

A Human Revolution: Creating Human and Economic Value, in Harmony

An Interview with Bob Chapman, CEO
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How do you create both human and economic value? a client asked me recently. A great question I thought.

At the same time, I have heard our CEO, Bob Chapman, increasingly speak about this in a way he describes as the need for a Human Revolution. Recently, I had the opportunity to interview Bob, who generously shared his time and his thoughts on this question and more broadly on:

- What is and why we need to shift towards a more Human Revolution;
- How to get started in balancing both human and economic value, in harmony; and
- Some of the challenges leaders may face in making this shift and how to overcome them.

In our [interview](#), Bob acknowledges the significance of the Industrial Revolution. He credits it for raising the standard of living and increasing economic prosperity. He reflects, "the industrial revolution was about economic value creation but it was not about human value

creation. We thought it was human value creation because people made more money and we associate money with happiness, but it was never about human dignity creation."

"We have not paid attention to human value because we assumed, if we gave people a job and that meant they made money, that they would find happiness. That is just the assumption behind all these things".

Bob references the [Gallup](#) survey of 155 countries for the source of happiness at work, which turned out not to be money "rather, the number one source of happiness in the world is a good job, working with people you enjoy." Bob encourages us to consider "we need to awaken people that we are self-destructing in the interests of economic gain."



How do you awaken that ability to balance the economic model for growth and a more human-centric culture?

Bob cites that his own awakening to shifting his traditional approach to a truly human leadership approach came from a series of revelations (the details of which are in his co-authored book [Everybody Matters](#)) and include:

1. Why can't business be fun?
2. The power of business being a force for good, because we have people in our care for 40 hours a week; and
3. Everybody is someone's precious child.

Inspiring others to generate this balance Bob suggests, "first of all, I think you need to model it. This is not an academic theory. It is the journey we have been on since we were awakened to this through these series of revelations...You need to say that we are actually doing this."

But it starts much earlier. It seems we need to look afresh at the way we teach leadership as distinct from management "Because we

really do not teach them [leadership], the primary responsibility of the men and women in their care, we teach them management, which is the manipulation of others for your success, and people are simply functions for your success. We do not see them as people's precious children that we have a chance to impact."

It is clear from research, and observation that "88% of the people in this country feel they work for an organisation that does not care about them. The person you report to at work, is more important to your health than your family doctor and the way we treat people when we have them in our care for 40 hours week, affects the way they go home and treat their spouse, their children and their community". With this information Bob encourages us:

"We have got to do something, because we are self-destructing as a civilisation in the interest of short term economic gain because we haven't embraced the human side of value creation"

For those who want to make this shift, how would

they get started to create both economic value and human value in harmony?

First of all watch the [Everybody Matters](#) animated Ted Talk (only 10 minutes) and see how your leaders relate to the message. "Are they being good stewards of those they have the privilege of leading? If that TED talk awakens them to something else we should be doing, then I would suggest that they send somebody to our [leadership classes](#), where people come from all over the world, to take a two day deep dive into our culture and see, how does this resonate with me?"

What are some of the challenges leaders and businesses face in being a force for good the world?

Bob reflects, "The biggest challenge is, how do I begin and how do I engage others in this process? We have been working with our Board for 12 years now and our Board fully supports it, our Board is proud of what we are doing but it is still hard for a Board to talk about culture because numbers are the language of business. The challenge is bringing people along in reasonable steps so they

can begin to see and feel the impact they are making on people's lives."

"This is really a big mind shift. You have to go from what is comfortable, which is numbers, shareholder value, to human value. Our experience is, our company's share price since 2000 has gone up 14% a year compounded, which is a combination of a good business strategy, it is not just being nice, it is a combination of a good business strategy and true human leadership, which is really the fuel for the engine.



We don't justify this to improve our performance. We do this because it is our obligation as leaders to be good stewards of the people whose lives are placed in our care when they accepted a role in our company. It is a big step. Somebody once said to me, somebody in a major division, 'What if corporate doesn't support this?' I thought to myself, what do they need to support? Do

you need a memo from corporate to care? Why can't you just begin bringing this about in natural steps so that all of a sudden corporate is coming to you saying, 'What are you doing? We have heard nothing but good things, share it with us.'

"You don't need capital expenditures, you do not need finances, you just need to engage your head and heart and be good stewards of the people who you have the privilege of leading and making sure that they go home each night knowing that who they are and what they do matters."

As you look back on your life's journey, what would you say to your younger self, to generate such a positive impact?

"Without these revelations that happened to me, why can't business be fun?, the power of business for good, because people are in our care for 40 hours, and everybody is somebody's precious child, I do not know that my younger self would have been able to make that transition from what I was taught and what I experienced in that marketplace. You cannot

go out and play soccer on the soccer field and make up your own rules. You have to play the game that is defined.

There is so much momentum towards numbers and so little momentum towards caring that it is easier to just play the game and the lowest common denominator, which is numbers, because numbers are clear, they are not emotional, they are up or down or they are on target or not on target and so it is easier.

I think if somebody had shared this with me 20 years ago I would not have known what to do. I had to go through these awakenings in the sequence in which they happened.

We were, without question, blessed with a leadership model that could profoundly change the world as we know it, where these young men and women who enter the workforce have a chance to be who they are intended to be and appreciated for that."

What matters most to you now?

"That is pretty simple for me to answer because I

think we have been blessed with this awakening to what leadership should be, but in the time I have left I need to make sure that I do justice to this message that it becomes part of our culture in this country in all facets, because even though I am a businessman, I speak in the military, I speak in the government, I speak in education and I speak in healthcare and this issue is prevalent in every facet of our society."

What matters most to those in your span of care and globally, given that you have very successful businesses across Europe as well as the States?

"That was best captured by Amy Cuddy (who is the number two TED talk in the world). She is a Harvard professor and came because Simon Sinek said, 'You've got to see this,' so she came as a favour to Simon, but when she sat down to reflect on what she experienced in the day and a half she was on site, she said, 'Walking through your factories, I have never cried so much and hugged so many people in my life, people who stopped me to tell me their story about what this has meant to them. Her statement was,

"this is as close to Utopia as I have ever seen."

"When you show people that you genuinely care about them, when you invest in their journey from management to leadership and they tell you about how it affects their marriage and their children, it is hard to put a value on that and what it means to us.

I just feel there is a tremendous need for this right now in the world because the current model shows that it does not create human value and we cannot equate numbers, money, with human value.

Clearly we have prosperity in the world but we do not have dignity in the world, we do not have caring in the world. We have people using each other for their own personal gain."

Bob leaves us with the message: *we imagine a society where people think of others first and they are able to do that because they feel cared for themselves and therefore they naturally will care about others."*

Bob has been voted the number 3 CEO in the world by [Inc Magazine](#). There is a reason for this. He is an extraordinary leader who leads in a totally unique way. He has a powerful message to share and together with BW Leadership Institute helps other leaders and organisations to become a force for good in the world, balancing both human and economic value creation, in harmony.

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