



by Wendy Schlett  
GZA GeoEnvironmental, Inc.

# Sustainability is More Than Just Another Buzzword –



**SUSTAINABILITY**  
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## It's a New Way of Doing Business

The members of the National Stone, Sand & Gravel Association identify sustainability as a business approach that integrates environmental stewardship, social responsibility and economic prosperity to ensure the long-term supply of aggregate materials to society. NSSGA recognizes that sustainable practices are necessary today to preserve the potential for a quality life for future generations. During recent years, the NSSGA Sustainability Task Force has developed guidance and tools to assist member companies in adapting to the changing business climate that now incorporates sustainability and sustainable business practices into routine business practice. In this and future editions of *Stone, Sand & Gravel Review*, we will explore concepts and practices to highlight the benefits of adapting to this new way of doing business.



Sustainability principles are being recognized as a means of meeting business, environmental and social demands of many stakeholders. These initiatives are being driven by businesses that focus beyond current regulatory and policy directives. The businesses that are in the forefront of sustainability are generating a new business model based on technology, information and new forms of value creation.

The foundation of this new business model, commonly referred to as the “Triple Bottom Line,” requires the three pillars of sustainability to influence business decisions simultaneously:

- Financial prosperity,
- Environmental stewardship,
- Social benefits.

By looking at these three pillars concurrently, competitive advantages that spur business innovation





- Providing a competitive advantage,
- Identifying and controlling risk,
- Generating additional revenue streams,
- Minimizing environmental impacts,
- Improving global marketplace penetration.

Many companies focus primarily on production and product development and do not take into consideration other aspects of operations beyond the minimum requirements, such as environmental issues or social responsibility within the local community. Lack of foresight and focus on the environmental and social aspects can increase risk and liability, which diminish efficiency, control and profitability.

As an example of one observed benefit, “maintaining an organization’s social license to operate within the community,” organizations that pursue sustainability initiatives, i.e., environmental and social stewardship, find that the communities in which they operate are more supportive of the organization and are much more willing to allow for expansion or

are identified. The benefits observed by focusing on the Triple Bottom Line include:

- Maintaining an organization’s social license to operate within the community,
- Increasing profitability,

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the pursuit of new reserves in green spaces. Companies that encourage community involvement, consider its concerns and support the community's needs are finding that they have less "Not in My Back Yard (NIMBY)" issues with the nearby residences and/or the local community when requesting to renew, modify or obtain new



### NSSGA Develops New Economic Impact Sustainability Tool

Companies in the aggregates industry provide a number of benefits to their local communities – economic and otherwise. NSSGA's new Economic Impact Sustainability Tool provides an easy, low-cost method of estimating an individual operation's contribution to the local community. It provides an estimate of a facility's positive economic impact in the local economy – the value of the goods and services produced – and a guide to describing the other tangible benefits that an organization contributes to the community.

This valuable service is available in collaboration with Drs. Richard Butler and Mary Stefl, both faculty members at Trinity University, San Antonio, Texas. Combined, Butler and Stefl have more than 15 years of experience conducting economic impact studies

for individual organizations and industries within defined communities.

When a member company purchases an Economic Impact Sustainability Report from NSSGA, it will be asked to provide information about its community and individual business unit, including employee wage and sales information for the most recently completed fiscal year. This information is submitted, via a secure Web site, to Butler and Stefl. They will perform the analysis and provide an estimate of economic impact in a brief report.

A company can also download, at no charge, the Community Impact Survey. The information provided to complete this survey will help create a thorough description of a company's tangible involvement and contributions in the local community.

Together, these two perspectives provide a comprehensive analysis of an individual operation's "footprint" on the local community. These reports can aid in community relations efforts and should be shared with local government and civic organizations to promote a company and its value. They can be posted on a company's Web site. Economic impact studies are typically produced and returned to the organization within 10 days. While the service is provided through NSSGA, any information submitted to Butler and Stefl is completely confidential and will not be seen by or shared with NSSGA staff.

For more information, contact NSSGA's Vice President of Environment, Safety and Health John Hayden at [jhayden@nssga.org](mailto:jhayden@nssga.org).



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operating permits. This in turn saves the organization time, money and effort in the expansion processes, thereby creating a competitive advantage. Community involvement can include activities such as:

- Hosting an open house to highlight the company's environmental and social stewardship practices and awards;
- Surveying nearby residents to understand and consider their concerns;
- Holding open meetings and inviting local community members to voice their opinions;
- Sponsoring local events.

Integrating sustainable long-term initiatives into the business decision-making process will help drive both business management and product innovation. Utilizing frameworks such as Lifecycle Analysis, Industrial Ecology, Cradle-to-Cradle and Global Reporting Initiatives enable an organization to understand the social and environmental effects of its business and enhance overall performance through a self-directed continual improvement process.

Many companies operating under the standard business models without a focus on the three pillars of sustainability tend to react to social and environmental risks as they arise, which generally increases the potential for liability or cost. Transforming the business model to one that focuses on the Triple Bottom Line will modify this reactive structure to a proactive *planning and improvement* structure,

allowing a company to control risks and minimize liability on an ongoing basis. By planning for potential social and environmental risk or concerns, an organization gains control of operations in a way that has a positive effect on the environment, its social position in the local community and, ultimately, its bottom line.

The growing interest and momentum in sustainability in the last 20 years is a leading indicator that sustainability is changing the business landscape. This is evident by NSSGA's commitment to sustainability. To further explore the changes member organizations are making to their business models by incorporating the principles of sustainability and the benefits observed by focusing on the Triple Bottom Line, a series of articles will be prepared in future issues of this publication. These articles will include interviews with small and large member companies that are transcending the current business paradigms and beginning to incorporate sustainability into their decision-making process to reveal their philosophies, strategies, goals and observed benefits. ■

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