



# Good Business: Leadership, Flow, and the Making of Meaning

*By Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi*

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## Good Business: Leadership, Flow, and the Making of Meaning By Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi

Since Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi published the groundbreaking **Flow** more than a decade ago, world leaders such as Tony Blair and former President Clinton, and influential sports figures like Super Bowl champion coach Jimmy Johnson have all been inspired by the book. In today's corporate upheaval, a new business paradigm is evolving. While many CEOs are being exposed for their greed, truly visionary leaders believe in a goal that benefits themselves as well as others. They realize that it is their vision and "soul" that attract loyal employees willing to go above and beyond the call of corporate duty. And their employees are realizing the same thing: while 80 percent of adults claim they'd work even if they didn't have to, the majority of them can hardly wait to leave their jobs and get home.

**Good Business** starts with the premise that this is an age in which business and work have replaced religion and politics as central forces in contemporary life. The book reveals how business leaders, managers, and even employees can find their "flow" and contribute not only to their own happiness, but also to a just and evolving society. It identifies the factors crucial to the operation of a good business: trust, the commitment to fostering the personal growth of employees, and the dedication to creating a product that helps mankind. **Good Business** is sure to become a must-read text for anyone who values the positive contributions of individuals in the changing world of business.

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### Editorial Review

#### Amazon.com Review

In psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's definition of leadership, the personal is political. The best-selling author of *Flow* interviewed several dozen exemplary CEOs whose wisdom provides the radical job description of the book's premise: "Leaders must make it possible for employees to work with joy, to their heart's content, while responding to the needs of society." Csikszentmihalyi leverages his definition of "flow"—the capacity for full engagement in an activity—to create a blueprint for a workplace in which bringing out the best in workers comes before products and profit. When leaders select and reward employees who find satisfaction at work, they can create an upwardly moral organization.

In this view, leadership is a privilege that requires checking ego in the coatroom and peering into the mirror to ask tough questions. For example, "How do I determine if something is right or wrong?" Or, "What is my business doing to benefit human well being?" He offers some inspiring stories from leaders who engage employees to go with the flow, including Body Shop CEO Anita Roddick, Patagonia crown prince Yvon Chouinard, and media mogul Ted Turner. Some of Csikszentmihalyi's advice will sound familiar. Yet he creates a compellingly fresh vision of good business in both a material and spiritual sense. Ultimately, the success of this book lies in its powerful, non-flaky ability to define corporate soul in terms of a company becoming a stakeholder in an entity larger than itself.--*Barbara Mackoff*

#### From Publishers Weekly

Asking business leaders to turn a profit in this climate is tough enough, but psychologist Csikszentmihalyi challenges them to do something even tougher: make people happy. The author first explored flow, the enjoyment felt when an individual is focused on a complex task, in 1991's bestselling *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*, and he has often returned to the subject (*The Evolving Self*; *Creativity*; etc.). Now he wants to show business leaders how to foster flow and use their psychic energy to enhance the happiness of their employees, customers and even themselves. The advice book offers predictable but sound guidance to business leaders: know oneself, set clear goals for employees and consider the consequences of business decisions. Insightful quotes from figures like Aristotle, Dante Alighieri and John Locke provide some historical grounding, but mostly the author focuses on how modern businesses motivate employees and contribute to the common good. By conducting extensive interviews, the author collects the secrets of successful business leaders, including the Body Shop CEO Anita Roddick; McDonald's chairman and CEO Jack Greenberg; and AOL Time Warner's Ted Turner. Roddick, for example, says that looking at company's lavatories and cafeteria can reveal a lot about a firm's corporate culture and the happiness of its employees. If a firm fails to create a clean, healthy environment for its workers, it probably isn't doing much good. Csikszentmihalyi shows how moral responsibility, respect for the environment and clean bathrooms can make a business good and the whole world better.

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#### From Library Journal

The noted psychologist aims to put some Flow into our workday lives.

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**Ronald Fowler:**

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