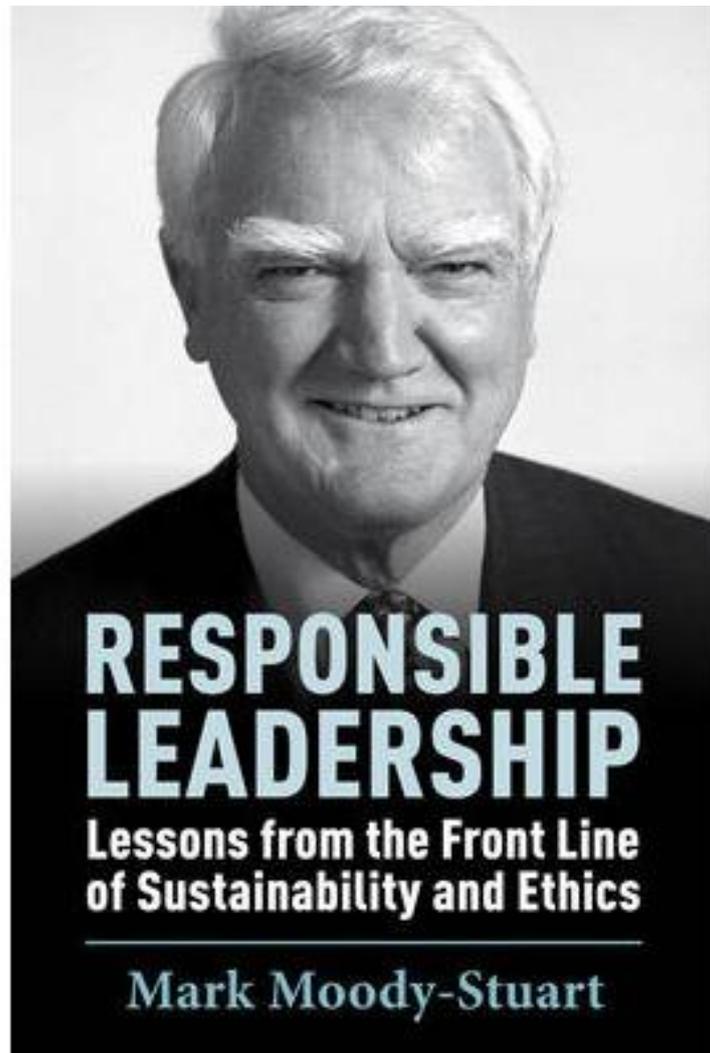


BOOK REVIEW #10



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Impressive & fascinating. Part memoir, part confessional, part manifesto for leadership. The underlying themes of the book are trust, cooperation and principles. Some chapters read as a thriller, especially chapters 5 and 11. You do not necessarily have to agree with the author's vision: tall trees catch much wind. But it is at least a story based on facts and experience, not on folklore. It is surely not a theoretical book with high level academic concepts what responsible leadership might be.

The author shares personal feelings, impressions, perceptions, successes and failures in a candid and engaging way. He addresses very sensitive issues, is not reluctant to give his personal opinion, is proud what he has achieved and humble about what went wrong. He also has the courage to raise the question 'why' something has failed. He shows gratitude and appreciation for people but is not afraid to spot serious mistakes, also not when it is related to himself.

> During the dismantling process of the Brent Spar platform [°] in 1995, he and another senior manager finally agreed that they should go ahead and cut the chains; a decision which ... *was probably not one of the best decisions of my Shell career.*

[°] A picture of Brent Spar activists challenging Shell is not for nothing one of the "Photos that changed the world" (Prestel Verlag - 2013). Although erroneous information was distributed by Greenpeace, it was a point-of-no-return in global environmental thinking and communication.

> Or, during the company restructuring process in 1999 he once made a proposal to split roles at board level but this caused violent counter-reaction. *I came closer than I ever had done in my entire Shell career to being sacked.*

Are these two examples not what is meant by responsible leadership: recognising and accepting that errors can be made, and learn from them ?

His scientific background - having a PhD in geosciences - might have been instrumental

in the author's analysis, assessment, observations, conclusions and decisions: sharp as a hawk but mild and resolute in his judgment.

The topics he addressed - with serenity and knowledge - are not the simplest ones:

- human rights
- bribery & corruption
- lobbying & transparency
- reputational exposure
- environment & climate change
- energy supply
- politics & governments
- industrial safety

· ...
and he illustrates them with his personal experiences:

- dismantling of Brent Spar
- execution of Ogoni people and environmental issues in Niger delta
- negotiations with governments in Syria, Libya, Iraq, Sudan, Myanmar
- calculation and reporting of oil & gas reserves
- CO₂ reduction & sequestration
- ...

At the end of each 'instructive tale', the author always wonders what could have been done differently from a leadership perspective. He concludes in different ways:

History will be the judge of which approach has been more effective.

I freely admit that it remains a matter of opinion rather than of provable fact.

It looks that he intends to say: " At many different occasions I had to displace a stone in the river, it was at that time always to my knowledge the right one, however the future will tell. "

A must-read for students & young graduates new to the subject, but also for seasoned professionals & experienced leaders.
