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DOING WHAT REALLY MATTERS TO YOU

English Translation by Mark Webber, PhD

By doing what really matters to you, you can effect large-scale benefits and fundamental changes.

Foreword

What makes businesses really successful: The toughest CEO? The best marketing? The most intensive market research? The answers to this question provided by the literature on management fill entire libraries. Every approach to explaining entrepreneurial success has its virtues. But most provide only a functional and piecemeal explanation of why some businesses are markedly more successful than others.

Our book – actually a set of theses – seeks to understand entrepreneurial success from the perspective of the history of ideas. Our reasoning: Behind every really successful business initiative stands an **ideational conception** of how something should be in future. A commitment, by one or more personalities, to do what really matters to them, a commitment brought to fruition in the form of a business venture. In the realms of art and politics, doing what really matters is considered self-evident. It’s “normal” for artists and politicians to be shaped – or even driven – by a vision of what really matters to them; something that, in the case of the artist, often cannot be precisely articulated. In the realm of business, this sense of wanting to do what really matters as the **real driving force** seems to have been lost over time. And yet identifying and pursuing “what really matters” is no less important for business than it is for politics, the arts, or even religion. In the business context, we understand doing what really matters as the **intrinsically motivated, emotional engagement** towards a goal that, when competence is applied to its attainment, yields economic success. Such a grand foundational vision is often characterized by neither morality nor rationality. We are not necessarily dealing with categories such as “good”, “right”, or “effective”. Initially, we are dealing with quite outlandish ideas whose implementation is pursued with incomparable intensity and extraordinary engagement.

For this reason, doing what really matters always results in effects that are also tangible – to employees, clients and everyone who has dealings with a company driven to do that which really matters to the entrepreneur.

Doing “What Really Matters to You” – to quote the title of our essay – is, however, not only an attempt to explain economic success. The paradigm of doing what really matters is also meant to provide an impetus to individuals and companies not to lose sight of what really matters to them. We want to encourage them to rediscover, and discover anew, what really matters to them. To contextualize it in ways that are both timely and future-oriented. In the form of a thought experiment we also want to provide an impetus to discuss the future of our economic system and its incentive structures. How would our economic system look if, instead of incentivizing short-term (and all too often, short-sighted) economic success, it provided incentives to do what really matters? The economy of “doing what really matters” that we outline here provides an impetus for the future of an economic order which, following the upheavals of the financial, economic, and debt crises, has fallen into disrepute.

It has always been – and it still is – the grand, passionately held ideas of what really matters that put their indelible stamp on societal and also economic development. They are what make the difference. They are what move us forward. And they are what make for economic success. That is the pleasant side-effect of implementing well that which really matters to you. With this in mind, then: Do what you really want to do. And make it your path to success.

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