

# A View

## From the Prairie

Vol. XXIX No. 9

September 2022

### Do No Harm

Can business operate on the concept of “do no harm”? At one point, a major corporation had that concept in their motto, but dropped it in the face of a constant drumbeat to make more profit. It is a challenge to commit to making the community better and yet not do harm. Because change may include some destruction, the community decides what is harm and what is not. We want to be doing more building than destruction.

At its core, Capitalism has the concept of “creative destruction” which describes how building the new often replaces the old. Many times, someone thinks that replacing the old is a form of destruction. The challenge is do that “destruction” while offering benefits to the whole community.

Change often includes losing something. We may need to tear down an old building to make something new or remove trees or something else. We who act do not get to decide if that is harming the community; the community decides.

Some people want to think that they can’t do harm. They may have achieved so much already. Or the good they are doing for the community or the wealth they have gives them a “pass” on what they do.

However, regular people can do harm. Many people who committed harm were intelligent, thoughtful, and culturally adept people. Pillars of the community have been convicted of major crimes.

Among every part of society including the elite, we can find every crime.

We need to explore what it really means for business to do no harm.

Society is a web, not a spreadsheet. It is fragile, incomplete, and constantly changing. We interact with others in a morality dance of mutual benefits where we are moral towards them and they are moral back. This means that no static definition of proper behavior is possible.

What was once accepted is no longer. Instead, we live in a constant striving for better. And we ask what is business doing for society instead of what business is doing to society.

Many want a veneer to cover what they really think and do. Tales of

“green washing”, “rainbow washing” abound. Many a corporation celebrates a cultural day or month in public while financially supporting those who are doing harm to that culture. No amount of such “washing” can make up for continuing to do harm.

The first step has to be to stop doing the harm. It is not possible to cover up harm. It will always eventually show.

It is not possible to wash away the stain of continuing to do harm by simple acts of contrition or through a PR campaign. The change that counts is a systemic change to corporate behavior.

Because we do some destruction when creating the new, perfection may not be possible in our goal of not doing harm. But a solid net gain to society is possible when we treat everyone with respect and push for just institutions in society.

### Society Is A Web

### Constructive Response

As business people, we get inundated with events and requests. It can be overwhelming and many people find themselves responding “reactively”. Media and political parties attempt to get all of us to respond reactively in ways that give them more money and power. It can greatly benefit us all to figure out different responses.

Some of the worst examples of bad responses occur when we respond reactively without fully thinking through all the consequences. Politicians are notorious for such bad decisions (especially decisions made during an election season trying to protect a constituent from market forces).

Most suggestions on how to respond instead of react start with taking a step back from the situation. In most cases, a response is not required right away. When someone is pushing for an immediate response, that is often a signal to turn them down.

We do best when we can connect with our values and respond according to those values.

Emotions often get in the way of identifying our values. Emotions can push us to a reactive response. To slow down our reactions, it helps to put words to our emotions. When we find new ways to express our emotions, we use the power of our emotions to reinforce our proper responses to the situation.

In order to better respond, it really helps to ask more questions. We can ask what emotions we are feeling. We can ask for more information in the situation. We can ask others what they think the possible outcomes might be for different actions. We can ask from history what things have worked and what have not. Asking can slow us down enough to make a better response.

### Risky World

On August 11, Capital Records signed an artificial rapper, FN Meka, as an artist. This rapper’s songs were all created by an AI system. On August 23, the rapper was fired for racist lyrics. The backlash from the community was very strong. No AI system actually had to experience the life and difficulties that it was rapping about.

A View from the Prairie is published by  
Prairie Trail Software, Inc.,

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