

> CFI.co Meets the Steward Redqueen Partners:

René Kim, Wouter Scheepens and Willem Vosmer



Partner: René Kim



Partner: Wouter Scheepens



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Sustainable corporate profits have become a function of ESG parameters. More than yet another business acronym, ESG (environment, social, and governance) ensures the long-term well-being of private business in a fast-changing world. As corporations of all sizes engage with their surroundings and stakeholders, often more questions arise than are answered.

“Sustainability advisors are now as essential to any given business’ operations as are legal experts and accountants. We are the ones charting future opportunities and showing the way forward,” says Willem Vosmer of Steward Redqueen – a Dutch consultancy specialised in helping managers and entrepreneurs understand how ESG values can ensure future corporate profitability.

“While old-school managers may be hugely successful in running their business at peak performance, they do sometimes struggle to incorporate modern environmental, social, and governance standards into day-to-day operations. It is often not so much a question of reluctance to embrace non-traditional business practices, as it is a lack of understanding in how ESG can positively impact the bottom line.”

Mr Vosmer is not into peddling fuzzy concepts or vague ideas. He is, however, concerned that private business is getting a bad rap: “There is quite a lot a criticism being levelled at capitalism as an economic model. While we fully understand the reasons behind this

censure, we also think it is not entirely justified. In a way, Steward Redqueen is in the business of saving capitalism from itself. What we want to show is that it makes perfect business sense to incorporate sustainability principles into day to day operations.”

Steward Redqueen provides its clients with a unique set of skills and has pioneered the transformation of business practices. The firm was one of the first to recognise that most CEOs and entrepreneurs are more than willing to respond to environmental and social concerns, but are often rather clueless when it comes to broadening and updating long-standing corporate processes and practices.

“Our professionals work with businesses in a joint effort to find transformative ways to future profitability. This is not merely an exercise in compliance with existing laws and regulations. Rather, we point out that by taking the lead, and doing so voluntarily, private businesses not only reduce risk factors but actually broach new markets that offer enticing opportunities.”

According to René Kim, one of Steward Redqueen’s founding partners, much can be earned from how money makes its way through the corporate structure: “We always base our advice on hard data. Contrary to popular belief, the advocates of ESG are not softies who base their thinking on lofty ideas that may prove impractical in real life. Steward Redqueen wastes no time on idealism or dreaming: we thoroughly assess the impact on the bottom line

of any ESG initiative we propose. Processes that fail to improve performance are unceremoniously discarded.”

Steward Redqueen has helped large multinationals, pension funds, development banks, charitable organisations, and others come to grips with ESG values. The firm has enjoyed particular success in assisting public organisations become more pragmatic in their approach. “Goals need to be met in a responsible way. By focusing on results and introducing tried-and-true processes from the corporate world, we have enabled a fair number of public entities to become much more efficient in the pursuit of their goals.”

Steward Redqueen has also managed to dispel the myth that ESG is an expensive proposition. Wouter Scheepens, a sustainability and impact management expert and another of Steward Redqueen’s co-founders, explains: “We work in both developed and emerging markets. The interesting bit is that whenever there are less funds available, creativity tends to take over. It never fails to amaze how much may be accomplished on a shoestring. Budgetary constraints encourage experimentation which, in turn often leads to surprising results. Ever looking for synergies and efficiencies, we are able to apply and leverage the insights and approaches first gained in emerging markets to deliver even better results to companies conducting their business in more developed markets – yet again underlining that ESG as a concept is a money maker and not a loss leader.” ❄