

Imagine...

Imagine a business that is born out of a dream about how the world could be and should be. The founders are on fire to create something of relevance, resonance, and permanence – a business that will far outlive them, that delivers real value of multiple kinds to everyone it touches. They want to create a business that their parents and children will be proud of, that aspires to so much more than making money – a force for good that enhances the health and well-being of society. They dream of creating a business that enriches the world by its existence and brings joy, fulfillment, and a sense of meaning to all who are touched by it.

Picture a business built on love and care rather than stress and fear, whose team members are passionate and committed to their work. Their days race by in a blur of focused intensity, collaboration, and camaraderie. Far from becoming depleted and burned out, they find themselves at the end of each day newly inspired and freshly committed to what brought them to the business in the first place – the opportunity to be part of something larger than themselves, to make a difference, to craft a purposeful life while earning a living.

Think of a business that cares profoundly about the well-being of its customers, seeing them not as consumers but as flesh-and-blood human beings whom it is privileged to serve. It would no more mislead, mistreat, or ignore its customers than any thoughtful person would exploit loved ones at home. Its team members experience the joy of service, of enriching the lives of others.

Envision a business that embraces outsiders as insiders, inviting its suppliers into the family circle and treating them with the same love and care it showers on its customers and team members. Imagine a business that is a committed and caring citizen of every community it inhabits, elevating its civic life and contributing in multiple ways to its betterment. Imagine a business that views its competitors not as enemies to be crushed but as teachers to learn from and fellow travelers on a journey toward excellence. Visualize a business that genuinely cares about the planet and all the sentient beings that live on it, that celebrates the glories of nature, that thinks beyond carbon and neutrality to become a healing force that nurses the ecosphere back to sustained vitality.

Imagine a business that exercises great care in whom it hires, where hardly anyone ever leaves once he or she joins. Imagine a business with fewer managers, because it doesn't need anyone to look over peoples' shoulders to make sure they are working or know what to do, a business that is self-managing, self-motivating, self-organizing, and self-healing like any evolved, sentient being.

See in your mind's eye a business that chooses and promotes leaders because of their wisdom and capacity for love and care, individuals who lead by mentoring and inspiring people rather than commanding them or using carrots and sticks. These leaders care passionately about their people and the purpose of their business and little for power or personal enrichment.

Imagine a business that exists in a virtuous cycle of multifaceted value creation, generating social, intellectual, emotional, spiritual, cultural, physical, and ecological wealth and well-being for everyone it touches, while also delivering superior financial results year after year, decade after decade. Imagine a business that recognizes that while our planetary resources are limited, human creativity is unlimited and continually fosters the conditions in which its people can rise to their extraordinary, almost miraculous potential.

Such businesses – suffused with higher purpose, leavened with authentic caring, influential and inspirational, egalitarian and committed to excellence, trustworthy and transparent, admired and emulated, loved and respected – are not imaginary entities in some fictional utopia. They exist in the real world, by the dozens today but soon to be by the hundreds and thousands. Examples of such companies today include Whole Foods Market, The Container Store, Patagonia, Eaton, the Tata Group, Google, Panera Bread, Southwest Airlines, Bright Horizons, Starbucks, UPS, Costco, Wegmans, REI, Twitter, POSCO, and many others. In decades ahead, companies such as these will transform the world and lift humanity to new heights of emotional and spiritual well-being, physical vitality, and material abundance.

Welcome to the heroic new world of Conscious Capitalism.

(Conscious Capitalism: Liberating the heroic spirit of business. John Mackey and Raj Sisodia. Harvard Business Review Press. Boston, MA. 2013. Pages 30ff.)