

Be the Solution: How Entrepreneurs and Conscious Capitalists Can Solve All the Worlds Problems by Michael Strong



Review by: Daniel Zoltani

I picked up this book in the hopes of grasping a deeper understanding of the “Conscious Capitalist” movement. *Be the Solution* most definitely helped accomplish this goal while providing a fresh and invigorating stance in regards to the endless possibilities of the liberated entrepreneurial spirit. The book went far beyond what I had expected. It not only provided a reasonable and sound argument on how and why free markets can help solve many of the world’s largest problems, such as global poverty, failing education systems, and environmental deprivation, but more importantly how through entrepreneurship we (all 7 billion of us) can live healthier, peaceful and more meaningful lives. I thoroughly enjoyed Strong's optimistic and idealistic vision of the future. I also enjoyed the book's attempt to present its fundamental message, neither for nor against, the Right or the Left, or liberal or conservative, but simply as an overarching solution – “Criticize by Creating”.

Essays from John Mackey, CEO of Whole Foods, Professor Muhammad Yunus, founder of the [Grameen Bank](#), Donna Callejon, COO of Global Giving, Candace Allen, Educator, Karter Singh Khalsa, CEO of Golden Temple of Oregon and makers of Peace Cereal and Yogi tea, Hernando de Soto, founder of the Instituto Libertad y Democracia, Dr. Don Beck originator of Spiral Dynamics, Brian Johnson, Philosopher and Entrepreneur, and Jeff Klein, Executive Director of FLOW all contribute to the book in separate chapters. Each provides their own unique perspective and experience regarding business, development and their vision for the positive transformation of the world.

Be the Solution argues that economic freedom and entrepreneurial opportunity are the best conditions for innovation, wealth-creation, and increased prosperity for all. In order for entrepreneurs to bring their creative innovations to scale, they need access to “The Entrepreneur’s Tool Kit”,

1. Secure, well-defined, and transferable property rights.
2. Rule of law rather than rule of arbitrary authority. For business purposes, reliable, timely, and fair contract enforcement is especially important.
3. The freedom to create, manage, and grow legal enterprises, often referred to as "economic freedom."

What if those who thought that they were finding meaning in status and consumption were to discover a more direct and satisfying path to meaning through flow? What is Flow you ask? In a culture of freedom, respect, and integrity as entrepreneurs continue to solve problems by creating solutions, the value added acts as the main driver of our human advancement.

Flow is:

“Being completely involved in an activity for its own sake. The ego falls away. Time flies. Every action, movement, and thought follows inevitably from the previous one, like playing jazz. Your whole being is involved, and you’re using your skills to the utmost.”

I like that!

A few other topics discussed throughout the book that I found intriguing:

1. The first section of the book celebrates the astounding accomplishments, often overlooked by politicians, media and academia in regards to the decrease in armed conflicts around the world, global poverty, and positive developments concerning health, the environment and wealth creation for all. Human beings have historically risen to the occasion, and continue to address and overcome seemingly insurmountable challenges.
2. Much of the value added to products in the future will come from improved aesthetics and richer more rewarding experiences rather than bigger and more. The growth industries of the future will be led by entrepreneurs who specialize in excellence in beauty and design, in style and fashion, in taste and elegance, in better living environments and better social environments, in more harmonious workplaces, more empathetic and patient-respectful health care, in more humane education, and the like.
3. The potential value of a monetized prediction market. Such a futures market has the potential to establish and record invaluable information concerning the efficacy of government programs, the prerequisites for economic growth, the effectiveness of educational policies and the validity of social theories.
4. The entrepreneurial creation of coherent modern tribal structures (or virtue cultures), initially in the context of what is now known as K-12 education, provides a better means of solving all of the foregoing problems than has been or will be provided by the exertions of academic researchers and public policy experts.
5. We need global peace and prosperity for all, but the vision is ultimately not satisfying if it is based merely on mindless materialism. Thus we also need to envision a growing well-being industry.

In the words of John Mackey, “Ultimately conscious businesses creates lasting value as the world evolves to even greater levels of prosperity, helping billions of people flourish and lead lives infused with passion, purpose, love and creativity — a world of freedom, harmony, prosperity and compassion.

In these regards, while reading *Be the Solution*, I couldn't help but in my mind keep referring back to a quote I once read by the Dalai Lama:

We have bigger houses but smaller families:

We have more degrees but less sense;

more knowledge but less judgments;

more experts but more problems;

more medicines, but less healthiness.

We've been all the way to the moon and back,

but we have trouble crossing the street

to meet the new neighbor.

We build more computers

to hold more information,

to produce more copies than ever,

but we have less communication.

We have become long on quantity

but short on quality.

These are times of fast foods,

but slow digestion;

tall man, but short character;

steep profits, but shallow relationships.

It is time when there is much in the window

but nothing in the room.

How this perfectly relates to the theme of *Be the Solution*. Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs similarly identifies the same issue:

Once people's more basic needs for food, shelter, and safety have been met, they then crave love, esteem and self-actualization. In the developed countries, almost everyone's basic needs have been met. Regarding the emerging economies, we know that opening the world will allow the basic needs for almost everyone on the planet to be met. Thus the fundamental problem is how to allow people's needs for love, esteem and self-actualization to be met more effectively.

Be the Solution celebrates the accomplishments that have been made thus far and creates excitement about our human potential to solve the next set of transformational challenges.