

Management spotlight: Vincent Stanley, Patagonia

Posted by [Steven Wilding](#) [1] on Jan 16, 2013

More sustainable footprints

Vincent Stanley is vice-president of marketing at Patagonia. He is also co-editor of the Footprint Chronicles, Patagonia's mini-site that allows customers to track the impact of specific Patagonia products from design through delivery, seeking new ways to define and improve corporate responsibility. Vincent Stanley spoke with Ethical Corporation's Steven Wilding. Additional reporting by Giles Crosse.

Ethical Corporation: Tell us, in two sentences, what it is you do?

Vincent Stanley: My major role is working on the intersection of product and environmental stories. Environmentalism affects how we think about product, yet we are a business and primary to us is product quality, innovation and development.

Ethical Corporation: What are the big issues to watch in 2013?

Vincent Stanley: I think that one of the big prospects is the opportunity to work collaboratively with indexes that define social and environmental values. This is something that is outside the competitive sphere, because all business are agreeing to the same standards and language.

There will be consolidation of these indexes, and that's something for everyone to watch out for this year.

From a consumer perspective on this, if you were going into a store to buy a pair of trainers and you had a price in mind you could make a comparison on what has gone into them environmentally, or you might decide to spend more if you knew what had gone into it and how the supply chain worked.

You are going to buy the product that suits you but there are a lot of choices within that to help you.

Ethical Corporation: In your role as vice-president of marketing, what are your priorities for 2013?

Vincent Stanley: I wrote a book last year called *The Responsible Company* and I've been going around to universities talking to students a lot about that. We are also doing some work to decentralise marketing and bring it closer to the source, so a lot of my time will be devoted to that.

Ethical Corporation: In terms of corporate responsibility, which industry sector would you pick out to watch, and why?

Vincent Stanley: I don't think that there's a particular sector to watch. Autos, electronics and clothing are all going about their work in different ways. They operate on very different scales, of course, so it's not easy to generalise.

I'm eager to see the work of the Sustainable Apparel Coalition and the eventual development of the consumer index, but that may reflect my parochialism toward our industry.

Ethical Corporation: Climate change – mitigation or adaptation?

Vincent Stanley: We're going to have to do both because we're too late so we're going to have to mitigate. We need to adapt as much as possible as all of our information is based on imperfect models.

Based on the precautionary principle we need to proceed very quickly to reduce our fossil fuel

reliance and to reduce our consumption of things from the planet that we can't get back.

Ethical Corporation: A government to watch on sustainability?

Vincent Stanley: It depends on the scale. For us in the US our government is fairly useless so we watch the EU. Part of what will make up the new economy are some smaller scale efforts.

Bhutan is an interesting country to watch in the developing world and there are some countries of deep concern including China and Brazil where the record is very mixed.

The King of Bhutan has more power than most kings and has decreed and argued against adopting the western model wholesale if it harms the environment and actually puts people out of work. Bhutan adapted their version of the happiness index and that is interesting.

China is slowing down its growth but they're running out of water and adding a lot of consumers to the consumer economy.

Ethical Corporation: Corporation tax – higher or lower?

Vincent Stanley: I don't know the answer to that, it might be better if the taxes were a little higher. I do think businesses should pay the taxes they are supposed to.

Ethical Corporation: CR impact – Obama or Xi Jinping?

Vincent Stanley: Because China is not democratic they can accomplish things much more quickly than the US, which can be both for good and bad.

For Obama, the kind of leadership he's adopted is when it's clear an issue is central to the public then he will take a stand. If things aren't clear then he doesn't, so it's incumbent on us in the private sector and in the citizenry to raise the game about climate change and environmental issues. Then he will take more of a leadership position.

Ethical Corporation: "Shared value" or "sustainability"?

Vincent Stanley: I think the most important thing is how to assign costs to externalities and key the environment and communities as values into the bottom line. That's the critical question.

I hate to hedge so much but I think both have limitations and can also be very strong. These things have become part of the business culture and they weren't 20 years ago.

Vincent Stanley will be speaking at this year's [12th Annual Responsible Business Summit](#) [2]. He will be part of a discussion based session looking at innovative approaches to the development of new sustainable products.

Links:

[1] <http://www.ethicalcorp.com/users/steven-wilding>

[2] <http://events.ethicalcorp.com/rbs/index.php>