

(Download free ebook) Corporate Truth: The Limits to Transparency

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Adrian Henriques

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Adrian Henriques : Corporate Truth: The Limits to Transparency before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Corporate Truth: The Limits to Transparency:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Pleasant surprise: a substantive book about CSR (4+ stars)By A. J. SutterAll too often books about corporate social responsibility (CSR) are either dry academic tomes or else business-book fluff. This one is an exception. Not only is it a valuable survey of issues relating to transparency in corporate behavior, but it's readably and intelligently written.The title and subtitle accurately indicate the limitations of the

book's scope. It's neither a general survey of CSR, nor does it treat much of transparency issues outside the corporate context (e.g., in government policy-making). Most of the examples come from the UK; rather than being a drawback for an American reader, I think that gives some interesting perspective. Some of the topics are part of the standard CSR syllabus: stakeholders, the "triple bottom line" (the same author edited a good multi-author volume on this a couple of years ago), media issues and corruption. But what's novel is that the author puts these issues on a solid philosophical foundation, without sacrificing the book's practicality or clarity. The author ties the need for transparency to balancing conflicting interests among stakeholders, with the appropriate level of transparency depending on the type of conflict. At a more detailed level, I can't remember the last business book I've read that (a) not only distinguishes among virtue ethics, duty ethics and utilitarianism but provides very down-to-earth examples of each approach (@20-23), or (b) mentions either Kant or Habermas, much less both (albeit the latter in passing only, @165). The recent issues around search engine companies' cooperation with the Chinese government is nicely grounded in the context of a distinction between corruption and complicity (@158-160), and the discussion of the ethics of tax havens (@113ff) was new to me, at least. I'd give this book a full 5 stars but I noticed that the discussion of some details about law, especially intellectual property and contracts, were a bit garbled (@130-135; also, the name of the US Alien Tort Claims Act is twice gotten wrong, @159 179). So my reduced rating comes out of a kind of "precautionary principle" that other details, especially ones relating to English and European matters with which I'm less familiar, might be slightly off as well. But despite such possible fuzziness in some details, the book remains a useful and stimulating survey of corporate transparency issues.

In the corporate jungle inhabited by Enrons and WorldComs, a lack of transparency is the root of all scandal. Yet delivering transparency seems immensely difficult, with the often-competing interests of shareholders, corporate boards, government regulators and other stakeholders to be taken into account. Drawing on a vast wealth of real-life examples from the commercial world, this lively business book goes in search of the appropriate limits of transparency. From commercial confidentiality and the ethics of marketing to lobbying and corporate corruption, the author addresses the position, significance and limits of transparency in modern corporate life, working through the dilemmas presented by the increasing calls for transparency. From the secrets of the boardroom to the struggles of NGOs, transparency is a persistent challenge. How much is enough? How much do we need? And how do companies actually report on their impacts?

'Corporate transparency is crucial because, with all their power, companies have a mind of their own. Henriques points out that the 'psychology' of companies means that unless people within companies can be honest with themselves, real transparency may be unattainable.' Oliver James, author of *Affluenza* and *Britain on the Couch* 'Whether you are an accounting standard setter, a corporate lawyer or an activist member of an NGO you will find ideas here which challenge previously held views and demand your consideration.' Roger Adams, Executive Director - Technical, Association of Chartered Certified Accountants 'This book will help business leaders understand the values and principles which underpin business integrity and why transparency needs to be taken to the heart of the decision-making process.' John Christensen, Director, Tax Justice Network International Secretariat 'This book is a timely exploration of what 'transparency' entails, the basis for expecting it of companies, and the limits which may apply to adopting it ... a welcome contribution both to contemporary debate and to the practical challenges which must be addressed by the creators of wealth.' David Nussbaum, CEO of Transparency International 'Transparency is a precondition of effective accountability, and Corporate Truth provides a compelling account of the state of corporate transparency today.' Jonathon Porritt, Founder-Director of Forum for the Future and Chair of the Sustainable Development Commission 'This important book examines the scope and limits of transparency, intelligently confronting the challenges and problems it poses. Its basic argument - that transparency is required wherever power is exercised - is relevant not only to companies, but to governments and, as their influence grows, to non-governmental organizations as well. It makes valuable reading for all.' Sir Geoffrey Chandler CBE, founding Chair of Amnesty International Business Group and former Director of Shell International 'Corporate transparency is crucial because, with all their power, companies have a mind of their own. Henriques points out that the 'psychology' of companies means that unless people within companies can be honest with themselves, real transparency may be unattainable.' Oliver James, author of *Affluenza* and *Britain on the Couch* 'This is a noble book with an explicitly moral focus: namely that 'transparency is required wherever power is exercised'... there is much that is refreshing about the text that can usefully remind us why accountability is a lot more than a life-style choice and that what we do really does have a considerable potential for change.' *Social and Environmental Accounting Journal* About the Author Adrian Henriques is an independent adviser, writer, researcher, teacher and campaigner on corporate responsibility, social accountability and sustainability. He has audited company reports on corporate social responsibility (CSR), sustainability and social impact. He has also been actively involved in the development of standards for responsibility and reporting. Adrian is currently Visiting Professor of Accountability and CSR at Middlesex University Business School. His previous publications include *The Triple Bottom Line: Does It All Add Up?* and *Focus on Sustainability and its Implications for*

CSR.