

## From the editor



*Rob Worthington-Smith*

Last year our economy was on the high road, a collection of individual businesses driving towards their destinations. Flashing blue lights were noticed in the distance, but what's new? We'll deal with it when we get there. And then the traffic ground to a halt. Okay, this can happen, probably some unfortunate company gone to the wall. Oops! No, a whole industry! Serves them right. Too little following distance, not enough precaution in the management of their assets, they got what they deserve. Come on, clear the road, let's get a move on. Ten minutes late, maybe we'll miss our earnings forecast for this quarter, but there's plenty of road to get the pedal back to the metal.

Well, as I write this, it will soon be a year and counting. Every new statistic on GDP contraction, business closures and waves of retrenchments points to a far bigger economic calamity than we ever thought possible. Yet, we humans are fundamentally optimistic. We tend to believe that disasters, though they might happen to others, won't affect us – especially when we are uninsured or unprepared.

I wish I could say that last year's edition of this book 'told you so'. It didn't. However, it did describe a whole range of sustainability issues that, like irresponsible lending and borrowing – the main culprit of our current predicament – are lurking boulders that need to be negotiated on our route to long-term business success.

The central purpose of this Handbook is to help companies to understand the sustainability imperative and to respond appropriately. The arena is developing fast. Chapter One provides an overview of King III's new 'comply or explain' approach to sustainability management and reporting. In Chapter Three, you'll find a detailed outline of the sustainability issues that are relevant to South African businesses. Sustainability Profiles, illustrating corporate responses to a range of critical sustainability issues, can be found in Chapter Six.

It may be true that as entrepreneurs we tend to rely on aggressive driving skills and get away with what we can. But we also care what others think, especially when our corporate reputation is on the line. Read then our new Chapter Two featuring Triologue's Media Analysis and Media Sustainability Index. Here we have tasked media analysis company Media Tenor, to rate what commentators are saying about companies in the media, across a number of sustainability areas.

Do we return to the highway of material excess? In these pages, we invite you to consider another road, one that's lined with our customers, our employees, our families, indeed our children and their descendents. We hope this driver's manual sets you up for a safer journey into the future.

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Rob Worthington-Smith". The signature is fluid and cursive.

**Rob Worthington-Smith**  
Editor

PS: I thank the entire Triologue team for producing an outstanding effort for this special edition. Well done!