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## A New Dream for Our Food

**I work with my team on dreaming a new dream for our food system.** This vision does not compromise the efforts of revenue but only endows it with a sustainable, healthier structure. I founded a food sustainability consultancy to improve food practices that work for every kind of institution, from schools to museums. I want businesses to know that to have a food system that can better people's health, the planets well-being, workers in the system, the animals, and the company is not only possible but attainable.

We are presented with the challenge that companies tend to have a 'Growth First' mindset. To some, no matter what the consequence, their main focus is to grow, grow, and grow. Most argue that without fiscal expansion, the business would be in trouble. While I whole-heartedly believe in the continuity of growth, I would argue that it does not stand on its own as a priority. For a business to be sustainable, the growth of the business, taking care of the environment, and communal responsibility should be considered in unison.



The viewpoint that I am presenting is what we consider, an ambitious one. Most businesses consider their model as a profitable system that works for them. Therefore, a business would think why change what already works. Some fail to see, that a model that is not intertwined with environmental sustainability, is one that does not sustain its community, and consequently its future growth in the market.

**The transition to a sustainable food system** requires turning all business premises on their side to examine them more closely. There are different variables within an institution's operation that can be refocused in order to reach a sustainable platform. This involves integrating the 'triple bottom line' concept, which is attained by strategizing a company's vision, and creating and prioritizing benchmarks.

Though, don't start just yet. To incorporate your visions' strategy, you have to understand how the business has been running first. To begin this process, we need to examine and gather information in a preliminary evaluation and continue identifying where improvements can be made. For instance, in the cafeterias and restaurants I work with, we look at a years' worth of receipts—what exactly did the business buy—in categories like: processed food, frozen food,

fresh produce, canned food, etc. The following areas are evaluated: the amount of scratch cooking being done, number of food products that are hormone free/with hormones, the amount of local food, the different types of kitchen equipment, and the skill level of the staff. This process also depends on the established goals of the client, implementing evaluations in more areas or in a particular area where it is necessary. This is why creating a strategy is extremely important so you focus on managing the variables that you designated to be analyzed.

**Once the company knows where it is at and what it needs** to strive for to become more sustainable, engaging the stakeholders is what helps hold it in place. Communication, internally and externally, is an integral piece for continuing successful, sustainable practices. Cafeteria customers, students, and staff are engaged by converting the dining area into a learning space. The vision for the company must be shared with its team, administrators, and its partners because without this involvement, the progression of being more sustainable ceases to grow.

Therefore, I stress that the implementation of the triple bottom line is not a top down endeavor. In order for food systems to improve, new strategies need to be introduced in the different sub categories of a food operation, and brought together into one, shared vision. Moving our food system towards one that works for everyone is just around the corner. A new dream is coming to life because people are now starting to wake up to the fact that our current one is not working for everyone.

**Greg Christian**

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