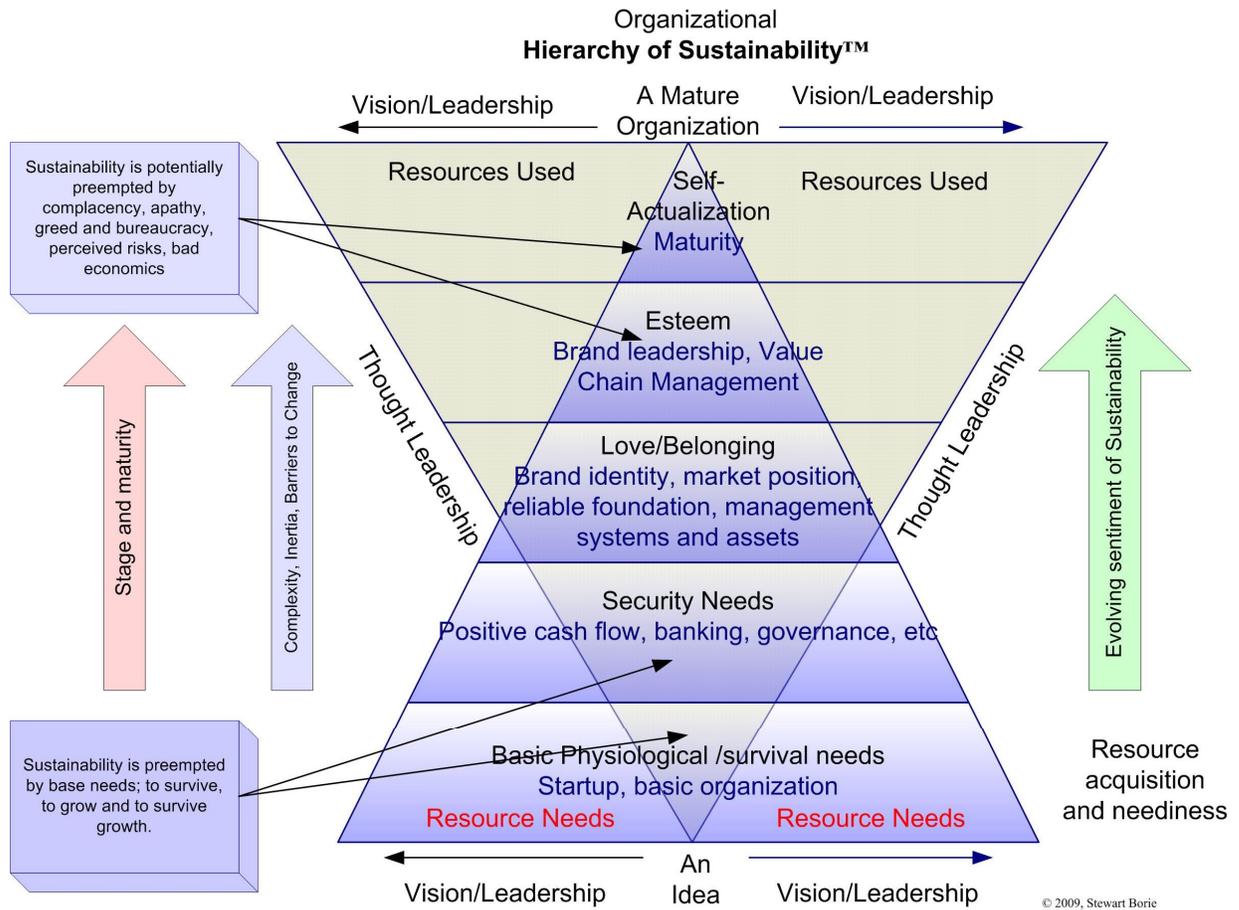
This model is represented utilizing inverse stacked pyramids to generalize the inverse relationships between the interdependent developmental stages and orders of magnitude of two basic foundations of human and organizational development;

- 1) Psychosocial needs, relative to individuals and organization in their developmental evolution from startup to maturity and
- 2) Resource utilization needs and uses relative to the same developmental stages of evolution from startup to maturity.

Additional developmental variables can then be examined concurrently as overlays upon the basic model. The model can then also be applied to sub-domains such as industries and/or vertical markets to examine this relationship in more specificity.

The objectives of the model are severalfold:

- To simplify the complex interrelationships of sustainability in human organizational development
- To examine and highlight some basic underpinnings of the notions of sustainability such as needs
- To provide an orienting framework for assessing and understanding “situational sustainability” in the context of “developmental sustainability”
- To allow for observation and inquiry regarding the impacts of subjective organizational development variables, such as innovation, transformation and personal as well as organizational self-actualization
- To highlight inherent paradoxes in the implementation of sustainable practices relative to the psychology of organizational development
- To provide a framework for situational assessments, intervention and solution development to enhance the promulgation of sustainable practices.



The Hierarchy of Organizational Needs

Maslow’s hierarchy of needs can be adapted to organizations to reflect more generalized needs associated with organizations. While all organizations are driven by leadership, each organization has a mix of organizational vision and needs as well as the needs of the human resources within the organization. As a result, organizational needs are a blend of human as well as strategic needs. Organizational needs range from intangibles, such as confidence, networks, momentum, credibility, brand recognition, camaraderie and team spirit, to structural tangible needs such as capital, assets, infrastructure, skilled human resources, technology, manufacturing, etc. These needs progress developmentally and generally in stages, differing greatly from the idea stage to the mature organization stage. Indeed strategy and resource needs are interdependent, as are leadership and resource utilization strategies.

The behavior of the organization’s leadership, the evolution of the organizational culture and all of the strategic decisions about resource acquisition and resource utilization can be seen as a complex hierarchy of resource needs.

This hierarchy of organizational needs correlates well with Maslow’s hierarchy of human needs when looking at organizational development from the idea stage initially

through to maturity. Initially, pre-organization, someone starts with an idea. Generally, in order to actualize the idea at any scale, that person must organize resources, including human resources, in order to manifest their idea as a viable merchantable concept. Indeed, early stage ventures are basically ideas with huge needs, starting with survival needs for operating assets such as; other people, money, credibility, infrastructure, etc. The objectives are generally to grow and to thrive on a path to full actualization of a vision – entrepreneurship in action, so to speak.

Hence there is a continuing need for more resources. With the expansion of resources, comes the inevitable transition through stages of growth and increased resource needs and complexity, with the needs changing throughout the organizational life cycle until maturity. At maturity, the organization has either reached its potential and then transcends to new realms, or it matures and declines, unsustainable in its evolving environment.

Organizations' hierarchy of needs are much like Maslow's hierarchy of needs, weighted toward survival needs as the base level developmental stage evolving toward the highest stage, yet lowest weighted, self-actualization needs. And like humans, if early stages are not met, self-actualization does not occur.

The Hierarchy of Resource Utilization and Management

Concurrent to this developmental hierarchy of needs is the developmental hierarchy of resource utilization. This hierarchy has an inverse relationship with organizational needs. Early stage organizations generally have few resources with high survival and resource needs. Later stage organizations generally have sufficient resources and much lower survival based needs. Mature organizations instead face challenges with resource utilization and high self-actualization needs, namely to transcend and grow through maturity to innovation and renewal. Some innovative organizations master this and survive and thrive over the long-term.²¹

With growth comes the inevitable growth in the levels and complexity of resource utilization, coupled with inexorable social and competitive drives toward improved efficiencies and productivity. At the early stages of organizational development, the emphasis is generally placed upon resource acquisition. In later stages, emphasis shifts toward resource management, on a spectrum from additional resource acquisition to improved resource conversion and management. Scope, scale and environment change dramatically as organizations progress through developmental stages, as does the sentiment and psychology of the organization.

Hence, in early development stages, the needs are survival and basic foundations. In middle development stages needs shift to growth, management of complexity and the management of the ethical and practical utilization of resources. In the later stages emphasis can shift to leadership, teaching, measuring and modifying approaches to the

²¹ See "Innovators Solution" by Clayton Christensen, www.claytonchristensen.com

organization's performance and its impact upon its stakeholders to achieve a more sustainable future.

Visualizing organizational sustainability developmentally

There is a paradox inherent in the concept of sustainability. This paradox lies in the common view of sustainability as a generalized ideal juxtaposed against the reality that sustainability must be individually relevant and actionable in the moment to have momentum, coherent value and hence, sustainability. Sustainability must be sustainable at all levels, individually, organizationally and socially.

If it is too complex, too depressing, too large, too amorphous, overridden by personal or organizational neediness or otherwise obscured by confounding variables, it will not last, and it will not be grounded in coherent transformation. It will remain an ephemeral ideal, rather than a congruent idea.

Like any idea, organization or activity, sustainability must be anchored in common vision, realizable at the leadership and the individual levels. This means that the far-reaching “vision” of “sustainability” must be brought down to the level of a simple vision, a least common denominator of thought leadership, able to be “gotten” simply, and easily. Otherwise it will be obscured by the “noise” of its inherent and massive complexity. It must be also be transferable; from the ordinary individual to any level of leadership.

In such, a model or vision of sustainability should easily translate into a visualization which can be relevant at any moment and in any circumstance.

Much like Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs made the spectrum of human development and needs understandable to all in a simple stacked pyramid model, we believe that the Hierarchy of Sustainability™ will serve to forward the notion that the concept of sustainability can also be made understandable and relevant to all, in a similar model that incorporates Maslow’s wisdom.

Moreover, Maslow’s model began a vigorous and vital dialogue about “humanistic” and developmental psychology that has endured and enriched human understanding in general. After half a century, it still is robust and stimulates lasting thought and ongoing inquiry, and it applies at all levels, individually, organizationally and socially. It is a sustainable model. We hope the Hierarchy of Sustainability™ will invoke similar thought and ongoing inquiry for individuals, organizations and our society. We hope it will sustain a deep, lasting and transformational conversation about the meaning and nature of sustainability.

Exploring the model

The Hierarchy of Sustainability™ Model is an inquiry model. It forces questions about the complex interdependencies of human needs, organizations and the concepts of sustainability, rooted in survival.

As we develop the model and the tools and implementation strategies that accompany its use, we find that we are drawn again and again to the power of the simple visualization and the questions that it invokes. We are always eager to display the model to individuals and groups and see the transformation that occurs. We are also eager to discuss the model because it always invokes a conversation, a path to finding shared visions and a common framework for exploring collaboration and community. It is also enriching to teach with this model. People “get it” right away.

We encourage you to take a look at the model and ponder your place in it. Ponder your organization’s place in it. Ask questions and explore some of its key inquiry paths, such as:

- What are the hierarchies of resources used by any organization, and does this hierarchy create obstacles for sustainability?
- Just how does the concept of sustainability evolve in organizations over stage development and time?
- Leadership and culture development are integral to this model. How do these factors affect sustainability across stage and size? Whose thought leadership is actually leading?
- What does the model look like when sliced by industry? Are their particularities of these hierarchies within industries, and how do variables like leadership and culture affect this?
- What happens with scale? Scale affects everything, including culture, leadership, language, shared vision and worldview along with resource utilization and resource needs.
- Ponder the evolving individual and organizational sentiment at size, stage and development levels. Sustainability, a.k.a survival, shifts constantly. How does the sentiment of sustainability shift?
- Think about disruptors, intervening variables that interrupt stages of development, affect sentiment, drive changes in needs and otherwise “upset the apple cart”.

Pick a point on the model and then pick another and imagine the transformation that is required to go from point to point in the evolution of an organization and its people.

Or perhaps ask yourself, what happens when one is blinded by resource neediness at early stages; or trapped by complacency or ego need by resource hegemony at a later stage. What critical dependencies exist across stages of organizational development? And if our economy and world depend upon entrepreneurship for renewal, innovation and growth, how many entrepreneurs know this stuff?

Summary: The Sustainable Organization™ – A complex notion based upon simple fundamentals. Simplifying Complexity

In the context of these theoretical underpinnings, the Sustainable Organization™ can be seen as a model, or framework of fundamentals, looking at the roots of “sustainability” from its meaning as a word, its parallels to the natural world and its simple applied utility to all stages of all organizations.

Moreover, the complexity of sustainability can be simplified by focusing on core principles and visualizing sustainability relative to the Hierarchy of Sustainability™.

The concept of the Sustainable Organization™ has two major elements

1) It ties together the following basic principles in the context of individual and organizational needs, value exchange and resource utilization:

- Sustainability is a myth, an ideal which can instead be defined in the natural and human world as simply *survival*
- Everything in the natural and human worlds revolves around the Ecology of Commerce, the valuing of resources based upon needs
- Everything in the human systems revolves around organizations, the mechanisms for actualizing commerce.
- Sustainability, namely survival and fecundity in the human world has its basis in the sustainability of organizations.
- Sustainability and entrepreneurship are essential partners
- Organizations, and their sustainability as a whole, define our global sustainability
- People as well as organizations follow developmental stages in both their evolution toward sustainability (survival) and in their utilization of resources. Hence understanding developmental stages and needs in correlation with resource utilization is essential to understanding “sustainability”.
- Relative to sustainability, defined as survivability, the fundamentals of organizational development are immutable. Sustainability can simply be defined as organizational excellence.
- Everything relies upon leadership

2) It integrates these principles with our simple model of the individual and organizational developmental needs and values that make up the Hierarchy of Sustainability™, such that sustainability can be visualized by a broad spectrum of people at any moment in time.

Hence, sustainability, when explained in the context of organizational fundamentals is not a mythic ideal; it is simply a natural of outcome of good organizational principles, practices and leadership. If an organization can master these principles it will come to be lead by them, and notions of sustainability will come naturally. The word sustainability becomes a simple reminder to stay the course of mastering organizational



excellence, and to think broadly about one's impact and responsibility, individually and organizationally.

Triple bottom line accounting can now be seen as simply an artifact of organizational excellence. Indeed, history tells us that the quadruple bottom line is essential to sustainability, where spirituality is once again reconnected to the “bottom line” of our sustainable development. Similarly, “sustainable development” can no longer be seen as an economic enterprise, but instead can be viewed as a perspective on individual, organizational and social systems natural progression on the hierarchy of needs and the hierarchy of resource utilization.

The Bottom Line

The bottom line results are survival, competitiveness, growth, individual and organizational health and measurable achievement of benevolent excellence performance metrics. Those who commit to the mastery of these values will survive and thrive in the coming age of uncertainty and entrepreneurship. The environment is changing, the knowledge one needs is more comprehensive and the tools of change are more sophisticated, but the principles of excellence are fundamental, and while measurements and management systems may change, the principles of "sustainability" are basic and timeless, ecologically, economically and organizationally.