

Changing the World, One Idea at a Time

A prime minister, corporate leaders, and global activists mix it up

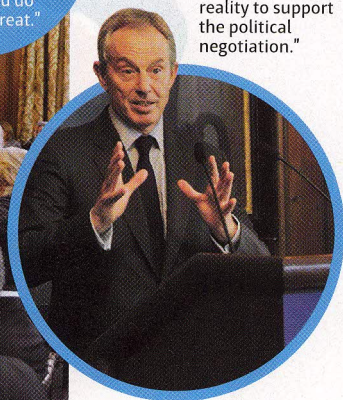


Richard Branson warned that fuel costs could soar again, making alternative energy not only essential but "very competitive."



Condé Nast Traveler Editor in Chief Klara Glowczewska asked, "What does it mean to do the right thing for a global industry in an age of global citizenship?"

Roger Martin, dean at the University of Toronto, urged companies to join forces for good: "You can't underestimate the ability of corporations to band together and do something great."



Tony Blair on travel's role in the Middle East: "If you want a peace process to succeed, you need the surrounding reality to support the political negotiation."

THE EVENT

Condé Nast Traveler's World Savers Luncheon

THE PLACE

Harold Pratt House, New York City

THE DATE

September 20, 2010

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN you bring together in one room former Prime Minister Tony Blair, the global visionary Sir Richard Branson, a panel of business gurus, and several dozen nonprofit and corporate leaders? A ferment of creative thinking. The beauty of this event is how it works as a catalyst. People who might otherwise never cross paths mix it up.

Blair, for example, made the connection between his current mission—to help build the economy of Palestine as part of the drive for Middle East peace—and the growth of tourism. He was lyrical about the appeal of

the region: "When you stand on Mount Nebo, on the Jordanian side . . . this is where Moses supposedly looked out over the Promised Land, and you can literally see right across the Jordan Valley. When dusk falls, you see the lights of Jerusalem in the distance, and you are at this most extraordinary historic site. You understand why Mark Twain said that the only problem with visiting the Holy Land is that every few miles you have to read up on 100 years of history."

The spirit of idea-interchange was infectious. Speaking up from the audience, Tensie Whelan, presi-

dent of the Rainforest Alliance, asked panelist Keith Weed, CMO of Unilever, for his advice to the travel industry. Weed's response: Communicate more about sustainability. "The best way to engage consumers is to tell a story that might encourage them to change behavior," said Weed, whose company encourages responsible practices among its customers. "Small acts can add up to massive change, and the travel industry has the power to touch people." Roger Martin, dean of the University of Toronto's Rotman School of Management, stressed that by collaborating, the travel in-

dustry can tackle global issues such as climate change.

Paul Brown, president of global brands for Hilton, noted that his company has launched a carbon-emission measurement system aimed at reducing consumption around the world. And Branson, the wunderkind of the Virgin empire, announced a \$1 million pledge to promote entrepreneurs in Zimbabwe. Virgin Group has also committed all travel-business profits to the development of alternative fuels. "I believe we can get on top of every problem there is when we have a plan," said Branson.

There was tangible evidence that World Savers forums have inspired effective projects: A year ago, Micato Safaris' managing director Dennis Pinto heard TOMS Shoes' Blake Mycoskie explain how he gives a pair of shoes away for each pair sold. From that idea, One for One was born: Micato now educates one child for every safari booked.

From left: On Jordan's Mount Nebo, looking toward Jerusalem ("I love every moment I am there," said Blair); in Zimbabwe, where Branson is donating \$1 million.

