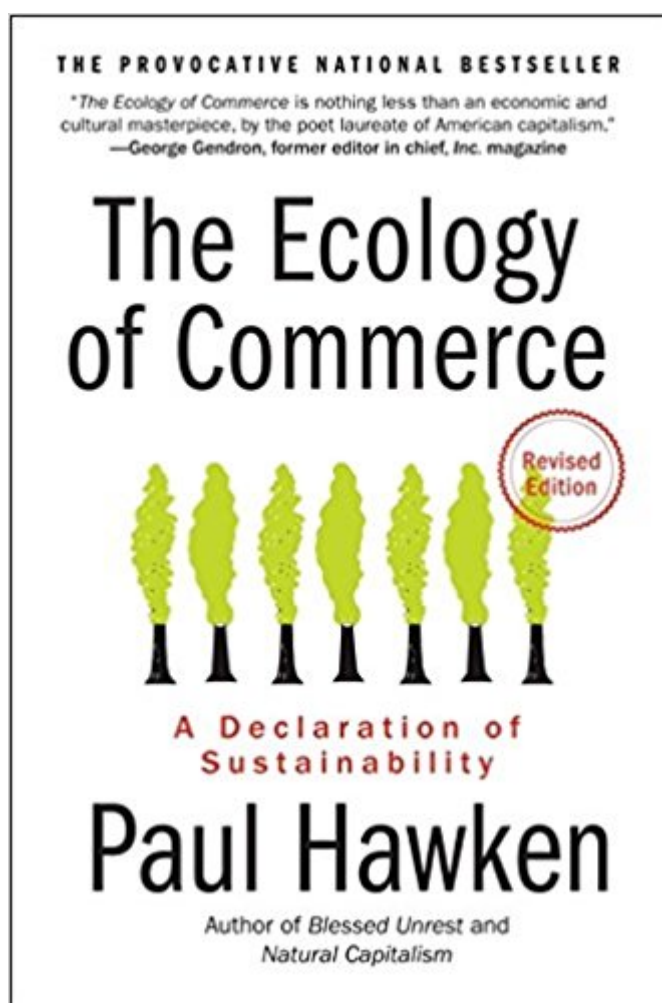


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# The Ecology Of Commerce Revised Edition: A Declaration Of Sustainability (Collins Business Essentials)



## Synopsis

“The first important book of the 21st century. It may well revolutionize the relationship between business and the environment.” —Don Falk, Executive Director, Society for Ecological Restoration

The Ecology of Commerce is the provocative national bestseller that addresses the necessity of merging good business practices with common sense environmental concerns. Nearly two decades after its initial publication, this controversial work by Paul Hawken has been revised and updated, arguing why business success and sustainable environmental practices need not be mutually exclusive any longer. An essential work, Hawken’s The Ecology of Commerce belongs on the bookshelf of every concerned citizen alongside Capitalism at the Crossroads by Stuart Hart and Al Gore’s Earth in the Balance and An Inconvenient Truth.

## Book Information

Series: Collins Business Essentials

Paperback: 256 pages

Publisher: HarperBusiness; Revised edition (March 25, 2010)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0061252794

ISBN-13: 978-0061252792

Product Dimensions: 5.3 x 0.6 x 8 inches

Shipping Weight: 12.8 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.4 out of 5 stars 79 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #120,267 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #93 in Books > Business & Money > Economics > Sustainable Development #264 in Books > Business & Money > Business Culture > Ethics #265 in Books > Business & Money > Economics > Environmental Economics

## Customer Reviews

Paul Hawken, the entrepreneur behind the Smith & Hawken gardening supplies empire, is no ordinary capitalist. Drawing as much on Baba Ram Dass and Vaclav Havel as he does on Peter Drucker and WalMart for his case studies, Hawken is on a one-man crusade to reform our economic system by demanding that First World businesses reduce their consumption of energy and resources by 80 percent in the next 50 years. As if that weren’t enough, Hawken argues that business goals should be redefined to embrace such fuzzy categories as whether the work is aesthetically pleasing and the employees are having fun; this applies to corporate giants and

mom-and-pop operations alike. He proposes a culture of business in which the real world, the natural world, is allowed to flourish as well, and in which the planet's needs are addressed. Wall Street may not be ready for Hawken's provocative brand of environmental awareness, but this fine book is full of captivating ideas. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Hawken ( *Growing a Business* ) touches on a raw nerve here. How might millions of people live and work in a complex business environment while causing "as little suffering as possible to all and everything around us?" Hawken, no Luddite, believes that "we need a design for business that will ensure that the industrial world as it is presently constituted ceases and is replaced with human-centered enterprises that are sustainable producers." Avoiding stormy rhetoric, Hawken thoughtfully reviews ecological theories and disasters and insists that "ecology offers a way to examine all present economic and resource activities from a biological rather than a monetary point of view." Calling for a restorative economy, he proposes rational, achievable goals: stop "accelerating the rate that we draw down capacity

I don't even know how to begin describing how great this book is. It should be required reading for EVERYBODY on the planet. I learned about this book while watching the documentary, "The Corporation," and I'll have to admit, I wasn't expecting anything revolutionary in this book. I thought I'd be getting some interesting pictures and statistics relating to consumption, recycling, landfills, global warming...pretty much your standard environmental rhetoric (of which I'm a subscriber) to complement what I already know. What I got, however, was so much more. This book is not only about the environment, but about how the environment integrates with global business and economics. For some reason, the 'developed' world has created a disconnect between the environment and business. Hawken shows how the two are inextricably connected, and in order to guarantee a successful future for us, our children and all life on earth, business and the environment must work harmoniously and each stop being the bane of the other. His metaphor for business IS the environment: everything in nature is cyclical, which brings maximum efficiency. Nothing is more efficient than the natural world: one organism's waste is another organism's life source. If business would approach operations and resources from this perspective, waste would not be 'waste' and the benefits of increased efficiency would permeate throughout all life and systems. His metaphor is very simple but exceedingly beautiful, and only becomes more so as Hawken goes in-depth with concrete examples and further exploration of all issues from both sides. Throughout reading this book, I was continuously floored by his analysis, his insight and his prescription for the future. And a

note about his prose: every sentence reflects structurally the economies and efficiencies it conveys ideologically. This man is concise and his style is powerful - every word packs a punch. He says so much with so little, maximizing the time spent in our reading investment. Clearly, I have nothing but the highest praise for Hawken and this book - it is truly visionary.

This is easily one of the top ten books on the pragmatic reality of what Herman Daly calls "ecological economics" (see my list of Environmental Security). The author excels at painting a holistic view of the realities that are not being addressed by the media or by scholars in anything other than piecemeal fashion. The bottom line: what we are doing now in the face of accelerating decay (changes and losses that used to take 10,000 years now take three years) is the equivalent of "trying to bail out the Titanic with teaspoons." On page 21-22 the author states that we are using 10,000 days of energy creation every day, or 27 years of energy each day. This is a practical book. In brief, we can monetize the costs of the decay, we can show people the \*real\* cost of each product and in this way inspire both boycotts (of wasteful products) and boycotts (Jim Turner's term) of solar energy and long-lasting repairable products. The author appears to be both pro-business and very wise in seeing that we cannot save the environment by destroying business, but rather must save business so it can save the environment--we must help business understand that doing more with less is what they must do to survive. The author includes a recurring theme from the literature, that diversity is an option generator, and hence one of the most precious aspects of life on Earth. Diversity is the ultimate source of wealth, and anything that reduces diversity is impoverishing the planet and mankind. In a magnificent turn of phrase, the author states that the loss of a species is the loss of a biological library. At its root this book is about missing information, needed information, about the urgency of making all inputs, processes, and outputs from corporate production transparent. He quotes Vaclav Havel on page 54 as saying that this is an information challenge, a challenge of too much (or too little) information and not enough actionable intelligence supporting sustainable sensible outcomes. This is also a financial problem that has not been monetized properly. Although E. O. Wilson takes a crack at the strategic or gross costs of saving the Earth in his book "The Future of Life," this author looks at the retail level and describes the waste inherent in our military system. He reminds me of Derek Leebaert's "The 50 Year Wound" when he notes that the US and the USSR spent over 10 trillion dollars on the Cold War, enough to completely re-make the entire infrastructure of Earth, including all schools. As I myself like to note, for the half trillion we have spent on the war against Iraq, we could instead have given a free \$50 cell phone to each of the 5 billion poor people, and changed the planet forever. The author is

compelling in pointing out that conservation alone would save more energy than drilling in Alaska, and that President Reagan not rolled back gasoline mileage expectations, we would today be free of any dependency of Middle Eastern energy. A good part of the book focuses on the need to eliminate waste, what some call "cradle to cradle" (waste must be fully absorbed of other pieces of the system), and where waste cannot be eliminated, to include the cost of its storage in the price of the product, requiring producers of products to take them back (e.g. refrigerators). I am inspired by the author's view that not only is technology NOT a complete solution, but that full employment is possible if we REDUCE our excessive acquisition of technology that not only replaces humans, but also consumes energy and produces pollution. This is an extraordinarily clever and useful book that fully integrates discussions of feedback loops and especially of financial and legal feedback loops that are now misrepresentative. One example the author uses is the GATT demand that there be no discrimination of "like" products based on methods of production. This is code for blocking labor laws by imposing high tariffs on products made by slaves or under sweatshop conditions. I completely agree with one of the author's most important opinions, that we must end corporate claims of "personality" and the rights of a person. This has had two pernicious effects, the first allowing corporations to dominate the public debate; and the second of exempting managers from legal liability and transparency. The book emphasized the restoration of human and natural capital as vital foundations for evaluating investments--this would dramatically reduce the financial criteria's dominance and emphasis on short-term returns that do not reflect the cost of natural resources and lost jobs to the future and the community. Distressingly but importantly, the author notes that a major component of the cost of goods is in advertising, where corporations spend more on advertising than the government spends on all secondary schools, and on packaging, much of which is designed to last vastly longer than the contents. I especially liked the author's suggestion that insurance costs be included in the price of homes and of gasoline, essentially making universal insurance affordable for all. I also liked his idea for indexing Nations by their sustainability, i.e. Most Sustainable Nation (MSN). The author ends with a restatement of his three fundamentals: 1) End waste 2) Shift to renewable power (solar and hydro) 3) Create accountability and feedback. Although this book was published in 1993 and the author has now published "Natural Capital" (next on my reading list), I did not discover it until recently and am now very enthused about the author's newest project, the World Index of Social and Environmental Responsibility (WISER). I am certain in my heart that a bottom up Earth Intelligence Network is forming, and that end-user voluntary labor--social networks--are going to place enough information in the hands of individuals to restore participatory democracy and moral communal capitalism. This author is extraordinary in his

understanding and his ability to teach adults about reality and the future.

Having read the 1993 version dozens of times I can only be profusely grateful for an updated version from which to teach college students. The revised version is like visiting a great city after a twenty year absence. The bones are there but there are new buildings that have evolved to reflect the times. Thank you Paul. You have given another generation another chance to wake up a world asleep at the wheel of a car headed for a cliff. It still reads like a collection of keynote speeches where every sentence is designed to pack a punch. It doesn't take a lot of words to be honest and direct. Ecology of commerce is not a spectator sport; if really read it is a call to action.

The insights provided by Hawken are priceless for the creating of a sustainable future on planet Earth. It is a book about balance and solutions, not blame. It is through a unified understanding between ecologists and economists that peace may be possible between commerce and Nature. Kudos for writing such an important book! "Rob Williams, Crestone, CO

This is a very interesting book filled with wonderful ideas regarding our economy and the effect we have on the economy when we make purchase decisions. The author has many unique ideas about how we can solve problems arising in our ecology using economic solutions. Hawken's ideas are original and provocative. It is an easy book to read even if economy or ecology are of no concern to you.

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