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"The Demise of Unilateral Corporate Responsibility and its Implications for Leaders".

Abstract:

The profile of Corporate Responsibility as a Board issue has risen over the last decade but where will it go next? Bansal and Roth (2000) said there were three reasons why companies acted on this issue: the first was under pressure of compliance; the second was because their leaders saw it as 'the right thing to do'; and the third was driven by competitive advantage.

Taking stock of each driver: companies are increasingly compliant, reporting on responsibility issues using an increasingly sophisticated set of metrics; altruism may not be dead, but in the current recession companies are examining their spend and need to deploy resources efficiently; the upside of competitive advantage has promoted some excitement about the opportunity offered by sustainability issues (Niumolu et. al, 2009) and some thoughts about how companies could integrate their corporate responsibility efforts into mainstream corporate strategy (Zadek, 2004).

But has any of this made a difference to the issues companies claim to want to solve? If not what other approaches could work better? This paper argues that to make a material impact companies need to act collaboratively. It explores the extent to which the three drivers can be realised in a new collaborative environment where companies can comply, compete and lead within a new paradigm of Network Social Responsibility.