



ON PROFITS

By Wayne Visser

Just as nature cannot survive without water, so commerce depends on profits to quench its natural thirst for capital.

Profits are the refreshing crystal water that collects in rock pools in the mountainous terrain of business.

Used wisely, profits are a source of life and rejuvenation;

Channelled effectively, profits have the potential to sustain a tropical forest, or to green a barren wasteland.

But if the flow of fresh water through the pool is blocked, the water becomes stagnant and a breeding ground for disease;

If profits are excessively hoarded, rather than fairly and productively distributed, the dam of popular discontent will eventually burst, causing indiscriminate damage to all who happen to lie in its flood path, and leaving behind scars where the integrity of the commercial system has been eroded.

Like the water cycle in nature, profits are part of a larger cycle of financial resources circulating through enterprise and society.

A farsighted business will seek to understand and contribute to balance in the whole system, looking both upstream and downstream for any signs of impending drought, excessive damming activity or pollution of the water supply.

The wise manager will be acutely concerned about the looming crisis of economic desertification in many marginalised areas of the world, which threatens to disrupt the entire water cycle unless it is reversed.

Profits are one measure of success in business, but only one of many.

Only a fool would try to argue that the water cycle is more important than the oxygen cycle or the carbon cycle, when in truth they are wholly interdependent.

Likewise, pursuing a business model that emphasises profits ahead of people or the planet is to undermine the very fabric of the economic system and will end in ruin.

Decisions about how and where to channel profits are best made by those who are intimately familiar with local needs and conditions.

Effective water management demands first hand knowledge of nuances in the landscape, variations in geological patterns and micro-climatic moods, together with an understanding of the intimate needs of the resident populace.

Beware, therefore, of the vagaries of scattered shareholders, absent landlords and remote executives.

The destiny of something as precious as water is far too important to trust to the hands of the self-proclaimed ruling few, or the self-indulgent faceless many.

Let those who have helped to build the waterways and nurture the rain and negotiate the open sluices, drink also from the fountain of profits, as just reward for their tireless labour.

But do not forget to also extend the life-giving chalice to those less fortunate, who do not share the privileges of prosperity, for whatever reason:





Those who live in the desert of deprivation, with no oases on the horizon to relieve their parched existence;

Those who are surrounded by great rivers of abundance, but have not been granted the drinking rights of the employed.

Share your profits generously with those who are dying of thirst, for giving without expecting to receive in return, profits the heart and the soul, and there is no greater wealth.



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