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Some things are non-negotiable.

Other things are best classified as “should” or “would be nice to do”. In many instances, the returns to such initiatives cannot be quantified or monetised. The general umbrella term of corporate social responsibility, greenhouse emissions reductions in particular, falls within this cluster.

A recent public statement by Australia’s second-largest supermarket chain that it had contracted to purchase 70% of the capacity of three solar plants, to be established in rural New South Wales (representing 220 gigawatts of power) was laudable.

It will complement and extend past endeavours which have reduced emissions by 4% over the previous 12 months, and some 30% since 2009. (During that decade market share has declined and revenue trends have largely flat-lined.)

Indirect to its primary retailing activities, it will generate or contribute to the creation of 240 jobs during the construction phase and a further 10 once operations begin.

When reviewing such endeavour within a marketing context, it is important to identify, isolate, analyse and interact with primary, secondary and tertiary target audiences. That is, stakeholders.

Plaudits will doubtless come from equity fund managers, many shareholders, supply-chain partners, some existing and prospective employees, peers in management and on Boards of Directors, and the media at large.

It is probably true to conclude, *the impact will be greater in media headlines than on company bottom lines.*

There has been no evidence in research findings from studies conducted over the past two years that greenhouse emission reduction is ranked in twelve criteria applied by Australian consumers in their selection of preferred supermarkets.

The relentless surge in presence, sales and market share of Aldi can be expected to continue – with or without an emissions reduction philosophy or strategy.

That is not to suggest that the concept and nature of corporate social conscience should be dismissed or discontinued.

Doing the right things, being seen to be doing the right things, all for the right reasons, should be sufficient reward and return in themselves.

As with the topic itself, a “feel-good” factor can be fulfilling in itself. Existing and prospective employees may readily identify an entity as an employer-of-choice. However, there is no evidence that it will extend job tenures, which continue to be concentrated.

Traditional economic and financial measures and ratios may not be appropriate for corporate social conscience values.

Rather than outcomes, these cultural beliefs may be better considered as parameters, or a framework within which traditional and long-established key performance indicators are established, monitored, respected, measured and refined.

It's an interesting and pertinent topic in an increasing number of strategic reviews and business development workshops that I'm given the pleasure to facilitate.

I encourage all to initiate and participate in conversation.

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