

**Incorporating Ethics and Compassion into Business Life: A Conversation
between His Holiness the Dalai Lama and Academic and Business Leaders
Remarks by Charles Geschke
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I am delighted and honored to be asked to participate in this panel discussion with His Holiness, the Dalai Lama. I have some very fond memories of the opportunity to spend a day with His Holiness a little over ten years ago at that other Jesuit University in Northern California, the University of San Francisco.

While preparing for today's panel, I had the opportunity to read His Holiness's book entitled, *Art of Happiness at Work*. I found his observations on an individual's relationship to work most enlightening. I have chosen to focus my remarks from a somewhat different perspective — less from the viewpoint of an employee but rather from the perspective of the senior management of a company and their responsibility to create an environment that supports compassion and the opportunity to be happy at work.

I will use my experience in founding a company, Adobe Systems, here in Silicon Valley over thirty years ago to illustrate the critical importance of compassion as a guiding principle in establishing a successful business. The issue of humanizing our business to reflect my partner, John Warnock, and my values was central to our thought process as we took the initial steps of recruiting our first employees and establishing a work ethic and environment for our company.

Simply put, we wanted to build a company for which we ourselves would like to work. We believed that, if we were successful in establishing a hospitable and welcoming culture coupled with our plans for developing exciting technology, we would be successful in hiring the best and the brightest talent to join Adobe. I am certain that our company's success is directly attributable to these initial decisions.

Why do I believe this? A computer-software, intellectual property business like Adobe's is quite different from businesses like steel mills or oil refineries or large-scale manufacturing or retail distribution. Those companies have significant capital assets such as real estate, sophisticated physical equipment, and warehouses. At Adobe, our only significant assets are people and the ideas they discover and invent. Every night, those assets go home. Unless we build a company that excites our employees, stimulates them, rewards them, and offers them a compelling environment populated with people that they like and admire, they may not return the next day. In effect, our capital assets could disappear.

So we formulated a few simple principles for our company. Before I summarize these principles, I want to emphasize that I believe these are not simply altruistic concepts intended to make everyone feel good about the company. These are critical concepts for achieving the primary objective of creating and operating a successful

business. They may seem simple and obvious but they are difficult to achieve and maintain.

Here are my choices for the three most important principles:

1. Hire the best possible people: male or female, independent of their lifestyle choices, their ethnic background, or their race. I constantly repeat to our managers a simple piece of advice: If you wish to advance your career or climb the management ladder, hire people who are smarter than you are. By the way, one should always remember that allows you to recruit from a much larger percentage of the population than the alternative.

2. A company should support an employee's freedom to maintain the quality of her/his personal and family life. Our belief is that employees should work smart not long. When we started our company in the early 80's, we provided our employees with a computer terminal, a modem, and a telephone line so they could always telecommute when family or personal obligations required them to stay at home. Today each employee receives three computers: one for work, one for travel, and one to use at home.

3. The final principle arises from the following observation. The management of a public corporation must balance the needs and desires of four primary constituencies: the Customers, the Shareholders, the Employees, and the Communities in which the corporation conducts its business. You must understand that the goals of these constituencies are somewhat in conflict with each other. What is good for one may be less desirable for the others. Rather than write a complicated set of rules of corporate behavior for dealing with each of these groups, we adopted a simple principle — whenever you deal with one of these individuals or groups treat them in the manner you would wish to be treated. This principle is usually referred to as The Golden Rule and is most often attributed to the teachings of Jesus Christ in the New Testament. In fact, a little online research lists a broad spectrum of ancient sources of this principle including: Confucianism, the Sanskrit Tradition in India, Buddhism, Hinduism, the Qur'an and many others.

In summary, if you are responsible for managing a business, please do not dismiss these principles as a simple altruistic adherence to certain religious or philosophical concepts. My experience has taught me that these principles are critical to operating a successful and well-respected business. Thank you.