



111 Sutter Street, 12th Floor  
San Francisco, CA 94104 USA

T +1 415 984 3200  
F +1 415 984 3201

**Contact:**

Eva Dienel  
Communications Manager, BSR  
[edienel@bsr.org](mailto:edienel@bsr.org), +1 510 684 9106

## **Global Business Survey Finds Widespread Optimism on the Crucial Role of Sustainability in Corporate Strategy**

### ***New Research Released at BSR Conference 2011 Highlights the Need to Integrate Sustainability Into Core Business Functions***

**SAN FRANCISCO—November 2, 2011**—Results from the “[BSR/GlobeScan State of Sustainable Business Poll 2011](#),” released today at the [BSR Conference 2011](#), show that global businesses remain highly committed to sustainability. For the second straight year, more than eight in 10 respondents (84 percent) are optimistic that global businesses will embrace CSR/sustainability as part of their core strategies and operations in the next five years. BSR and GlobeScan surveyed nearly 500 business leaders drawn from BSR’s global network of nearly 300 member companies.

“Even with the current uncertainties in the global economy, companies remain highly focused on the value of sustainable business strategies,” said BSR President and CEO [Aron Cramer](#). “This year’s survey indicates that sustainability holds a critical, valued seat at the table when it comes to defining corporate strategies for growth.”

Former U.S. Vice President Al Gore echoed this sentiment to a crowded room of sustainable business leaders and practitioners at the BSR Conference 2011 earlier today. “Sustainability is now on the agenda for so many companies around the world in a way it was not in the past,” he said. “Many companies that did not think of sustainability and responsibility in the past are starting to figure out that it is a business plus. Businesses now understand in a much more textured way that what you represent is a very positive benefit. This is now a global agenda.”

#### **Main Leadership Challenge: Integrating Sustainability Into Core Business Functions**

The BSR/Globescan survey also revealed that almost two thirds of respondents (62 percent) identified the integration of sustainability into core business operations as the most important leadership challenge over the next year. Other challenges include convincing investors that sustainability enhances value (30 percent), and planning for the long term (30 percent).

“It is still difficult for many companies that are committed to the sustainability agenda to find investors who understand how important this is,” Gore said at the BSR Conference 2011 this morning. “The impatient, short-term nature of investors is a very serious obstacle.”

He added that the integration of sustainability into the investment agenda is a key priority. “We need to genuinely and fully integrate sustainability into markets,” Gore said. “We need to build sustainable capitalism. We need to internalize externalities.”

“We introduced a question on leadership in this year’s survey to help us better understand how executives manage and address the many challenges around sustainability within their company,” said Chris Coulter, senior vice president at GlobeScan, which conducted the survey on behalf of BSR. “We heard loud and clear that integration of the sustainability function within companies is a big challenge for

many companies. And while some functions are more closely engaged, the survey shows that the level of integration of sustainability across the enterprise remains a work in progress for many companies surveyed.”

### **Top Sustainability Priorities in Year Ahead: Human/Workers’ Rights, Climate Change, and Water**

The business leaders surveyed cite human rights, climate change, workers’ rights, and water issues (in that order) as the top priorities for their companies’ CSR/sustainability efforts in the year ahead.

Human rights surpassed climate change this year for the first time, with 65 percent noting it as a priority. Climate change followed closely, with 63 percent saying it was a priority, and 61 percent saying workers’ rights were a priority. There was a sizable increase in interest around water availability/quality over the past 12 months; in this year’s survey, 54 percent noted it as a priority, up from 47 percent last year.

### **Drivers of Public Trust, Business Leadership, and Ongoing Success**

Respondents continue to acknowledge that the public does not have a high level of trust in business and identified three important actions companies should take to address this gap: “increasing the transparency of business practices” (55 percent); “measuring and demonstrating positive social and environmental impacts” (51 percent); and “creating innovative products and business models designed for sustainability” (42 percent, up significantly from 34 percent last year).

Respondents were also asked to pick the three areas where companies are demonstrating the most leadership today, and the three actions that will drive ongoing business success. “Measuring and demonstrating positive social and environmental impacts” was selected most often (40 percent); followed by “creating innovative products and business models designed for sustainability” (38 percent); and “responding promptly and effectively to accidents, product-quality issues, and other incidents” (38 percent).

In addition to being mentioned as a key element of business leadership, “creating innovative products and business models designed for sustainability” appeared as the most important driver of business success by far (70 percent).

“There are good, solid business reasons for the companies of the world to move forward,” Gore told attendees of the BSR Conference 2011.

### **About the Research**

The “BSR/GlobeScan State of Sustainable Business Poll 2011” was conducted from September 28 to October 17, 2011, among a sample of 498 professionals from BSR member organizations from around the world (in 2010, 377 respondents were interviewed). The sample includes representation from 68 percent of BSR’s member organizations.

### **About BSR**

A leader in corporate responsibility since 1992, BSR works with its global network of more than 250 member companies to develop sustainable business strategies and solutions through consulting, research, and cross-sector collaboration. With offices in Asia, Europe, and North America, BSR uses its expertise in the environment, human rights, economic development, and governance and accountability to guide global companies toward creating a just and sustainable world. Visit [www.bsr.org](http://www.bsr.org) for more information.

### **About GlobeScan**

GlobeScan is an international research consultancy. Companies, multilateral institutions, governments, and NGOs trust GlobeScan for its unique expertise in reputation research, sustainability, and issues management. GlobeScan provides global organizations with evidence-based insight and advice to help them build strong brands, manage relations with key stakeholders, and define their strategic positioning.

Established in 1987, GlobeScan is an independent, employee-owned company with offices in London, Toronto, and San Francisco. [www.GlobeScan.com](http://www.GlobeScan.com).