

THE PURPOSE OF BUSINESS

經商的目的

Jim Mathis

In 1968, at the start of a class on financial management at Kansas State University, my professor entered the room and wrote on the board, "The purpose of every business organization is to increase the wealth of the owners." This statement appeared on every exam. Owners of a publicly traded corporation are the stockholders, the professor explained, so the purpose of a publicly traded corporation is to increase the value of stocks or dividends to benefit them.

1968年，在堪薩斯州立大學的經濟管理課程第一堂課，我的教授一進到教室就開宗明義地在黑板上寫：「每一個企業組織的目的就是要增加老闆的財富。」之後這段話出現在每一個考試裡面。教授告訴我們：「在能公開交易的企業裡面，老闆就是股東，所以公司的目標就是要增加股東的股價、分紅和利潤。」

This assertion did not ring true for me, however, because I knew a lot of business owners and few of them were in business solely to increase wealth. Most of them worked to achieve a desired standard of living or to use a specific skill. Like my classmates, I had grown up in the "superficial 50's," an era that was emotionally stunted in the wake of the Great Depression and World War II. During those years few people were ready for soul-searching about their "purpose"; but by 1968 a revolution was underway. People my age wanted to do something important, something with significance beyond themselves.

但是對我來說，這樣的說法並不完全正確，因為我認識很多老闆，他們經商的目的並非只是單單要增加財富。他們大部分的人工作是希望能過自己夢想中的生活或者是學習一種特定的技能。就像我的同學，出生在二次大戰之後經濟大蕭條的年代，當時幾乎沒有人在尋找自己人生的意義，但是1968年，有一波新的改革運動出現，跟我同年紀的人想要做一些不是只關心自己而是更大的事情。

I started my first business in 1973 to solve a specific problem – creating high-quality black-and-white photos. I have spent the rest of life developing other skills to help others. For a number of years I had employees, so another purpose was to provide jobs and empower them to help our customers. Contrary to the professor's declaration, increasing wealth has never been my priority or purpose in business.

我在1973年開始自己做生意，因為要解決一個問題－製作高品質的黑白照片。我的人生下半場都在學習幫助別人技巧。有幾年，我雇用了員工，所以我做生意的目的是要給人工作以及鼓勵他們去幫助客人。跟我的教授所說的剛好相反，增加財富一直都不是我做生意最重要的目的。

There remain corporations whose purpose is to "increase the wealth of the owners," but many like that exist only in history books today. Some of their executives have served time in prison for ethical and criminal violations. The idea of "shareholders" has been replaced with "stakeholders" – shareholders, employees, clients, creditors, and anyone else with a vested interest in the organization. I would hope colleges have stopped trying to convince students that the only purpose of a business is to increase stock value, but it would be hard to know that based on some of the disastrous decisions being made.

雖然有很多公司的目的仍然是要增加老闆股東的財富，但其中很多已經不復存在了。有些公司的執行長也因為破壞道德和違法而入獄服刑。以往「股東」的概念已經被「利益相關者」取代了，這些人包括了股東、員工、顧客、融資者和其他擁有公司利益的人。我希望現在的大學已經不再想說服學生說：經營公司唯一的目的是要增加股票的價值，因為這樣的觀念已經造成了一些災難性的決定。

When I speak to entrepreneurial students, I emphasize most successful businesses start with a skilled person having a sincere desire to serve others. Many passages of the Bible advise that for those who follow Jesus Christ, this should be a primary purpose. For example:

對商科學生演講的時候，我會強調大部分成功的企業的創立，一開始都是因為一群有專業的人想要真誠地服務人群。例如，很多聖經中的經文都告訴要追隨耶穌的人：服事而非被服事。

Serving, rather than being served. Many in ownership and top executive roles may act as if others are there to serve them, but Jesus – God in the flesh – did not hold that attitude at all. *“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many”* (Mark 10:45).

服事而不是被服事 很多老闆和管理階層都表現出應當被服事的態度。但是耶穌一道成肉身的神態度剛好完全相反。因為人子來，並不是要受人的服事，乃是要服事人，並且要捨命作多人的贖價。」(馬可福音 10:45)

Resolving to put others first. If we determine to focus on the needs and interests of others, we will receive a good return not only financially but also in good reputation. *“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others”* (Philippians 2:3-4).

下定決心要把別人放在第一位 如果我們決定要專注在別人的需要和益處上，我們會得到經濟上的回報以及好名聲。凡事不可結黨，不可貪圖虛浮的榮耀；只要存心謙卑，各人看別人比自己強。各人不要單顧自己的事，也要顧別人的事。(腓立比書 2:3-4)

Reaping everlasting dividends. Concentrating only on wealth and profits reflects short-term thinking. It fails to consider the long-term health of the organization – or the eternal benefits gained by focusing on others. *“For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul?”* (Mark 8:36).

收割永恆的莊稼 只專注財富和利益反應一個人的短視近利。這樣的思想沒有考慮到公司長遠的健康或是服務他人所帶來永恆的價值。人就是賺得全世界，賠上自己的生命，有甚麼益處呢？(馬可福音 8:36)。

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Reflection/Discussion Questions

回應與問題討論

1. Prior to reading this “Monday Manna,” how would you have defined “the purpose of business”?
第一、在讀這篇週一嗎哪之前，你是如何定義經商的目的？
2. Have you seen the consensus about the purpose and priorities of business change over the years? If so, in what ways?
第二、你是否同意經商的目的和最重要的事情近幾年來已經有所轉變了？如果有，是怎樣的改變？
3. Do you agree with Mr. Mathis’s view that most businesses are established and operated to perform certain skills or services – and to help and serve others in the process? Why or why not?
第三、你是否同意作者所說的：「大部分的企業的成立都是專業技能或是服務的表現，為的是要服務他人」。請分享你的理由。
4. How do you think a self-centered, profit-only attitude in a company can be overcome? What are some of the benefits of maintaining personal and corporate missions and philosophies that are others-centered?
第四、你覺得企業裡自我中心、利益導向的態度能夠被克服嗎？你認為維持個人和公司的利他原則能帶來什麼益處？

NOTE: If you have a Bible and would like to read more about this subject, consider the following passages:

備註:如果你手上有聖經想要知道更多關於這個主題的經文，請參考:

Proverbs 3:27-28, 11:24, 27:20; Ecclesiastes 1:3-11, 6:7-9; Matthew 16:26, Mark 8:35-37

箴言 3:27-28, 11:24, 27:20; 傳道書 1:3-11, 6:7-9; 馬太福音 16:26, 馬可福音 8:35-37