

Creativeship

Lessons for evolving leaders.



by **Bob Kelleher**

HOW CAN LEADERS build sustainable cultures and business models? In my book, *Creativeship*, I tell the story of retiring management consultant Joe Daniels who is anxious.

Driving to his retirement party with his purpose-driven daughter Heather, who represents millions of her millennial peers, sets Joe off on a series of epiphanies, flashbacks, conversations, and revelations. He sees signs that his idea of *leadership* can't sustain business.

Leadership, Joe realizes, has morphed into *Creativeship*—the need to build *sustainable cultures* and *business models*. The collapse of ENRON, World Com, and Arthur Andersen has afforded a painful glimpse at what happens when firms become so focused on profit that they lose their *moral compass* and forget the purpose. *Creativeship* questions the old definition of leadership, providing a roadmap to a new paradigm that organizations must embrace to thrive.

Invest in Six Priorities

Though Joe is a fictitious character, his experiences, anecdotes, lessons and

recommendations are real. Through his story, we learn that to be *sustainable* in this world of technological advances, globalization, shifting economic drivers, changing workforce demographics, and corporate social responsibility, firms need to invest energies and resources in six interrelated *Creativeship* priorities:

1. Purpose. Generation Y is motivated by *purpose*. A parallel trend is the vital role Baby Boomers are playing in leading *corporate social responsibility*. After years of focusing on wealth accumulation and career advancement, boomers are re-focusing their priorities. This dynamic, dramatized in conversations between Joe and his daughter, is common.

2. Engagement. Since companies with *high engagement* are *twice as profitable*, it's not surprising that Pricewaterhouse Coopers' Global CEO Survey reported that 83 percent of executives list their *talent management strategy* as their top concern. I agree! I define *engagement* as

the unlocking of employee potential to drive high performance. To help employees reach their potential, leaders must tap into their intrinsic motivational drivers and develop a job match that finds symbiosis between what an employee is great at, what they love to do, and what needs to get done.

3. Performance. We take keen interest in what is fair. Yet, *fair* is different from *equal*. Recently, a major Internet company announced plans to reward all of their employees (regardless of merit) with a 10 percent pay increase just because the company was doing well. Over time, such a decision erodes performance and creates disengagement. There is no incentive for employees to be high performers when mediocrity is rewarded in kind.

4. Innovation. Companies fail when they cease evolving their product or service, or internal processes. And yet many organizations (such as DEC or Polaroid) are slow to learn this lesson, leading their organizations for *today* rather than creating *cultures of innovation and sustainability*. Creating such cultures requires investing today's cash to discover tomorrow's technologies, products, services, geographies, and approaches. The mantra *innovate or die* has never been more prescient.

5. Tri-branding. The new media that's taking the world by storm is a powerful tool for engagement, staffing, retention, and branding. Building sustainable cultures and business models with the valences that are now

part of everyday life requires *tri-branding*. This occurs when companies (such as Apple) build tenacious customer brand loyalty and passion that customers and employees then feel compelled to communicate. In a *Creativeship* culture, HR sets policies that facilitate employees' use of social media since employees are the company's best brand ambassadors.

6. *Global growth.* No industry is insulated from globalization. Technology is creating a level playing field regard- less of where a product is produced or a service performed. To be sustainable, *local companies need to think regional; regional companies need to think national; and national companies need to think global.*

Realize that *Leadership* now means *Creativeship* and invest energy and resources in these six priorities.

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