

Conscious Capitalism: Liberating the Heroic Spirit of Business by John Mackey & Rajendra Sisodia



Review by: Lauren Evans

As the saying goes, *“The longest journey that people must take is the 18 inches between their heads and their hearts.”* It's crazy how difficult this journey is for so many corporations, businesses and entrepreneurs out there, mainly due to the fact that crony capitalism and general lack of consciousness is rooted in the myth that the ultimate purpose of business is to maximize profits for the investors. Why? The crony approach has a narrow view of human nature and cannot explain the causes of business success. In this book, the authors lay out a plan for large corporations to overcome decades of legacy thinking in order to achieve real success. They teach us how conscious capitalism is truly the only way you can build an organization that benefits all of its stakeholders, and they give us ideas of how to develop our SQ (spiritual intelligence) to drive conscious leadership and business practices.

Having been a Whole Foods Market Team Member for almost 10 years now, I have been able to witness how a large corporation that is growing by leaps and bounds every year still manages to remain authentic and cater to its stakeholders - all of them, including the environment, the silent stakeholder. Whole Foods Market started in Austin back in the 80s, and after opening more stores, there were some challenges with how to move forward. These conflicts ended up dividing the company, and John and the leadership team saw a need to reevaluate how we were doing business. What developed was a purpose search and the creation of our Declaration of Interdependence that laid the groundwork for our multi-stakeholder, conscious approach, as well as the creation of Whole Planet Foundation in 2005.

How do these companies who are so rooted in their old ways change for the better? This is what worked for Whole Foods and other conscious companies noted in the book - Patagonia, Southwest Airlines, Panera Bread and more:

- Start with a purpose search, create human commitment and behave like a conscious citizen in our global communities. Whole Planet Foundation was not part of the original purpose search of Whole Foods Market, but ending poverty is now one of the company's higher purposes.

- Count Team Members and customers as the most important stakeholders - customers are a company's most effective marketers, and happy Team Members result in happy customers.
- Develop a relationship with customers, then lead and educate them. I was part of the team that launched the Whole Foods Market Health Starts Here healthy eating initiative a few years ago. We partnered with third-party organizations to educate our customers about the ANDI (Aggregate Nutrient Density Index) scale. When we launched it, most people were like, "what the heck is ANDI" or "who is this ANDI guy" and "what is this kale thing," but after educating our customers about the nutrient density of foods, and that kale is the highest and most beneficial, kale started flying off the shelves. While we can't say that people are necessarily healthier because of ANDI and the Health Starts Here initiative, we can definitely say that our customers know how to make healthier choices when shopping.
- Investors are true stakeholders too. Just look at Warren Buffett - to his stakeholders, he communicates who he is, what his values are, the purpose and the strategy. What happened? He attracted investors and shareholders who most align with his philosophy and vision of his business.
- Be creative and innovative; share and collaborate. Conscious companies are always more creative and use marketing to enhance the quality of relationships with customers. Marketing should not be used to sell, but rather to add value among people who share a company's beliefs. This is why Whole Foods Market doesn't do much advertising - global and regional marketing initiatives are used to enhance and create value for the shopping experience.
- "Decentralization, combined with empowerment, fosters innovation and collaboration." Whole Foods Market's decentralized structure allows each region to have its autonomy and function independently, while also being able to collaborate with others to bring value where appropriate.
- Create purposeful work environments that challenge and encourage Team Members to learn and grow. What will result? As the authors note, "Team Members flourish as self-actualizing human beings." This is why Whole Foods Market doesn't necessarily pay the highest salaries in the industry and why all salary information is transparent - so that we attract employees who are motivated by a deeper purpose and connection to Whole Foods' mission and core values, rather than just the paycheck. It's also why we have initiatives like the Whole Foods Market University to teach our Team Members about a wide variety of subjects.
- Develop a conscious collaborative approach to customer-supplier relationships. Through Whole Planet Foundation's partnership with more than 200 supplier partners across all departments, we have been able to collaborate to not only fund more poverty alleviation projects around the globe, but for many supplier partners, we have given them a newfound higher purpose that has added a lot of value to their organizations.
- Don't neglect the environment, the silent stakeholder. Rather than adopting fear tactics, the authors urge readers to raise consciousness to create creativity and innovation. By having an ambassador in every store and at least one at the regional level, Whole Foods Market's Green

Mission program fosters collaboration to reduce our impact on the environment in very creative ways.

- Leadership and management need to be in harmony!

While the authors seem convinced that conscious capitalism will win in the end, we as millennials have an uphill battle to fight, and I am proud to be a part of a company who is driving change and inspiring all of us to be more conscious leaders. This is a quick and easy must-read for entrepreneurs who are just starting out as well as big corporations who want to be able to drive the world's future prosperity. As the authors note, "Quiet your mind, listen attentively to your inner heart and follow its guidance."