



BSR Conference 2009

**Reset Economy. Reset World.**

## Think Big: Developing Systemic Answers to Sustainability Challenges

Breakout Session Summary

Thursday, October 22, 2009 | 1:45-4 p.m.

### Speakers

- » **Michael Bzdak**, Director, Corporate Contributions, Johnson & Johnson
- » **Blakey Emmett**, Global Director, STOP Hunger, Sodexo
- » **Sandy Fernandez**, National Relationship Manager, Citi
- » **Victor Tabbush**, Adjunct Professor, UCLA, Anderson School of Management
- » **Euan Wilmshurst**, International Government Relations Manager, The Coca-Cola Company
- » **Farid Baddache**, Director, Europe, BSR (moderator)

### Highlights

- » Coalitions that involve multiple corporate partners—and receive support from government and NGOs—can make major progress on issues like climate change, access to finance, and food security.
- » Involving and training local institutions can help ensure that corporate efforts have a lasting effect.

### Memorable Quotes

*“Sustainability and the collective need to shift to a more sustainable model is more than an emergency. Every actor can contribute to a certain level, but fragmented action alone is insufficient ... the private sector has a key role to play in this space.”* —Farid Baddache, BSR

*“As we grow our business, how do we maximize the positive impacts that we have?”* —Euan Wilmshurst, The Coca-Cola Company

*“The irony is that we ask our nonprofit partners to collaborate, but we’re not as good at it.”* —Michael Bzdak, Johnson & Johnson

*“We’ve been very conscious to involve local institutions in the delivery of the programs, with the view that after two or three years we can leave and the expertise resides there. We’re having a footprint that lasts. We’re establishing roots. It was crucial to involve these [local] institutions, and have them be majority partners in the delivery of these programs.”* —Victor Tabbush, UCLA, Anderson School of Management

*“You can have one partner; you can have thousands of partners. If it’s not working for you—go somewhere else.”* —Blakey Emmett, Sodexo

### Overview

After an introduction from Baddache, each panelist described a company program that aims to build local capacity to address sustainability challenges. In most cases, the panelists discussed the importance of developing local skills in order for the programs to have a long-lasting impact.



Emmett started by explaining Sodexo's STOP Hunger program, which uses employee volunteers, knowledge sharing, and food and financial donations to combat hunger and malnutrition. The large size of Sodexo presents it with an opportunity to make a significant impact on fighting hunger: Sodexo has over 400,000 employees, in 30,000 sites globally, touching 50 million customers daily. Sodexo selects strategic partners for each of the program's regions, and all of the programs are tailored for local cultures, laws, and businesses.

Fernandez next described a capacity-building program at Citi that focuses on building digital communications skills with partner organizations. Partner organizations include NGOs that focus on issues like workforce development and foreclosure prevention. These issues align with Citi's development focus areas, which are community development, foreclosure prevention, and access to finance for low-wage individuals.

Next, Wilmhurst discussed Coca-Cola's efforts in East Africa to leverage core business functions to meet societal goals. The company uses small, manual distribution centers—which run as entrepreneurial businesses—in the region. The centers often rely on pushcarts, bicycles, and donkeys to deliver the products. Following a business call to action on the Millennium Development Goals, Coca-Cola pledged to double the amount of distribution that goes through these manual centers in Africa, and double the revenue streams and the number of jobs created. Coca-Cola involved the International Finance Corporation, the Harvard Kennedy School, and 25 other stakeholder organizations to get feedback on the initiative. These centers offer five opportunities to improve development in the region:

1. Increase training and capacity development for owners of distribution centers and their employees.
2. Increase the number of and support for woman entrepreneurs.
3. Utilize distribution systems for products that offer societal benefits.
4. Use marketing to promote social messages, like good health.
5. Develop and promote small businesses down the value chain.

The next stage for Coca-Cola is to implement strategies in each of these areas.

Finally, Bzdak and Tabbush described a partnership between Johnson & Johnson and UCLA to develop management skills for people serving community health needs in sub-Saharan Africa. The Management Development Initiative (MDI)—a seven-day intensive management course—leverages local organizations and also includes an online training component to make it more accessible. Tabbush asserted that longer lifespans and improvements to quality of life are the ultimate measures of success for the program.

During the Q&A session, participants and speakers discussed the need for more partnerships and stronger partnerships among corporations, government, and aid organizations. A representative from USAID then asked what is needed for more powerful corporate partnerships. In response, Wilmhurst advised, "Use your convening power to bring us together ... in a meaningful way."

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