

Doing Business Consciously - June 2009

Introduction

There's something happening; something in the air.

The credit crunch. Global problems: from climate change to poverty and war. Tensions in the way many people, even in the developed world, live.

And there are new ways emerging of looking at politics, economics, markets and business. But do you sometimes feel there is more to do?

Do you work in a business, or perhaps own or run one, or advise one? Do you believe that business can be a force for good?

Doing Business Consciously can help. Doing Business Consciously means:

- Staying aware of what is happening as you do it.
- Inquiring into the purpose of something, and into its impact.
- Being aware of thoughts, feelings and deeper needs.
- Valuing learning and experience as much as the result.
- Reflecting on the impact of even the smallest business on the broader global system.

Doing Business Consciously usually results in businesses that affect human beings and our environment in a positive way.

The Benefits of Doing Business Consciously

There are personal benefits:

- A sense of belonging – knowing where you fit into society and how you contribute.
- The ability to balance tensions between money and other goals, and between short-term and long-term needs.
- Solidarity with other people.
- Increased confidence and the ability to face new situation.
- Stronger relationships and the ability to create and maintain them.

There are benefits to companies (and other groups of people):

- Creating more useful products and services for your customers.
- Stronger internal relationships and culture in your team.
- Excellent internal and external communication, and better relationships with customers.
- Flexibility and the ability to respond to market changes rapidly and effectively.
- More strength and resilience, financially and in other ways.
- Cross-fertilisation and synergy across and within companies.
- Unity of purpose across an entire group.

There are global benefits:

- Better quality products, ones that last.
- Replacing physical products with services with lower carbon use.
- Companies that produce real value, with reduced environmental impact.

- More people being valued as much for themselves as for their economic worth.
- Better working conditions.
- More productive relationships between companies and their customers, locally and globally.
- Happiness that means real fulfilment and growth.
- More stable economies, locally and globally.
- A redefinition of growth: to mean increasing development and maturity, not just scale.
- Realising the positive power of business to improve things.

Want some of that?

If so, simply join in. There are a many initiatives emerging around doing business more consciously. Look up: Ricardo Semler, Yvon Chouinard, John Mackey, and Ray Anderson.

You can contribute by:

- Reading and learning about the subject.
- Writing and teaching about it, and bringing news of it to others.
- Encouraging those you work with to learn about it, and join in.
- Carrying out your work, whatever it is, more consciously.

To do business more consciously, commit personally to:

- Personal development – investing in learning about yourself and how you tick.
- Developing emotional literacy – understanding your and other people's feelings.
- Challenging your beliefs and attitudes – constantly; and giving up your certainty.
- Honesty. Being brave. Being open to new ideas and nurturing an appetite for learning.
- Defining and carrying out a personal mission – keeping this in mind and always going for it.
- Taking responsibility for everything that happens to you, and leading others.
- Looking after yourself – physically and mentally.
- Staying aware of your attitudes and beliefs and what is happening inside and outside of you.
- Delivering whatever you deliver in the best way possible.
- Spending time with other people who wish to be more conscious.
- Understanding that all of the above is an on-going process that really has no end-point, and that requires diligence and perseverance – even when things get tough.

And as a group, commit to:

- Developing a shared mission and direction.
- Taking responsibility for what happens and participating democratically wherever possible.
- Communicating clearly and giving each other feedback, coaching and support.
- Exploring and breaking boundaries and silos between functions and teams – communicating better in order to create better integrated products and services for customers.
- Examining collaboration and competition and doing both consciously.
- Being conscious about team processes, about everything, always.
- Dealing with one another truly respectfully – all the time.
- Acknowledging and articulating power structures, both formal and informal.
- Spreading leadership skills and responsibility to everyone in the organisation.

Above all doing business consciously is a choice. It's a choice that changes **what** you achieve and **how** you achieve it. For the better.

Pete Burden/Lasy Lawless/Will McInnes (with years of input from many others) June 2009.