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“The essence of the independent mind lies not in what it thinks, but in how it thinks.”

Christopher Hitchens



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About

I write about digital strategies and communications — and their intersection with culture, politics, journalism and social activism.

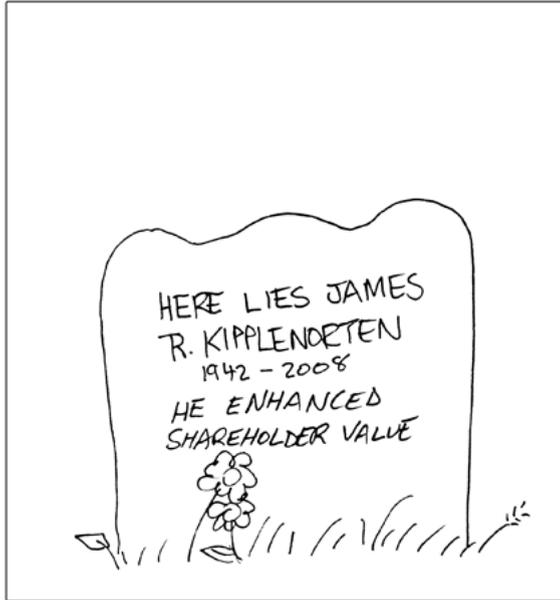
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Professors and the Social Web

FRIDAY, AUGUST 27, 2010 AT 2:14PM

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Okay, I have misled you. This post isn't about social web usage by professors. But I do think a Wall Street Journal article by Professor Aneel Karnani called "**The Case Against Corporate Social Responsibility**" was maybe intended to kick up some cyber dust and force some social web coughing and sputtering . . . All the better to draw attention to yourself especially if your ideas are lame and dated. (A colleague commented on Twitter that he thought at first the article was a reprint from the 1980s.)

I was going to post a response to Professor Karnani, but it is hard to know where to begin, with the unhistorical claim that responsible conduct is "(i)rrelevant or ineffective", his ignoring evidence of the enormous social and economic benefits of social entrepreneurship (Take a look at David Bornstein's easy primer called **Social Entrepreneurship: What Everyone Needs to Know** or his **How to Change the World**), or his missing entirely the relationship between conduct, reputation and profit.

But having scanned reaction online, it's obvious I am much too late to the game and likely have little to add that hasn't been said. On **Elaine Cohen's blog** (thanks to **CBSR** for pointing me to it) you can find nearly a dozen links to articles from mainstream and online media taking Professor Karnani to task. Mallen Baker has a clear and well-argued counterpoint on **Ethical Corporation's blog**. Even CSR-skeptics like Paul Seaman **admit** the critical element missing from Professor Karnani's logic: . . .

The problem with deciding between profit-first or profit-with-purpose is that

they are difficult to separate. Firms live within society and have all kinds of *unavoidable obligations to fulfill as they produce profit.*

Rather than giving a poor article more social web traction, I'll just leave it there.

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