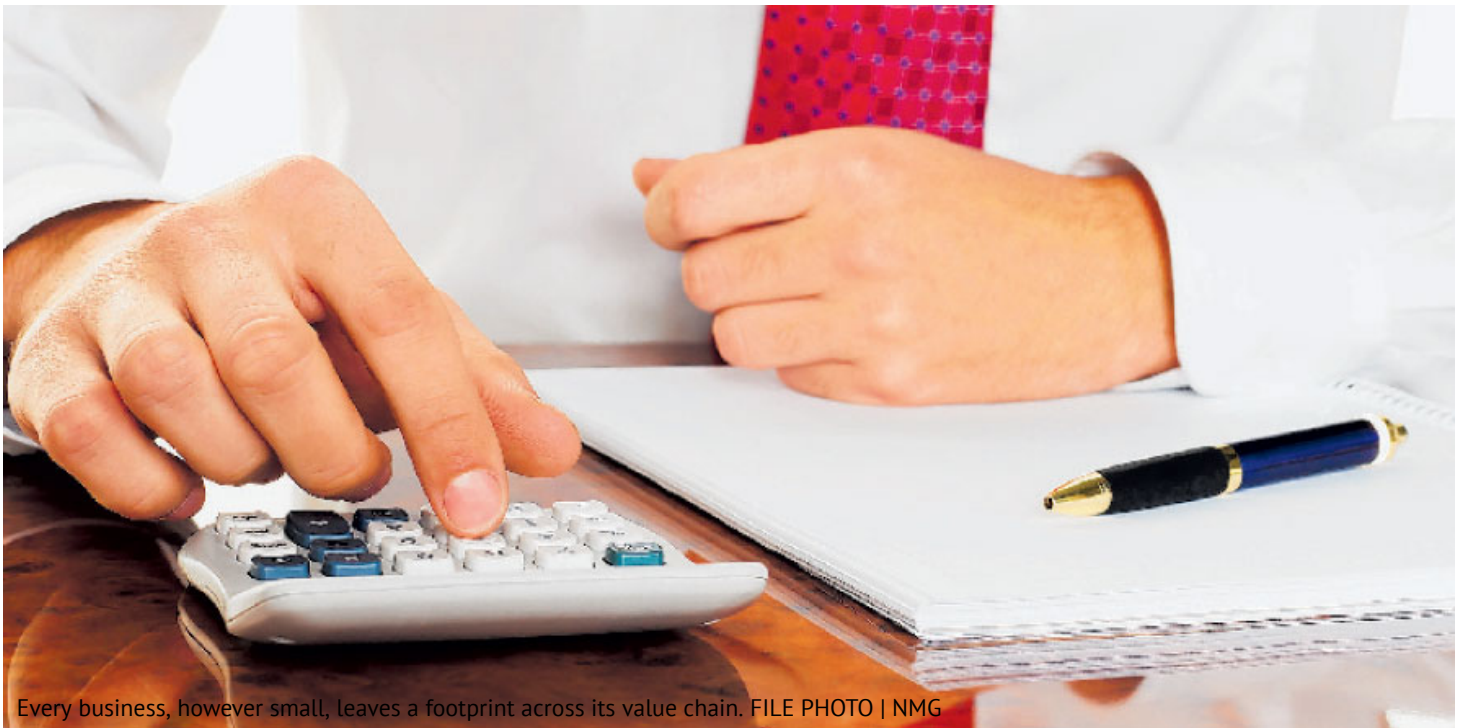


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## Thinking that will assess business beyond profits

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 25, 2018 21:20



Every business, however small, leaves a footprint across its value chain. FILE PHOTO | NMG

For the longest time, businesses were primarily about profits and little else. Naturally, profit was the best indicator that the business was on the right track.

Once in a while, however, the business went out to the community to engage in some social 'good', what has come to be known as corporate social responsibility (CSR).

The problem with CSR is that it wasn't intrinsic in the business DNA. It was done primarily to make the business look good.

Thankfully, the model of "profit at all costs" is changing in many parts of the world and Kenya has not been left behind.

Don't get it twisted. Profits remain key. Every business must make profit to stay in the market in the long run. But there are two other Ps whose impact may not be very obvious, particularly in the short to medium term.

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But if mishandled, no business can survive in the very long term. The two Ps stand for People and Planet.

Every business can and should contribute to a sustainable and inclusive economy, a new economy where we measure success in the well-being of People, Communities and the Environment.

The shift, however, has not and won't be easy for many businesses.

The development of a new economy where success is measured by the well-being of people and communities as well as the quality of the environment, from a centuries old practice where only profit mattered, will require a new business mindset among business leaders and employees alike.

In fact, even governments, academia and civil society should not be left behind. A new business mindset is what will deliver a new economy and "future proof" businesses. To put this subject in perspective, every business needs a good business DNA that grows the 3Ps (People, Planet, Profit).

Every business, however small, leaves a footprint across its value chain. Others leave regional footprints yet others are more local.

READ: [Sustainable enterprise goes beyond CSR activities like sponsorships \(https://www.businessdailyafrica.com/analysis/letters/Sustainable-enterprise-goes-beyond-CSR/4307714-4487942-ui4uoq/index.html\)](https://www.businessdailyafrica.com/analysis/letters/Sustainable-enterprise-goes-beyond-CSR/4307714-4487942-ui4uoq/index.html)

The remarkable thing about business footprint is that it does not resolve itself. It is not 'blown' away by the winds of time or 'washed' away by the rains. Instead, it lingers on.

Cumulatively, over a period of time, it leaves a big enough impact to harm people, planet and, yes, business. Airlines, for instance, leave behind emissions as they fly across lands and seas over many kilometres. Flower farms use lots of water from rivers and lakes.

All these businesses are good and necessary. But we need to manage their impact so that all 3Ps thrive equitably. We must take care of the environment. We must also take care of the people.

So, you got to ask yourself, WHATS MY BUSINESS GOAL? When you critically think about it, sooner or later your footprint will catch up with you. It could be international rules and regulations, the competition could be winning big at your expense or consumers will demand inclusive business practice.

As an added benefit, Sustainable Inclusive Business practice can increase your employees' engagement, boost your productivity, lower your (energy) costs, create a long lasting relationship with your customers and decrease yours risks.

*Karin Boomsma, Project coordinator, Sustainable Inclusive Business Initiatives.*

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