

Objectives & Methodology

- Brown-Forman asked SustainAbility to gather and analyze feedback from external stakeholders on its 2007/8 Corporate Responsibility Report
- Brown-Forman and SustainAbility jointly identified stakeholders to participate in a one-hour interview
- SustainAbility conducted a total of 10 interviews: eight by telephone and two in person
- Interviewees included representatives from competitors, industry organizations, watchdog groups, investment firms, distributors, suppliers, environmental groups, and socially responsible investment analysts

Report Strengths

- As a first report, it provides a strong baseline and context for further work and achievements
- Overall, interviewees felt that Brown-Forman was a highly credible company based on the contents and feel of the report
- Case studies and “stories” resonated with interviewees and are well integrated to support Brown-Forman’s efforts
- Interviewees appreciated the humble tone and felt that it reflected company values and culture
- Interviewees praised the environmental section as innovative and cited it as an example of detail they would like in other sections

“It has a good feel to it and a clearly set purpose...issues are dealt with in a very down to earth manner.”

“I don’t think there is any company that is as thoughtful about these issues as Brown-Forman, but its tough to identify if it’s because of the report or my previous knowledge of the company.”

Report Weaknesses

- The report lacked clear data, metrics and targets to support strategy and evaluate performance
- Many interviewees were concerned that the report was too “US-centric”
- In places it was too “wordy” and visuals were needed to support the text
- While most interviewees agreed with the chosen issues, they would have liked to see transparency on the identification process including stakeholder engagement
- In the next report, stakeholders will be looking for a measurable plan to fulfill the intent laid out in this report

“It is a leading report in terms of aspiration, but it hasn’t gotten to the point where it is leading in effectiveness and performance.”

“The report does not engage critics. Who are they? What do they ask for?”

“Overall it seems quite introverted.”

Topline Stakeholder Recommendations

Interviewees made a range of recommendations, the majority of which centered around expanding the use of metrics and targets

- **Targets, metrics and timetables** are integral to support strategy and vision
- Include evidence of the **effectiveness** of programs and initiatives
- Be more transparent about levels of **accountability**—who is responsible within the company?
- The report needs to steer clear of focusing too narrowly on **compliance**
- There are a lot of vague statements regarding policy. Brown-Forman needs to be more comfortable taking a **position**.
- Develop a more robust **business case**. What are the long-term benefits of a corporate responsibility strategy from a financial standpoint?
- Condense and where applicable replace text with more **diagrams and charts** especially in relation to performance
- Include a more comprehensive **stakeholder engagement** process which feeds into the identification of material issues
- More information is needed to show B-F's commitment to **responsible drinking**