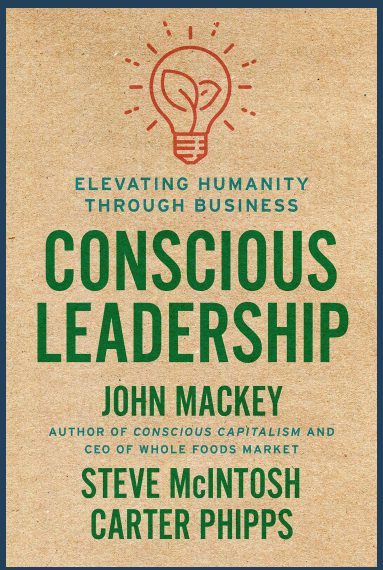

Conscious Leadership

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Author: John Mackey, Steve McIntosh, Carter Phipps
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"Cogito ergo sum", or, "I think, therefore I am". You have probably heard this sentence from the philosopher René Descartes. But besides being, what is necessary to be conscious?

According to John Mackey, author of the book Conscious Leadership, being a leader with this characteristic means having much more integrity and responsibility, which can only be earned through a journey of self-development.

Imagine having to face an interview to determine whether you will continue as CEO of the company you co-founded and guided for more than twenty years, or whether you will be "asked to step down".

This was the moment when Mackey realized that he needed to evolve, not only himself but also his leadership style, bringing it back closer to the needs of the company. From then on, he managed to stay on the job and helped take the annual revenue from 1 billion to 19 billion dollars.

So that you don't have to face such an external challenge only to then realize the internal conflict, continue reading this summary and learn from Mackey's experience and the reflections he has learned at such great cost.

What are the key points of "Conscious Leadership"?

- Leadership is not a fixed position of power, but a constant path of service;
- Love has possibly the most powerful value but it's the least used emotion when it comes to leadership;
- Conscious leaders manage the polarity theory: while it is positive-negative, there is also positive-positive, where collaboration and competition both occur;
- The 4th Industrial revolution is happening right now, so we have mixed economies shaping the economic system and the 'supply and demand' process;
- The capitalist economies and the capitalist systems are no longer shaping the "wealth of nations", "government intervention" or "private property" as Adam Smith or even Karl Marx thought, now the mindset is toward a stakeholder orientation;
- Leaders need to keep up with new tendencies especially if they are the leader working with creative industries;
- Innovation must bring value, regardless of where it comes from;
- Resting is also part of the job.

Why should I read "Conscious Leadership"?

Governments, non-profit organizations, educational institutions, armed forces, as well as companies. Do you know what all these environments have in common? According to the author, all of them need conscious and socially responsible leaders.
Therefore, the reading is valid for those who want to improve their leadership skills, allowing them to know themselves better as a leader while helping everyone who is affected to also get the best result.

Overview of the book

What is the importance of vision and virtue in leadership?

According to the author, "*the first and most important job of every conscious leader is to **connect people to purpose***". This purpose should not be driven by profit, but by the contribution, it will make to the world.
For example, for the billionaire Google, the value is in the knowledge it transmits, helping its users to get around everyday problems.
John Maxwell's **Law of the Lid** demonstrates why the driver of the company comes from there when it says that "the potential of an organization is limited by the capabilities of its leader".
Remember that purpose is, like leadership, a process, not a destination. It is also worth noting that a dose of pragmatism also strengthens purpose, in the way that pragmatism alone lacks meaning.
To assist in this mission, you must develop **purpose advocates**. They are people who are part of the company and aligned with the purpose, but sufficiently distant from the routine processes so that, when necessary, they can intervene in major decisions, helping to always put the greater ideal in focus.
Attention to purpose in the company involves constant communication and demonstration, even with physical symbols.
An interesting example that the author brings is that of Jeff Bezos. In Amazon's early days, he would leave an empty chair in meetings representing the customer, referring to the purpose of being "the most customer-centric company in the world".
The next focus of a conscious leader should be to **act with love**, changing the way he or she sees the work. When it is authentic, this feeling saves even the company's marketing expenses.
This master virtue shows itself in six faces in the work environment:

1. Practice **generosity**: stay in the company of generous people;
2. Practicing **gratitude**: reflecting on the good in life when you wake up, before meals, or before going to sleep;
3. Practicing **recognition**: "catching" someone doing something right;
4. Practicing **caring**: asking yourself "how can I be more helpful in this situation?";
5. Practicing **compassion**: Being fully present at the moment makes you notice the feelings;
6. Practicing **forgiveness**: practicing the intention to let go of resentment.

At Whole Foods Market, John Mackey's company, a simple situation where they apply love in the working relationship is when, before they end any meeting, they ask: "Would anyone like to praise a coworker?".
Completing the part of the three most important views and virtues, comes integrity. Because it is such a subjective and even ambitious concept to fully achieve, the author divides it into five attitudes, to facilitate the understanding of how it would be applied:

1. Speaking the truth;
2. Having honor;
3. Authenticity;
4. Credibility;
5. Courage.

A type of leadership cited is **servant leadership**, which includes many of the concepts discussed in this session. It is when the leader plays the role of someone who **serves** the organization rather than **imposing power** on it. If you have doubts about the effectiveness of the method, this is how it works at Starbucks.

What is the importance of mindset and strategy in leadership?

Here too are three main ways a conscious leader applies an evolved mindset and well-programmed strategy for higher purposes.
First, this person must **seek solutions beneficial to all**, in any challenge. The author calls this a "**win-win-win situation**", where any negotiated proposal is positive for the company itself, for the party being negotiated with, and for the community, which can be the customers, for example.
In difficult negotiations, the writer recommends repeatedly stating your willingness to find such a solution. When there is intention and conviction, the subconscious creative mind naturally enters into a searching process, which may end up bringing unexpected results.
These situations require time and space to think through the possible options, as well as good communication, transparency, and trust among those involved - while still being cautious.
And, if you think that **systematic thinking** is always a bad thing, here it is recommended, perhaps with a different meaning than usually attributed.
Also called **systematic intelligence** or **systematic integral awareness**, it concerns more the various systems, complex and interrelated, to be considered for the solution: social, economic, and political, among others. The ideal approach covers the relationships between them and conciliates how one affects the other.
The next application of the conscious mindset and strategy is to **innovate and create value**. Take some time to reflect on the innovations that, over time, came from a unique idea and conquered space in the market, improving our lives. Start by doing this with simple everyday objects around you and reflect on when they were introduced into society.
But how can you have the next of these innovations coming from your own company? It is not enough to encourage the individual creativity of one or another employee, innovation must be infused into the company's DNA and the entire organizational culture must be made more dynamic, in the following ways:

- Create the right incentives;
- Encourage healthy competition;
- Embrace the different;
- Start a strong internal culture (what the author calls "conspiracy");
- Recognize innovation while it is happening.

And if the opportunity for innovation doesn't come 100% from within your company, don't avoid getting inspiration, run away from what Mackey calls "the syndrome of the uninvented here".
The conscious leader is more concerned with the idea than with where, how, or from whom it came. This demonstrates humbleness, a powerful competitive advantage.
Of course, the idea on paper is only part of the way, don't forget to operationalize it to generate the potential value.
Closing the strategic part, avoid "short-termness", conscious leaders "think about the long term of their actions and choices".
A situation that also relates to "win-win-win" is the difference between winning in the short term and building for the long term, or "finite games" and "infinite games", in the terms of the scholar James Carse.

The infinite does not seek to “win” a negotiation, but to stay in the game. While the finite focus on what seems like a momentous victory may hurt the company in the future.
Now, to predict good opportunities, make suitable investments, make efficient plans and react in the best way to what is trending in such a fast-changing world, the theorist Stuart Kauffman brought the term “possible adjacent”.
It is something that great leaders already use, but by instinct, even if they don't know the name. It means analyzing which future desired by the team is achievable, and possible, without taking "biting off more than you can chew”.
This retains attention on the most important things and makes it possible to act with more clarity when walking a path between the current reality and what one hopes to achieve.
Of course, with each step taken, the adjacent possible also moves forward, expanding its possibilities.
That is why global and exponential - rather than linear and local - thinking is recommended, following the progression of the open paths, being able to explore the whole wide range of new opportunities gained step by step.

What is the importance of people and culture in leadership?

Here, the key points that the book makes are to develop the team constantly, to revitalize regularly, and to learn and grow continuously.
One point to pay attention to when it comes to the company's personnel is how to proceed with hiring and firing. At Whole Foods, the goal is to fill 75% of leadership positions with people who already work at the company, and work to get that level up at least another 5%.
When there is a need to hire someone new, being intelligent and having a high IQ are characteristics to be taken into account, of course, but the priorities in the evaluation should be emotional intelligence, character, and cultural fit.
Another way to mirror the writer's company is in salary transparency. There, the compensation of everyone in the company, even the leaders, is available in the salary disclosure report.
This provides insight into pay equity and gives the power of consultation to the leadership for anyone who feels they have been wronged. The company, on the other hand, can change possible incompatibilities more easily, has a strengthened sense of solidarity, and decreases cross talk and information about payments, improving the environment.
It is the leader's responsibility to ask himself and his subordinates how the internal chemistry is, and the relationship between each one, and also to worry, “just like a father thinks about his children”, about how it is possible to improve their development.
Since we are dealing precisely with people, not machines, rest is fundamental in any service. The book features a study that showed more than 60% of US workers as exhausted or highly stressed.
In addition, the Harvard Business Review estimates that burnout is responsible for $125 billion to $190 billion in health care spending each year.
Coming to the book's target audience, for senior leaders, Harvard Medical School pointed to 96% burnout at some level. 32% had a case of extreme exhaustion.
To combat this picture, the author recommends escape activities such as gardening, meditation, and digital fasting to regenerate the four types of energy: **physical**, **mental**, **emotional**, and **spiritual**.
Of course, for the answers to be reliable, you must train your giving and receiving feedback skills.
Communicating this intention to your team is the first step. This exchange of learning humanizes the leader and encourages the team to be more patient and understanding with mistakes.

It is also worth mentioning some leadership practices that the author recommends for developing a real conscious culture:

- Make employee happiness a core value;
- Practice what you preach;
- Leader, know thyself;
- Create an environment of security and trust;
- Provide clear goals and evaluations.

Books on Leadership Models and People Management

It is impossible to say which is the best leadership style, but, for sure, one of those that has the ideals closest to that of conscious leadership is **Shakti Leadership**. In this summary, besides consciousness, you will learn how to develop, in your leadership, more creativity, cooperativeness, and inclusion.

In "**Líder Humano Gera Resultados**", the focus is on compassion while leading. Being also a non-conventional model, in this one, awareness comes through self-knowledge that is recommended for the leader, before anything else.

Another type of leadership that brings the importance of soft skills in the search for respect and better results within the team is the one brought in the summary of "**The Kind Leader**". As the translation of the name suggests, the kindness of a leader can be an interesting characteristic to apply at the same time as his or her conscience.

How can I be a better leader?

- Change the metaphors you use in the workplace from warlike terms to expressions of the community;
- Look for activities that regenerate after intense days of focus on work;
- Be transparent, provide reports with company information for your employees;
- Always keep in mind the effort to keep searching for the option that favors all three parties;
- Think of your work as serving the company, not dominating it.

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