

THE SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS

Interview with James Taylor
Chief Executive, InSync Technology



Extract from book commissioned by
Brevity Marketing

Introduction

A relatively new addition to the business vocabulary, but mission-critical if a company is going to be looking long-term.

But what does 'sustainable' really mean?

With 'sustainability' it has become locked in the crosshairs of the pursuit of environmental best practice, which arguably is the commercial equivalent of cart before horse.

The very *modus operandi* of a sustainable business means that one of the outputs will be environmental responsibility, though a company delivering environmental sustainability won't necessarily be a sustainable business.

Arguably 'sustainable' is kind of a business definition of holistic, with everything it does interconnected by its culture.

In other words its about sense of purpose, values, behaviours, active brand, internal/external engagement with all of the stakeholders, relationship optimisation, consistency, resilience, a mindset which sees challenges as opportunities, a desire to develop a circular economy, all of which combines to deliver sustainability, all rooted in responsible practices that will serve to preserve our planet.

For a series of papers and subsequent book commissioned by Brevity Marketing and to be published by DECISION magazine, business owners and directors from across generations and market sectors share their thoughts about how they would define the characteristics of a sustainable business, and what the journey might hold.

This is one of the interviews to be included.

An ethos which is evidence based

“If you aren’t being challenged or developing your knowledge, you’ve probably achieved the maximum at the role you’re in, whether as chief executive or on the shop floor, and that should be the point of your departure.

“For a sustainable business, every day is a school day. Its people have got to be continuously learning. The moment that stops, sustainability is compromised. A sustainable business is not achieved by simply maintaining the status quo.”

James Taylor is chief executive of InSync Technology, developers of signal processing hardware and software products that ensure video content looks its best, however it is broadcast anywhere in the world.

First and foremost, says Taylor, a sustainable business has got to be profitable and provide something the customer values because it solves a problem or meets a need. “Two key characteristics are that it has to innovative and be agile,” he maintains. ‘Long gone are the days when you could confidently write and follow to the letter a ten-year plan.



James Taylor

“Fundamentally there has to be an ethos of continual business improvement in process, product, and people, which I believe makes an organisation more attractive to work for. And a sustainable business will embrace diversity because it’s a great way to gain ideas from all walks of life.

“Our values, how we operate, also need to be expressed externally. They serve as the foundation and the guide rails for a sustainable business and we shouldn’t be shy about them.”

“How a sustainable business projects community and environmental value has to be evidence based,” asserts Taylor.

“Having a focus on sustainability in design and manufacturing for example enables us to reduce CO2 emissions in the use of our equipment by factor of ten in some cases; while energy use for video conversion hardware in the market is typically eight hundred and fifty watts, ours can be running at thirty-five watts.

“Innovation is a characteristic of a sustainable company, but because it is at the core of the business I would say it is driven more internally than being customer led. It has also resulted in us reducing computer resource consumption by sixty-five per cent in the last six years, and a competitive advantage will come out of that.

“But that internal driver is fuelled by understanding what the market is telling us we should be addressing and why, so it’s a holistic perspective.

“We changed all our packaging, not from customer demand but because we wanted it to be completely recyclable, and as a result the volume of packaging has reduced. There’s a financial benefit in that but the driver was environmental responsibility, which is part of the DNA of a sustainable business.

“We have a policy of buying local rather than looking to procure at the very cheapest rate we can, which inevitably would be from China, because that sustains our communities. By local I mean within thirty miles where possible but silicon, for example, invariably is produced elsewhere.

“It’s important because a sustainable business will recognise the importance of generating income for the local economy, and the impact that has on its ability to attract talent.”

Another characteristic of a sustainable business, according to Taylor, is to evaluate strategy through a wider prism than the immediate P&L. “There’s a very good reason for not following the path of taking software development overseas,” he says by way of example.

“You can end up paying ten people to do the job of one offshore, or one person to do the job of ten in the UK and bolster the country’s talent pool. That’s before the wider environmental considerations of having to travel across the globe to address issues which can’t be reconciled on a conference call.

“I also think you lose control of quality, and my view is that offshoring can turn out to be a false economy. That doesn’t contribute to building a sustainable business.

“Nor does debt finance if it results in sweating an asset because all the investors want is the coupon, the amount of interest they are able to receive. Can a buy-and-build strategy, folding one company into another with, guess what, debt piled upon debt, be a model for building a sustainable business?

“I’m not saying a company can’t look for outside investment and be sustainable, but it needs to go into the process with its eyes open.”



A characteristic of InSync Technology is that the company is employee-owned. “I was interviewed for the post of chief executive by all of the twenty committed, smart staff at the time in one room,” recalls Taylor.

The board makes decisions on behalf of the shareholders as in any other business, and the governance of the organisation sits with the board. It means the directors have a responsibility to shareholders who all happen to be working for the company.

“My first question to everyone here was to ask what for them was the purpose of our company,” says Taylor. “Their responses were along the lines of making the best quality products for the broadcast industry. I said the right answer is that its prime

purpose is for the benefit of you, the same as for a company with external shareholders. It's the 'how' which makes the difference.

"The positive consequence of the 'how' if the intention is to build a sustainable business? What I'd like it to result in is InSync Technology being an organisation which has people knocking at its door because they want to work here, and customers knocking on the door because they want to buy our product.

"Increasingly, if it isn't doing the right thing in this day and age then a company is going to lose trust, become less relevant, will damage even long-term relationships, and will ultimately lose business."

But Taylor adds a caveat. "Ultimately," he says, "a business like ours is only sustainable if it delivers value and has relevance to its customers in terms of its technology."

www.insync.tv

About Brevity Marketing



Kaia Vincent

The interview with James Taylor was undertaken with Brevity Marketing founder and managing director Kaia Vincent FCIM.

Brevity Marketing is on a mission to empower business leaders and teams to succeed in today's competitive market while at the same time considering their impact on people and planet, providing tailored strategic and tactical marketing that tell a company's story and drive results – helping business to be seen, heard, and chosen above the noise.

Brevity achieved B Corporation status in 2023.

Kaia Vincent began her career in the beverage industry as an editor at Canadean (now Global Data), a leading analysis firm in that sector. After earning a master's in marketing (CIM Level 7 Diploma), she transitioned into the corporate marketing department and was responsible for leading high-profile events across Europe for c-suite executives.

Seeking new challenges, Kaia left Canadean to pursue a career in the fast-paced tech sector as marketing manager for a Novell and VMWare platinum partner. Then following a stint in the agency world, she founded her own consultancy, Brevity Marketing in 2010. With over twenty-five years of experience and a chartered marketer and marketing fellow designations, Kaia has worked with more than one hundred SME leaders throughout her career. She practices continuous professional development (CPD) including more recent studies in artificial intelligence and neuroscience.

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About DECISION magazine

First published in 1988, DECISION magazine reflects the business lifestyle, the trials and tribulations, the hopes and aspirations of business owners and directors responsible for businesses with a turnover of £5million and above.

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