

## Personal values

The more surely and quickly you are able to deliver your goals, the greater your responsibility for ensuring those goals are the right ones.

I think therefore I am! Does this mean that the extent of my existence is dependent on the quality (or otherwise) of my thinking? Perhaps if we do not think enough, our existence may tend to be simply the extension of somebody else's thinking? A tool driven by their ideas and their view of the world?

As you become a more powerful tool, shouldn't you examine more carefully the ideas and values that you are driven by?

There is a risk in any section like this that the reader ends up being told what to believe. The intention here, however, is not to provide answers, but to stimulate questions which you need to answer for yourself. Of course, simply saying that is in itself suggesting that 'responsibility' is a valid and acceptable model. However, in this case, it is a fairly safe and reasonable one.

## Stewardship

Depending on your world-view, the human race has either been appointed stewards of the world in which we live, or, by dint of our own strengths and superiority, we have taken stewardship of the world. Either way, our position in the world establishes us as stewards, and we carry the authority of stewardship, which we exercise for good, or ill. The world: socially; physically; spiritually will become what we make it (at least in the short term).

Every choice we individually make, and everything that we do, affects the world in some way. Every time we make a selection, or speak out, or demand, or praise,



Is it progress if a cannibal uses a fork?

Stanislaw Lec.  
Polish Aphorist



He that has more knowledge than judgement, is made for another man's use more than his own.

William Penn  
Founder of Pennsylvania



The world has achieved brilliance without conscience. Ours is a world of nuclear giants and ethical infants.

Omar Nelson Bradley  
Permanent Chairman  
Joint Chiefs of Staff  
Armistice Day speech, 1948

## Chapter 16

The Church service lived down to Richard's worst expectations.

He walked into the Church self-consciously, almost as if he was trying to project an air of "I'm here for someone else, but I'm okay and I don't need this sort of emotional crutch". It was a look that he hoped would ward off all but the most determined approaches. It largely succeeded, except for one or two women to whom Laura introduced him.

The service was printed in an old red book, and was turgid to say the least. A series of old fashioned words, their meaning made obscure by their convoluted phrasing, and responses spoken lifelessly without any apparent emotion or sincerity. Hymns, with familiar tunes, but with sentences twisted and distorted to such an extent that Richard missed out entire verses while his mind struggled to make sense of the first line.

He wondered, not for the first time, what Laura found so appealing in this strange ritual. He could not imagine that, if a God really existed, he would hide himself in such tortuous rhetoric. A 'living God', as they claimed that he was, would surely not leave his people with such meaningless cant. He accepted that the words might possibly have some underlying relevance if you dug down deep enough, but looking at the faces around him, he was not sure that many of them had found it.

They sat down for a reading from the Bible. The reader was good. He might have been a classical actor in his heyday. He spoke with expression and made the words come to life. All of a sudden, Richard found himself captivated. Here was someone for whom the words really had meaning, and the meaning echoed in his voice, and in his hands, and in his expression, and even, Richard fancied, in his soul!

And the words had meaning for Richard too. They seemed to echo in the areas of his life that he kept shut in a darkened room. They raised questions at him that he did not want to face. Questions about integrity, and values, and life choices. Questions about who we really are. And then, without warning, the speaker appeared to look directly at Richard and said: "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

or criticise, or purchase, or ignore, or support, or use something, we are either exploiting our rights of stewardship, or exercising our responsibility for it. The sum of our collective decisions is the major influence in the world today. Our small, even minuscule, part in stewardship will build up and compound with millions of others for good or ill.<sup>1</sup>

And, as leaders of our organisations, our impact is greater still. We do have a real responsibility to re-examine what we are trying to do. To challenge some of the myths and fuzzy thinking that abound, and to begin to deliver a result that we feel really will begin to change things for the better.<sup>2</sup>

We have a responsibility to at least face up to exploring what our view of stewardship is, and what it means.

## Making a difference

What difference do you want to result out of your time here on Earth? Do you have a purpose for your life? What do you invest your time (work and personal) into?

You will almost certainly be doing something that adds value somewhere. It is highly unlikely that anybody entirely hedonistic and self-centred would have persevered anything like this far with the book. So what actually are your values?

- Community?
- Justice?
- Humanity?
- Learning?
- Truth?

<sup>1</sup> An excellent exploration of this is provided in Patrick Dixon's book 'Futurewise', published by Trafalgar Square, in January 1999.

<sup>2</sup> Whatever your considered opinion of 'better' is.

All the evils of life have fallen upon us because men will not sit alone quietly in a room.

Pascal

For evil to triumph, all that is required is that good men do nothing.

G.K.Chesterton.  
Author of the 'Father Brown' stories

Richard was stunned; the words seem to have been spoken directly at him personally. He blinked and looked back at the speaker, expecting him to have stopped, and to be pointing directly at Richard, exposing him before this room full of strangers. But the speaker had moved on; had swept his gaze over others in the congregation.

However, the speaker had changed forever in Richard's eyes; he had been transformed from a crusty old curmudgeon to something altogether more sinister. Richard felt discomfited, and he could feel his heart beating faster. He felt like he had been 'found out'.

As the reading finished, the reader closed his book and walked back to his pew. Richard felt fearful that he should look at him again as he sat down, but he did not. Instead the preacher began his sermon, and Richard found himself letting out a breath he had been holding. He had not realised how nervous he had been. He knew he was just being stupid, and reflected ruefully on how superstitions can even get to sane, rational, fully-grown men.

The preacher was talking about his own experience, and Richard was surprised to find that he had worked in merchant banking before he had been ordained. Richard began to feel more comfortable.

But after two minutes preamble, he then said to the congregation, "I want you to think about the phrase 'For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?'" And despite all his rationalising, Richard felt the fears he had just swept from his mind come stealing back over him once more. Richard stared directly at the vicar, half expecting him to turn and glare back at him.

Richard then looked sideways at the man who had done the reading, to see if he was looking at him, but he was looking expectantly back at the vicar. Richard felt like he was caught in some '60s B movie, waiting for the trap to spring.

He looked back as the preacher continued his sermon. He kept on expecting the look, but the look never came, and then Richard felt he was being deliberately ignored. What was this? What was happening? There had to be a rational explanation. Had Laura arranged this? Was he part of some macabre game?

He looked at Laura, but she was rapt in listening to the preacher. However, sensing Richard looking at her, she turned to glance at him.

Whatever your values are, whatever you hold dear, you will be more effective if you are clear about them.

Is business any different? Is your organisation simply a means for you to fund your personal life, or does it represent the opportunity for you to progress your values more directly?

There is a serious risk of misinterpretation here. What is being advocated is not the subversion of business to your personal ends. Rather it is the alignment of your values with your role in achieving the goals of your organisation and vice versa. It is about the power of integrity.

### The business context

To explore this further, let us consider the context of business. At its simplest, a business is a symbiosis between three stakeholders:

- the shareholders, or owners of the business
- the employees, and the local community
- the partners (customers and suppliers) of the business.

It exists to trade and convert what each of these stakeholders has into what another needs in return (see diagram on the right):

- shareholders provide capital in exchange for some security of return
- employees provide ideas and effort in exchange for wages and development
- trading partners provide revenue in return for service and vice versa.

The business needs to invest the capital into facilities, which the employees can use to develop and supply services in return for revenue, which is repaid to the shareholders and employees. If it does all



Her look of interest changed to one of concern, as she could see the worry in Richard's face.

"What is it?" she whispered urgently. "Are you okay?"

Richard nodded dumbly, and looked back at the preacher. He was just being silly, and anyway Laura was not that good an actress. But what was going on?

The preacher continued talking, and drawing out questions about identity, about who we really are, about being true to ourselves. The very things Richard himself had been thinking about during the reading. He then began exploring the sort of person we need to become if we are to successfully pursue wealth and fame and power, and Richard began to hear a description of himself spoken from the pulpit.

An irrational fear of exposure gripped him tighter, as the preacher spoke about focus, and compromise, and selfishness, and then he went on to surmise that, while we may be seen as successful, we have often distorted our inner selves so much in straining for such things, that it is then no longer us who is there to enjoy them. That, in pursuing the big things, we so often lose the pure, innocent, unabashed joy we need to really appreciate them. And what excitement we gain from them, is therefore transitory and quickly swept away in the next pursuit.

Finally, the preacher finished by saying that success is working out who we really are, and then trying to be that to the best of our ability.

"For me," he said, "it means: what do I make the role of vicar, rather than what does the role of vicar make me? What does it mean for you?"



At the end of the service, Richard was subdued. But once outside the Church and back in the car, Richard sat with his hand on the ignition and challenged Laura. "Have you told them about me? Did they know that I was coming here with you today?"

Laura looked back at him, clearly puzzled by his manner and the forcefulness of the questions. "No. Why would I? What's brought this on?"

"Have you not spoken to anyone in the Church about our difficulties?" he pressed.

"Richard! No!" she said emphatically.

these efficiently, then everyone is happy to continue and build on the relationship. If it does it inefficiently, one or all three parties migrate to other relationships and the business dies.

If the organisation is super-efficient at these things, the business develops a discretionary power of its own. It develops a 'surplus' over that needed to satisfy the needs of all three parties.

- It has delivered a return to the shareholders, which meets their fair expectations, and secures their continued involvement.
- It has delivered opportunities, rewards and salaries to the employees, which meets their expectations and secures their continued service.
- It has delivered service to the customers and custom to the suppliers that meets their expectations, and secures their continued loyalty.
- And it has generated additional wealth, which is not required simply to maintain the status quo.

### The 'big question'

So what does the organisation do with this additional wealth that it has generated? Conventional thinking might see it as naturally the due of the shareholders. They are, after all, the legal owners of the business. This is the concept that underlies 'managing for shareholder value': the goal is to maximise share growth to outstrip other businesses.

But why? To what end? Does delivering the additional wealth directly to the shareholders provide any additional benefits to the organisation? Or are they likely to be, as a result of this unexpected windfall, more expensive in terms of their future expectations? And given the impact of dividends on share price, are the share-

A business that makes nothing but money is a poor kind of business.

Henry Ford  
Founder, Ford Motors Inc.

Richard inherently felt this was wrong. Whether he agreed with Church or not, surely, at the very least, it was about listening to each other's problems and praying over them. He looked disbelievingly back at her.

She sensed his confusion. "I've only been going for a while, and only to the services. I've not yet felt close enough to anyone to talk about any problems we might have. Richard, what is this? What is going on?" she asked urgently.

Richard could see she was telling the truth and felt mollified. But he was still confused.

"Well, did you suggest the reading for today?" he asked.

Laura stared into his urgent face and a light dawned. "That reading really got to you, didn't it?"

"Well, did you suggest it?" he pressed, not responding to her question.

A small smile played on Laura's lips. "Richard. No! All the readings are defined by the Church calendar. I think you can see them listed in the thick green books in the pews."

"So you knew that was the reading for today?" he accused her.

"No, I didn't," Laura said vehemently. "I never look in the book. To me, as to 90% of the Churchgoers you'd meet, the reading is a total surprise."

Richard seemed to accept this. Laura continued: "But if you felt that the reading was meant specifically for you, you would not be the first to attend Church for the first time and feel that bits of the service were written for you personally. Many people feel that way. It is the way God works sometimes."

Richard put on his most sceptical face.

"Come on," said Laura. "Let's prove this one way or another," and with that, she stepped back outside the car and headed back toward the Church building.

Richard paused for thought, and then followed her. When he came in through the door, she had the lectionary in her hands at the day's date, and pointed triumphantly to where it said '*Matthew 16:13-28*'.

"There you are," she said.

holders at the end of this transaction the same ones you started out with?

And anyway, other stakeholders have played just as big a part in generating the surplus; do they not have some claim on the benefits?

For instance, it might be better to invest it in your employees. In developing their numbers, or their skills, or their attitudes and motivation, or in improving their community and environment.

Alternatively you might invest it in your business partners. To improve the quality and impact of the services you provide, or to develop new products.

And both of these investments have the potential to improve your effectiveness; to increase your efficiency and help build more 'discretionary surplus' for the future. Both of these investments, managed properly, provide ultimate benefits for your shareholders, not as a one-off windfall, but as a sustainable long-term return.

In a partnership shouldn't the spoils benefit all parties? Is it really a partnership?

### The role of vision

This might sound academic. You might feel that you are not in a position to call the shots. But even though your shareholders or parent organisation are the legal owners of the business, you are not powerless in how you influence the distribution of the wealth you have created.

But if you want to have a voice, you have to have a vision!

It is the vision that defines the partnership, and it can be a partnership if there is a common goal, a common vision, to pull all three parties together.

There is something sick about a person whose only interest is money. And the same can be said, I think, for the company whose sole goal is profit.

Richard J. Haayen  
CEO, Allstate Insurance Company  
in Nation's Business, March 1988

Richard looked at the page, and Laura continued: "Shall we look it up in the Bible?" But Richard shook his head. He had the Church notice sheet in his hands, which listed the same reading. He folded up the piece of paper and put it in his pocket, and headed out of the door slowly, a puzzled look on his face.

Laura knew better than to press, and simply followed him at a distance. But at the Church door, she turned and looked back at the Altar Cross. She felt in her heart that the presence she had come to know, and so desperately wanted Richard to share, had begun to make its existence known to him. A well of gratitude seemed to spring up within her, and, with watering eyes, she simply whispered: "Thank you!"



Richard went straight off to work after dropping Laura at the hospital. They had not said a word the whole journey.

During the afternoon, Richard found himself repeatedly distracted by thoughts of his soul, and his identity, and what they were. Had his career moulded him in its image?

By five o'clock, he had made little progress in his thinking in any area, and he prepared to return to the hospital. He noticed small traces of panic building up in him. He had so much work to do, and was becoming increasingly less able to do it. He felt he could scream. He looked up at the ceiling and, though he felt foolish, he felt he just had to say it: "Look, if you're there, and I'm not agreeing that you are, just give me a break will you?"



Back in the hospital he looked in on Nicholas sleeping peacefully, and then carried on to look for Laura in the chapel. But, as he entered the room, he realised she was not there, just an older woman leafing through a Bible on the lectern. She looked up at him as he walked in, and he smiled back at her.

He was about to turn round and walk back out again, but thought it might convey a bad impression, so he walked to the back of the room, sat down and waited quietly. After a few minutes the woman left, and Richard walked over to where she stood and gazed down blankly at the Bible text. He grabbed a handful of pages and let them pour out of his grip one by one to the other side of the book. His heart seemed heavy, and he was

You have to be able to paint a picture of the future that is big and bright and powerful, which people want to be part of, and which they feel confident in. You have to be able to explain to your shareholders why retaining their money will enable you to build a future for them that is better than anything they are likely to achieve by taking the additional wealth to themselves. And if you are already delivering to them what they were expecting, they are very likely to listen to what else you have in mind - you have already proven your worth.

The point is, implementing the approaches outlined here will generate more output for less resource, more impact for less cost. It will generate a 'discretionary surplus' for your organisation.

That additional wealth can be absorbed by the shareholders, or it can be used to leverage the future of the organisation. But it can only be used for the latter where there is a clear, ambitious and compelling vision for what that future is.

### Creating a vision

People are not motivated by money. People are motivated by vision. Money way well be needed to pave the way to that vision, and it may also be an indicator that the vision has been reached, but money is not the vision itself.

The challenge then is to develop a vision that your people, your shareholders and your business partners can believe in.

And the closer that vision parallels your own value set the more effective and compelling you will be in selling it to other people.

The first thing is to be clear on what your values are, and then to understand how your work provides opportunities to influ-



#### The role of vision

Three workmen were laying stone blocks on a building site. A stranger, watching them for a while, noticed that they were undertaking the task with totally different levels of satisfaction and effort. So after a few minutes he went to the least happy builder and asked: "What are you doing?"

The man replied "Me? I'm just laying blocks, one atop another like so!"

The stranger then moved on to the second builder, who seemed reasonably content. "What are you doing?" he asked.

"Hey!" replied the builder, "We're building this huge wall, its going to be a fair size when it's finished."

Moving on, the stranger came to the third builder, who looked positively joyful, and asked the same question.

The builder replied, "We are building a huge cathedral that will be the most magnificent building to be seen for miles around, and it will stand for centuries - and my name will be written on its walls."

about to do it again, when his gaze caught the words "What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul?"

Goosebumps came up all over him.

He looked at the top of the page '*Matthew 16*'.

He scrabbled in his pocket for the Church newsletter. He folded it out, smoothed out its creases, and read the words '*Matthew 16:13-28*'. He felt cold, as his mind struggled for an explanation he could accept.

And then it found one.

Of course, it was the reading for today. Probably no end of people had looked at it. No wonder it fell open there.

Some of the panic left him as he assimilated this rational explanation. After all, what else could explain it?

Well it could also be coincidence. There were only 2,000 pages in the book. Every so often, someone would accidentally turn up the right page! Wouldn't they?

Strangely comforted by being back in control of his own world, he read the words on the page: "What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul?" and as he read them he knew in his heart, without any shadow of a doubt, that they were meant for him, whatever his head might say!

He returned to the back of the chapel, sat down, held out his hands, and let his head fall into them.

He was not sure how long he spent there. Sometimes thinking. Sometimes throwing up arguments to challenge the plausibility of a supernatural being that hid in coincidence. Sometimes reviewing his life. Sometimes considering who he really wanted to be.

As he poured over his thoughts and ideas, he gradually became more accustomed to the idea that he really was not the person he really wanted to be. That he had lost some of himself in recent years. And as he accepted this, paradoxically he became more calm and resolute.

He could still regain himself as the person he could respect and admire from the inside as well as the outside. It was simply a matter of being entirely and unambiguously clear on whom that person was.

ence them. At first the links might seem a little tenuous, but it is possible to find the means to link almost any situation with your value set, and to do so profitably.

And as we recognise our work as an extension of ourselves, rather than the other way round, we become better at it, and more committed to it. We develop a passion that can win others over to our vision as it strikes personal chords with their own value sets.

So what do you want your organisation to achieve? If you really can't personally identify with anything, then you are probably in the wrong job, and you should get out of it. If, however, you can see real opportunities to shine, to add real value, to make a difference, then you should grasp it and pursue it.

Work can profitably be a meaningful activity. The unquestioned assumption that additional wealth is automatically the due of the shareholder is quite often the major factor in people seeing their work as simply the means to fund their lives and their purpose, not to be their lives and their purpose. You have the opportunity to break that paradigm to the benefit of all parties. But if you are bored with your organisation, why should any of your people be any different?



I desire so to conduct the affairs of this administration that if at the end, when I come to lay down the reins of power, I have lost every other friend on earth, I shall at least have one friend left, and that friend shall be down inside of me.

Abraham Lincoln  
Sixteenth President of the United States

And then a thought struck him.

He had been through all this before. For the company. If QFD could work for that, then surely it could work for him.

As if energised by the thought, he launched himself out of his chair and headed out of the door.