



Sustainable Firms Expected to Prosper in 21st Century

CHICAGO, IL -- A business conference just completed at the Union League Club of Chicago discussed the types of companies that will be the leaders—including the profit and growth leaders—of the 21st century and what they have in common.

Guest speaker Rosabeth Moss Kanter, author of several books and chair of the Harvard University Advanced Leadership Initiative, says the leading companies of this century will be those that have a purpose, have values, and promote sustainability.

As an example, Kanter discussed Procter & Gamble (PG), which makes many products for consumer as well as the professional cleaning industry, as a company that meets these criteria.

“P&G has a very strong set of values that have guided the company for years,” she says. “Essentially it can be boiled down to developing products that improve the lives of consumers now...and for years to come.”

Kanter says her research has found that companies that share these criteria have weathered the current economic storm relatively well because they have a foundation that has helped

many prosper during the current recession.

For instance, she mentioned a Brazilian bank, Banco Real, which believes so strongly in sustainable and environmental issues “that they turn away business if it does not meet their [sustainable] values,” Kanter says. “Interestingly, they are also one of the most successful banks in South America because their values have drawn similar, successful companies to them.”

Stephen Ashkin, president of The Ashkin Group and Sustainable Tool LLC, which helps jan-san companies measure their environmental impact and promote sustainability, says he is not surprised that environmentally responsible companies will be the growth leaders of the 21st century.

“Companies can no longer focus just on profits, especially short-term profits,” says Ashkin. “They must make money, of course, but also keep in mind the ‘big picture,’ which is how their products and services help people, protect the environment, and foster sustainability.”