



PRiME progress report 2012

PRiME Principles for Responsible
Management Education



BIFRÖST UNIVERSITY
HÁSKÓLINN Á BIFRÖST

Bifröst University at a glance

-
- Bifröst University was originally a business school, but began to offer degrees in law in 2002 and social science in 2005.
- The role has always been to educate responsible leaders for business and society.
- The departments at Bifröst University are:
 - Department of Business
 - Department of Law
 - Department of Social Sciences
- Bifröst offers the following bachelor's and master's degrees:
 - BA in Philosophy, Politics and Economics (PPE)
 - BS in Business Administration
 - BS in Business Law
 - ML in Law
 - MS in International Business
 - MA in Cultural Management
- The university also offers a one-year preparatory study program for students lacking full university entrance qualifications, as well as various life-long learning programs.
- In 2012 193 students are enrolled in the preparatory study program 243 in the continuous education programs, 633 at the undergraduate level and 401 at master's level.
- 70 partner universities in 34 countries. Approx. 30% of undergraduate students at Bifröst spend one or more terms abroad at partner universities in America, Asia and continental Europe
- Bifröst is a campus university, 110 km from the center of Reykjavík, roughly 90 minutes' driving distance from the capital.



From the rector, Dr. Vilhjálmur Egilsson

Bifröst University, which is a small campus university in West Iceland, joined PRiME in August 2011 and we are proud of the fact that we are the first university in Iceland to join the program. The decision to join PRiME was made in connection with the universities reevaluation of its strategy in order to implement the ideology of sustainable development, social responsibility and good governance.

After the economic crisis the universities and Icelandic academics were harshly criticized for not having been the social, economic and moral audit the society needed prior the crash in 2008. Althingi, the Icelandic Parliament formed an investigative commission of specialists to explore the reasons for the fall of the

Icelandic bank system in 2008 and in the commission's report the universities were also criticized.

Bifröst University has decided accept the challenge and shoulder the



responsibility of educating the future leaders in a more responsible manner. In January 2011 a decision was made by the university board to start a revision of the university's strategy. The challenge was to find a path, which was both practical and not too complicated. After a period of time and lots of speculations of how we would do this, we found PRiME as a helpful tool. We joined in August 2011 and since then we have been going through a period of transformation and even though we look at this journey as a long-term goal, we have already after the first year made some progress that we are proud of. In this report we will describe what we have done and how we have taken steps to implement the PRiME principles.

Introduction

The role of a university

*Successful people have a social responsibility to make the world a better place and not just take from it.
~Carrie Underwood~*

The worldview has changed in a short period of time. In many ways, the world has become “smaller” and the snowball effect of “bad business decisions” has become more obvious.

According to most, one of the challenges facing universities is to keep up with the ever “shrinking” world, diminishing natural resources and constantly changing perspectives.

Some would say that the only way to meet those challenges would be to “shock treat” our values. To turn away from the tunnel vision of profit, towards a globally informed way of decision-making. According to UNESCO, educating toward sustainability and social responsibility is the counteract society needs in this turbulent era.

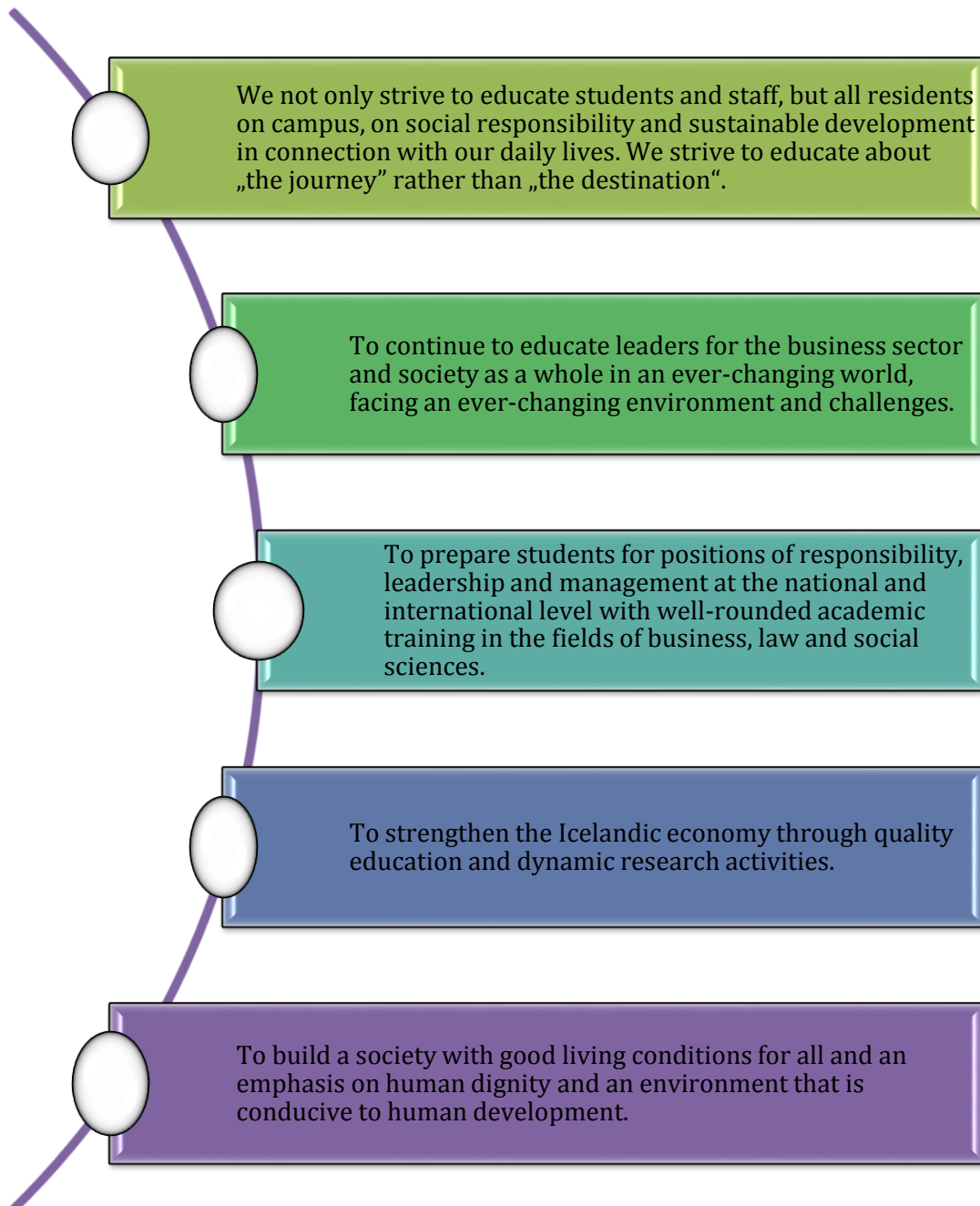
To educate the consciousness, capability and knowledge of the individual to make decisions that do not only serve themselves, but also the society we live in and future generations.

It is widely accepted that social responsibility will however not be taught in a single course, in a single faculty or in a special kind of school. Social responsibility and the grounds for sustainable development need to be spun like a thread through a university’s curriculum, through all faculties. The keyword being; interdisciplinary, building bridges between fields, focusing on connection and deepening our understanding of the effects of human interaction and decision-making.

Our vision and our role

Bifröst University is a private, non-profit organization with an independent board of directors. The board is composed of representatives of the business sector and the university's Alumni Association, in addition to representatives of the University council.

Objectives



- Bifröst is proud of these objectives, but there is more. Amongst those mentioned above, we strive to build a solid international university with a strong network of links with other universities, professionals, the business sector and society.
- We strive to produce graduates who possess the knowledge and training required to take on real-life problems, and who possess international vision, good collaborative and communication skills and a creative and critical mindset.
- As much as possible we use Bifröst University's unique location to build an environmentally sound community.

Future vision and goals of Bifröst University

Universities are in an informal competition with each other, domestic and foreign and at Bifröst we seek to achieve a competitive edge through our flexibility, innovation and quality. Bifröst University will continue to have qualified teaching and student service staff that combine forces to achieve the university's goals.

Being a campus university, Bifröst gains an advantage. An advantage to educate students and residents through a holistic approach, not only through its curriculum, but also through the way we run our campus in an environmental and social aspect. We will continue to nurture this part of the university's unique status and appeal.

It is important for the University to maintain strong co-operation with the business community and the Alumni Association. The municipality of Borgarbyggð is also an important partner in the development of the university community.

The staff and students of the University will be active participants in the public debate and display pride and forward thinking

Bifröst University will remain alert to new opportunities that answer the needs of students, the economy and society as a whole.

The University will aspire to show initiative in adopting new methods of teaching through technological innovation and systems that are suited to the pace of the modern age.



THE PRINCIPLES

Business social responsibility should not be coerced; it is a voluntary decision that the entrepreneurial leadership of every company must make on its own.

~John Mackey~

PRINCIPLE 1 – PURPOSE

“We will develop the capabilities of students to be future generators of sustainable value for business and society at large and to work for an inclusive and sustainable global economy.”

On November 29th 2011 the board of the university and later on the university council agreed upon the Rectors proposal on implementing the ideology of sustainable development into all activities. The board decided to evaluate our strategy in order to do so and the rector was in charge of that evaluation.

Strategy

A university is in many ways considered a role model in society. At Bifröst University we embrace that fact, not only in regards to what we teach, but also in how we teach it and how we live our daily life within the university campus.

The concept of *“Practice what you preach”* is part of our vision and the fact that sustainability is not something that should be taught in defined classes to dedicated

environmentalists. Bifröst emphasizes on implementing the concept of sustainability and social responsibility into all aspects of the university life.

To embrace the fact that students are willing (and asking to) be molded and place their trust in the hands of the university.

“Practice what you preach” at Bifröst therefore becomes a part the lives of students and staff living and working on campus. Issues touching the lifestyle on campus therefore become as essential as the framework and environment “that [will] enable effective learning experience for responsible leadership”.

Major achievements

University strategy 2012-2015

World Café Forum

On March 3rd 2012 a seminar (World Cafe Forum) was held at Bifröst. It was made public in the media and attendance offered to all interested parties but also key individuals were summoned. The mission was to seek answers to questions like; which should be the role of the university in the future and how we could improve ourselves in offering education for future leaders. The forum was a success; approximately one hundred people (students, alumni's, staff, neighbors etc.) attended and took part in vigorous discussions. This event was the starting point of an evaluation of our strategy as a whole, which took over the period from March 2012 to December 2012, when the board finally accepted the new Mission statement.

The core difference from our old strategy reflects in the Role, describing that the universities' role is not only to educate leaders (as before), but rather to educate responsible leaders. This reflects in both the vision (personal development and social participation where critical, creative thinking and strong environmental awareness are nurtured) and last but not least in the core values, one being Responsibility (Respect for the environment and the community, guided by the ethos of sustainability).



Bifröst University Mission Statement

Role

Bifröst is a university that educates socially responsible leaders.

Vision

Bifröst will be on the cutting edge in its course offerings and methods of instruction, which are shaped by the University's emphasis on social responsibility and sustainability. Bifröst will develop and evolve as:

- A knowledge centre with an emphasis on the interplay between individuals, the economy and society
- A convergence point for personal development and social participation where critical, creative thinking and strong environmental awareness are nurtured
- A specialised university with strong roots, a clear vision and an expansive contact network
- A symbol of foresight, courage and radicalism in teaching and studies

Core values

The University strives to train its students for participation in specialised career fields and carrying out scholarly analysis, informed with a sense of the complex interplay of work, development, research and society. The ideological and ethical core values reflecting all activities within the University underpin this central objective.

Cooperation that aims at:

- Training students in group and team work
- Fostering new and differing points of view through multi-disciplinary activities
- Encouraging interaction and participation in a socially thriving university village (campus)
- Working with and serving the local community

Initiative that involves:

- Innovation in all University activities
- Independent work habits and the courage to blaze one's own trail
- Active student participation in teaching and research within the University's walls

Responsibility that emerges in:

- A systematic emphasis on social responsibility in course content
- High aspirations and professional work methods and procedures in teaching and research

Future perspectives

Bifröst University will develop its strategy further in the next year and implement the Statement step by step in the next months and years to come. The university will connect and work more with the closest society in the north western region of Iceland. Bifröst University believes that its purpose is to be of value not only for the community in the north western part of Iceland and it's habitants but also to Iceland as a whole. The university will continue to create a solid foundation in the Icelandic society and in the business community.



PRINCIPLE 2 and 3 – Value and Method

“We will incorporate into our academic activities and curricula the values of global social responsibility as portrayed in international initiatives such as the United Nations Global Compact.”

“We will create educational frameworks, materials, processes and environments that enable effective learning experiences for responsible leadership.”

Strategy

Before joining PriME we hired a person to be the coordinator of the project as a whole; to implement the principles of sustainable development into our activities. This person served as the rector’s assistant in PriME matters. She mapped which steps to take next and in what order. Also our teaching councilor was put in charge of assisting the teachers to revise the aim and conduct of their courses.

As mentioned before, the new policy of the university focuses on global social responsibility. In order to implement this, the revision of all curriculums has started and is ongoing. Our teaching councilor has personally assisted the teachers in this revision, and in some cases there were radical changes made, both on the curricula itself and on the teaching methods.

A good example on this is a course taught in the first year of undergraduates; Leadership and management, where basic changes were made. All assessments are now focusing on environmental issues and social responsibility, with one big core project called „Making a better Bifröst“, being a big part of student’s activities in the course. Through that course alone, many projects on environmental matters and social responsibilities have been made already.

After the economic crash in 2008 we had already responded to the critics of the Parliaments Investigative Commission, and made a course in ethics mandatory in all our lines. Also, we have improved our range of courses on sustainability and social responsibility, both as mandatory and elective courses. Since we joined PRiME the number of student’s projects on sustainability and social responsibility have

grown, and student's interest in those matters is increasing.

Engaging with PRiME has been the encouragement Bifröst needed to revise its traditional business school approach. The revision focuses mainly on curricula and interdisciplinary teachings through all courses of study.

Currently we are orienting ourselves in regards to a more strategic emphasis on sustainability and social responsibility. Revising our lines of study at all levels being part of that.

Courses that cover ethics, critical thinking, economics and introduction to law are amongst subjects that will be part of all lines of study in the first year at Bifröst.

Major achievements

Learning by Developing – Cooperation with Laurea University

Bifröst has a heritage of progressive teaching methods, built on real projects and „hands on“ assessments. Still, in connection with our goals of educating responsible leaders, we want to improve our teaching methods. So we contacted Laurea University in order to learn from them and their „Learning by developing“ (LbD) ideology.

In fall 2011 we welcomed Mrs. Katariina Raj from Laurea University to introduce a new educational frameworks that Laurea has been developing the last 10 years (LbD). The LbD is an innovative operating model created by Laurea University of applied sciences in Finland. The model is based on authenticity, partnership, experiential learning and research.

Subsequently two staff members were sent to Laurea to learn more about the LbD-approach and in summer 2012 an LbD-attempt was made by adjusting it to Bifröst curriculum. Again we received help from Laurea University and consequently 3 undergraduate courses were taught in close cooperation with each other, were 3 teachers worked together preparing the syllabus and spin a PRiME-thread through the courses.

A PRiME-thread combined with the schools vision of education for responsible leaders, was spun through these courses, connecting them with one another.

Viable projects – „A better Bifröst“

This interdisciplinary course across all undergraduate fields was taught during spring semester 2012. Students were to hand in a 60% final assignment connecting leadership and management, using Bifröst University campus as stage ground. Students were asked to design a viable project that would result in improving living conditions at

the campus site, for students, staff and the community as a whole. The outcome aimed at training students in viable projects at the same time as making them more conscious of the effects their decisions would have on their surroundings. Making students more aware of the problems school authorities face in attempts to “green the campus” was a marginal gain.

Students were able to choose from projects concerning environmental issues, the role of the university in society, connecting Bifröst furthermore with the surrounding community, adding value to the school’s strategy; or in short, to make Bifröst a better, more responsible place to live. While doing so, students had to convince each other of the value of their idea and follow it through. To name a few of the projects conducted:

- “Health weekends” were organized at Bifröst
- A cinema for children living on campus
- Introduction of sustainability and nature conservation in the surrounding community
- “Green Bifröst”. 10 homes volunteered to sort domestic trash
- Nourishment and academic performance
- Clothes collection in cooperation with the Red Cross

Some project outlived its originally planned life span and became permanent changes on campus.



Lifestyle on campus

Recognizing that the lifestyle we lead in regards to food, rest and exercise, Bifröst has made drastic changes at the local café. Health food and health concepts in general are being focused upon.

Students and habitants in the university village are encouraged to “stay in shape” with various initiatives. Yoga and meditation is also a recognized part of the total wellbeing of staff and students at Bifröst.

A Bifröst mountain hiking club has been formed, connecting students, staff and members of Bifröst alumni as well as hikers in general. The aim of the project being to

open Bifröst “gates” and introducing the school from a different angle.

In social aspect the university strives to locate minority groups living on campus and offering them the assistance they need. For example single parents, “older” students coming back to school after life on the labor market.

Ethics

In the commission’s report written after the fall of the banks in 2008, universities were criticized for not being “on the ethical guard”.

Bifröst response to that was to add more compulsory ethics into the curricula. Furthermore a new course was designed; Sustainability and Corporate Social Responsibility, for those wanting to add more meat to their ethical bones.

Greening the campus

The environmental approach of sustainability is being adapted to the abilities and aims of the university. Sustainability being an “open ended” concept, leaving the unit involved (homes, organizations, firms, villages etc.) with the work of implementation.

Greening the office

The greening of the office space has started and will be made in gradual steps. What we have achieved:

- All printers print both sides as default.
- All personal trash bins have been removed but sorting trash bins have been placed centrally

Future objectives

Sometimes we are “further down the road”, than we give ourselves credit for. That’s what we found out when we started this revision at Bifröst. We were doing more to implement socially responsible leadership than we had been giving ourselves credit for. In teaching methods, curricula, promoting sustainability and social responsibility on campus etc.

One of our future objectives is to track the changes we make and the effects they have in a wide sense, in a more organized manner. By doing so we gain a far better overview over where we are, where we need to add effort and where we are going.

Student involvement

We will continue to develop our curriculum and teaching methods in according to the cooperation with Laurea University. The aim

being to continue to develop our students' ability of critical thinking and independence and prevent students from becoming passive recipients.



PRINCIPLE 4 - Research

“We will engage in conceptual and empirical research that advances our understanding about the role, dynamics, and impact of corporations in the creation of sustainable social, environmental and economic value.”

Strategy

Bifröst University wants to take part in the academic progress of human resources and thereby strengthen the foundations of culture and economy. This can be done by encouraging students and staff to participate in national and international research on innovation and scientific cooperation.

At Bifröst we have 6 research centers:

- Bifröst University Research Center
- Center for European Studies
- Center for Retail Studies
- Center for Labor Law and Equal Justice
- Center for Cultural Studies
- Center for Management and International Business

Major achievements

Oil and gas research project

Bifröst University has recently entered into cooperation with two Norwegian academic

Institutions (University of Tromsø and Lillehammer University College) to explore economic, social, political and legal issues related to the development of the oil and gas sector in the Arctic with both sustainability and responsible management of resources in mind. Two stakeholder conferences will be organized in 2013, one in each country, to map out key issues. After the two conferences, the aim is to design a research project on the topic.

Another achievement was accomplished by the center for Cultural Studies as Dr. Ágúst Einarsson concluded a research on economic effects created by creative industries. The research was published in a book in October 2012 and is called “Economics of cultural industries” Dr. Ágúst Einarsson is a former rector of the university and is a professor for the course “Economics of cultural industries” in the MA program Cultural Management.

Future objectives

Bifröst University has two major future objectives in its research efforts. Firstly the university will conduct a research made in collaboration with all educational institutions for adults in the north western region of Iceland. The aim is to discover the need for continuous education in the area and how to apply methods to lift the educational level in the whole region. The research will be funded from the government of Iceland.

The second research is a study on the cooperative movement and its function in the business society. In the research Bifröst University going partly to its roots as the school was founded in 1918 as a cooperative college where the model was adopted from the Ruskin College in Oxford.



PRINCIPLE 5 - Partnership

“We will interact with managers of business corporations to extend our knowledge of their challenges in meeting social and environmental responsibilities and to explore jointly effective approaches to meeting these challenges.”

Strategy

For a university concentrating on social studies, business, culture, politics and law it's extremely important to keep up with the ever changing challenges society is faced with. A “shrinking” world and diminishing natural resources, just to name a few, force universities to stay alert to the changing focus and needs of businesses and society.

Major achievements

Real-project manager

In 2011 we decided to increase our understanding of the needs of local businesses. One of our teachers was designated real-project manager in the sense of requesting real projects from local businesses. The projects were handed over to students who got the challenge of solving them.

It's also the job of the manager to find every project a suitable channel according to the required level of the project; whether the project is to be solved at an undergraduate-, graduate- or masters-level.

Future objectives

To increase the dissemination of real projects and at the same time develop the LbD approach on teaching; taking into account that students, as often as possible, deal with real life business, social or cultural problems rather than “homemade” ones.

Further development of the role of the project manager is to sort out and map all projects that are requested or suggested. The best way to do that would be to create a website where businesses can sign up and request processing service from students. In

important information for ongoing development of the curricula.

that way the university would also get a better overview of the problems businesses and society face in real life, which is very



PRINCIPLE 6 - Dialogue

“We will facilitate and support dialogue and debate among educators, business, government, consumers, media, civil society organizations and other interested groups and stakeholders on critical issues related to global social responsibility and sustainability.”

Strategy

Universities have been criticized for raising ivory towers, placing themselves on top, looking down on the rest of the world.

Academic pride can threaten the academic world and lack of dialogue between institutions can lead to status quo or a situation where everyone needs to “invent the wheel” in order to believe that it’s rolls.

At Bifröst we’ve focused on keeping the dialogue between society, other universities and local business open. We strive to welcome guest teachers, increase the exchange possibilities of students, show initiatives in public debate and encourage teachers and staff to seek views and experience “outside the box” and seek constant way of cooperation with universities, business or community.

“Pay it forward” are words that have become our motto and will be explained in the next chapter.

Major achievements

Pay it forward – Open access

Research performed by universities is in most cases financed with public funding. Stating that, it should be the claim of the public to be able to view findings and results of such research.

Like stated before universities have to remember that their duty is not only to teach and do research, but also to inform society of their findings.

Bifröst is proud of being the first Icelandic university to create an open access database of all peer-reviewed papers published by its staff. Bifröst-academics strive to publish paper in open access magazines or open archives on the Internet. This agreement, between the academics and the university is active during time of employment.

The cooperation with Finnish Laurea has been fruitful and we have great expectations towards the future.

It began with the emphasis on teaching methods, but has transformed into much wider ties. Besides welcoming Laurea's employee to Bifröst to lecture on teaching methods, we have now sent on of our assistant professors to teach two courses; Tourism as cultural phenomenon and International trends in tourism.

Welcome to Bifröst

In spring 2012 Bifröst welcomed Mrs. Pernille Kallehave , director from Aarhus University. Mrs. Kallehave held an interesting lecture on how Aarhus University had managed to revise their strategy and performance according to PRiME values. She held meetings with staff and students, answered questions and gave constructive advice.

A conference series

In fall and spring 2011-2012 Bifröst University made the initiative to organize a conference series, the thread connecting the series being social responsibility. The highlight of the series being a conference held in English where Mrs. Pernille Kallehave was the main speaker.

Future objectives

Laurea and Krems?

The plan is to continue our cooperation with Laurea and even add Krems University (Austria) to the group. The reason for that is that the schools are substantially built on similar operational foundations.

In the summer of 2013 it is the plan to welcome more exchange teachers from Laurea who will be assisting with the continued interdisciplinary course that will be taught again.

The status quo is a very powerful opiate and when you have a system that seems to be working and producing profits by the conventional way of accounting for profits. It's very hard to make yourself change. But we all know that change is an inevitable part of business. Once you have ridden a wave just so far, you have to get another wave. We all know that. For us, becoming restorative has been that new wave and we have been riding it for 13 years now. It's been incredibly good for business.

Ray Anderson