

The Future of the Responsible Company: What We've Learned from Patagonia's First 50 Years

Vincent Stanley

Yvon Chouinard

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Vincent Stanley and Yvon Chouinard's book *The Future of the Responsible Company* reflects on the first fifty years of the outdoor retailer Patagonia.

Co-written by the company's founder, the book looks at the purpose-driven California-based company, documenting how it goes beyond mere profit chasing with initiatives like supporting the restoration of the dead Ventura River and supporting a raptor rehabilitation center that nurses injured birds back to health. The recreational clothing retailer is presented as a shining example of what corporate America could be at a time when more young college graduates only want to work for virtuous employers who reflect their values.

Beyond the book's self-mythologizing elements are candid insights: Patagonia's publishing wing, an offshoot of a parent company that makes outdoor apparel and gear, helped the company to a much wider market. Thanks, in part, to such efforts, Patagonia rose from an organization made up of a few climbers and surfers into a revered global brand that clears more than a billion in annual revenue. And it does an impressive job of putting its progressive values to work: it was an early childcare adopter and donated 10% of profits to environmental causes.

Patagonia became a foundation-owned business in time; the book shows why that structure advances its values, noting such arrangements have been common in Europe for over a century. It also issues a call for other companies to do their part in saving the earth instead of despoiling it, sharing a clear template for social responsibility. Indeed, its appendixes include checklists for other companies looking to have a positive impact on the world.

The Future of the Responsible Company is rousing as it looks back at Patagonia's history and considers what it means to be a responsible company in a climate-changing world.

JOSEPH S. PETE (September / October 2023)

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