

Business Warrior Monk: Core Principles

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In our era, the road to holiness necessarily passes through the world of action.

– Dag Hammarskjöld, U.N. Secretary-General (1953-1960)

If we are to address the many challenges of our era, ranging from climate change to income inequality, leaders must increasingly embrace a unique combination of traits that I've come to refer to as being a "Business Warrior Monk."

This article outlines the four core principles that differentiate a Business Warrior Monk from a traditional leader. These principles have anchored my success over the past thirty years in building both for-profit (NYSE, NASDAQ and OTC) and non-profit enterprises (JUST Capital, World Business Academy, Chopra Foundation, Omega Point Institute, Unstoppable Foundation, Gorbachev Foundation, National Peace Academy, etc.) that "take responsibility for the whole."

Since its formal launch in 1987, the three-fold Mission Statement of the World Business Academy has been, and today remains:

- To shift the consciousness of existing business leadership from that of a predator to that of a steward, because we act differently when we accept we are responsible for the result of our actions;
- To shift the consciousness of young people going into business, particularly our business schools, to see themselves as entering a noble profession rather than a jungle, because we act differently in the temple than we do in the jungle; and
- To shift the consciousness of the public at large to put its money where its deep values are, because when the public does this, business will immediately shift in response.

Underlying this public Mission Statement are four Core Principles that guide the actions and perceptions of a Business Warrior Monk, so those "Monks" could share in the noble work of the Academy to "Take Responsibility for the Whole" of society. As summarized below, these Core Principles are Orientation to Spirit; Clarity of Purpose; Embracing Critical Qualities; and Redefining Success.

1) Orientation to Spirit: We are not humans having a spiritual experience. Rather, we are spiritual beings having a human experience.

This principle is grounded in the Perennial Philosophy (Aldous Huxley's term) which views all of the world's great religions, despite superficial differences, as sharing many of the same metaphysical truths as manifestations of the "divine reality" (Charity, Non-Attachment, Self-Knowledge, Good & Evil, Prayer, Suffering, Faith, etc.). This principle is further amplified by Gurdeiff and Pierre Teilhard de Jardin.

2) Clarity of Purpose: If we accept the conclusion that the universe is benign, then the transcendental question that will define our life's work is "How can I serve?"

Einstein's concluded that the universe is a friendly place. He famously observed that the only "real choice" was to believe that the universe was inherently threatening or benign: if the former all was hopeless, if the latter investigate how you can best harmonize with it. Our ultimate goal is to uncover the clues the Universe provides in order to find our respective life's purpose. Integrity means living in harmony with that truth, so we can "live the truth we know." An observation I made many years ago and repeat often to this day is "I define Personal Integrity as living the truth *you* know, not the truth I know, but the truth you know." And that "pain" as we experience it every day is defined as the distance between living the truth we know and the life we actually live.

3) Embracing Critical Qualities: Once we understand our life's purpose, we must commit heart and soul to fulfilling it by acting with impeccable discipline, humility and inspiration.

To achieve our purpose, we must finely hone three essential qualities and employ these in our actions: (a) the *discipline* of a professional athlete, who continually seeks peak performance regardless of changing conditions; (b) the *humility* of a Shaolin Buddhist monk, who acts without attachment to results or the need for recognition; and (c) the *inspiration* of a visionary, who transcends all negative thoughts in order to translate creative ideas into the material world.

4) Redefining Success: If we act in accordance with the above principles, then we're inevitably led to supreme success, including having the appropriate amount of money that will follow.

Once we are fully committed, as Goethe observes, “Providence moves too. All sorts of things occur to help one that would never otherwise have occurred.” By following our purpose and doing what we love, the money follows – more than enough to satisfy our needs. In doing so, we avoid the classic business pitfalls of never having enough “money, power and ego” and redefine success to being far more than the mere accumulation of wealth. Success means building thriving enterprises that fulfill the Academy’s four-fold bottom line comprised of “People, Purpose, Profit and Planet.”

We are well aware that seeing business as a spiritual enterprise is far from a traditional approach. We do not ask you to embrace the foregoing Core Principles as a matter of faith; but rather to look at them as an operating manual for the “new paradigm of business” and judge them on their results. To do so, we are currently writing a book that will elaborate on the material in this article by presenting twelve case studies of successful for-profit and non-profit enterprises, each of which illustrates a business Operating Principle derived from the foregoing Core Principles.

Each of the case studies described below demonstrates how one of the twelve Operating Principles can be applied to a variety of enterprises, both large and small. These principles are also applicable to complex domestic and international public policy issues. For-profit case studies range from co-founding the cable television industry to creating a hydrogen-powered dirigible that has been heralded by multiple high-ranking admirals as the “greatest innovation in flight since Kitty Hawk.” Non-profit case studies include developing solutions for climate change, serving Mother Teresa, and providing schooling and clean drinking water for 20,000 children in Africa.

These case studies and Operating Principles are:

- 1. Recognize that, in building highly successful businesses, culture always trumps strategy*
- 2. Practice Servant Leadership, asking always “How can I serve?”*
- 3. Build disruptive companies, especially companies that disrupt entire industries*
- 4. Network constantly. If you are not networking, you are not working*
- 5. Tackle humanity’s greatest challenges by “taking responsibility for the whole”*
- 6. Embrace humility. It is amazing how much you can accomplish if you don’t have to take credit for it*

7. *Think way out-of-the-box to develop innovative solutions for challenging environmental problems*
8. *“Change or Die!” Follow nature’s fundamental law to create game changing technologies and companies.*
9. *Apply cutting-edge information technologies to build highly-effective marketing campaigns*
10. *Pursue radical integrity and transparency. Your reputation is your most valuable asset*
11. *Beware of out-of-control egos. They destroy people and companies*
12. *Trust in the “green energy flow” of the universe. If your idea is true, the capital will follow, abundantly and effortlessly.*

In the mid-1980s, I served on the board of Business Executives for National Security (BENS), an organization of Fortune 1,000 executives dedicated to ending the Cold War by changing the relationship with the former Soviet Union. Working closely with BENS further confirmed the wisdom of the Academy’s teaching that business was “the most powerful force in the modern world.” Accordingly, in order to make positive lasting change, we would have to start by re-conceptualizing business as not simply being about making a profit, but as having the moral responsibility for improving the human condition by representing all stakeholders and uplifting all that it touches: employees, customers, shareholders, communities and the environment.

I launched the non-profit World Business Academy to show that business could both improve the quality of life for people and planet, while providing better than average profits. In the beginning we referred to the Core Principle of “Orientation to Spirt” as the “s” word, fearful that the mere mention of “spirituality” would frighten business executives away.

The idea of business as a spiritual discipline has come out of the closet. Today it is entering the board room wrapped in blue-ribbon concepts (“compassionate capitalism,” “the soul of money,” “servant leadership”) which express the innovative ideas through which farsighted CEOs, best-selling authors and business consultants seek to transform companies. It is gratifying to see these “new paradigm of business” ideas that the Academy has championed for over three decades move from the margin to the mainstream.

In the process of building the Academy, I discovered and implemented – through trial and error, success and failure – the Operating Principles outlined above. I share these principles so that you may consider joining the growing fellowship of

Business Warrior Monks, who are striving to build successful enterprises, win victories for humanity and insure a better future for our children's children.

For those who are skeptical, we close with this quote by Guillaume Apollinaire:

"Come to the edge," he said.

"We can't, we're afraid!" they responded.

"Come to the edge," he said.

"We can't. We will fall!" they responded.

"Come to the edge," he said.

And so, they came.

And he pushed them.

And they flew.