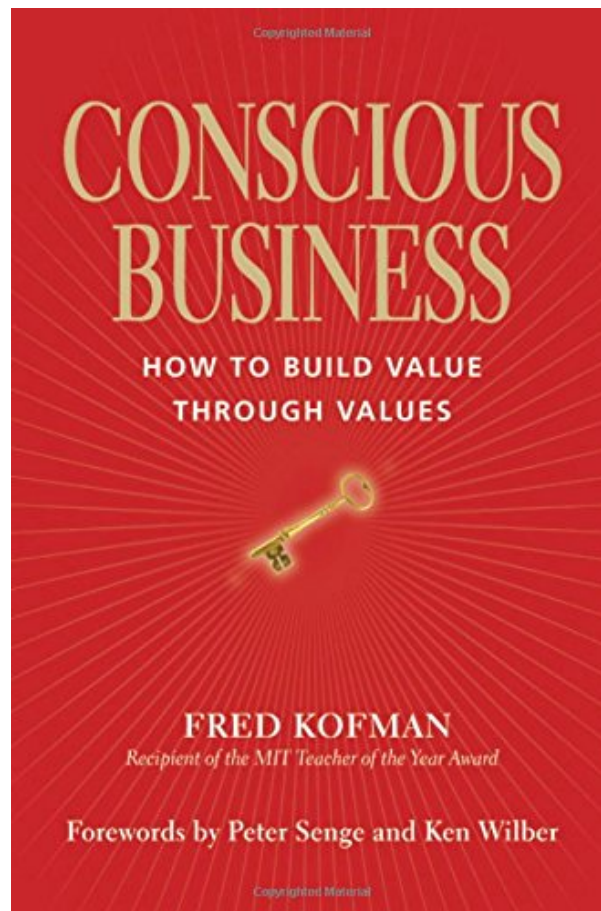


# CONSCIOUS BUSINESS: HOW TO BUILD VALUE THROUGH VALUES BY FRED KOFMAN



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# CONSCIOUS BUSINESS

HOW TO BUILD VALUE  
THROUGH VALUES



**FRED KOFMAN**

*Recipient of the MIT Teacher of the Year Award*

Forewords by Peter Senge and Ken Wilber

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## Review

Fred Kofman is a genius with a heart as big as his brain. In this remarkable book, he takes us on a thrilling tour through what business would be like if it had both a heart and a mind -a conscience and a consciousness. The result is a practice of business that transforms you and your world.

Ken Wilber, philosopher and author of *A Theory of Everything*

A fundamental book for our times.

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## From the Inside Flap

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**\*\*Winner of the 2009 Nautilus Gold Award\*\***

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## Excerpt

Consciousness is the ability to experience reality, to be aware of our inner and outer worlds. It allows us to adapt to our environment and act to promote our lives. All living beings possess consciousness, but human beings have a unique kind. Unlike plants and other animals, we can think and act beyond instinctual drives and conditioning. We can be autonomous (from the Greek, “self-governing”). While this autonomy is a possibility, it is not a given. We must develop it through conscious choices.

To be conscious means to be awake, mindful. To live consciously means to be open to perceiving the world around us, to understand our circumstances, and to decide how to respond to them in ways that honor our needs, values, and goals. To be unconscious is to be asleep, mindless. To live unconsciously means to be driven by instincts and habitual patterns.

Have you ever driven down the highway on cruise control, engaged in a conversation or daydreaming, only to realize you missed your exit? You didn't literally lose consciousness, but you dimmed your awareness. Relevant details, such as your location and the actions needed to reach your goal, receded from the forefront of your mind. Your eyes were open, but you didn't see. This is a poor way to drive—and an even poorer way to live.

Praise

“Consciousness has a real and deep business impact. Learning how to work in full congruence with our values has inspired every person in my team to be a better professional—and a better human being.”

—Sheryl Sandberg, Chief Operating Officer, Facebook

“Fred has been a true partner in our efforts to build a conscious organization, helping us move from aspiration to implementation. His advice is never easy, but always worthwhile.”

—Eugenio Beaufrand, Vice President, Microsoft Latin America

“Conscious Business translates the tools of organizational learning into day-to-day business applications. Both at Chrysler and DTE Energy, Fred's work has allowed us to shift our culture faster, but with much greater sustainability than any other effort.”

—David Meador, Senior Vice President of Finance, Detroit Edison

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79 of 84 people found the following review helpful.

Creating a Cooperative Culture of Improving Performance

By Donald Mitchell

Conscious Business is the first book I've read on an important subject I'd like to tackle as an author: How to move those in an organization from focusing on their selfish interests to concentrating on what creates the most good for the most people . . . with the least potential harm to any individual. I thought that Dr. Kofman did a good job in defining one path to creating mutual benefit in Conscious Business. If people in your organization seem to be emphasizing their own careers rather than the tasks that need doing, this book is a must-read for you!

Let me agree with Dr. Kofman about his warning for readers: It's much easier to understand his principles than apply them. But with practice, you can do great things.

Here are the goals he sets:

"In the impersonal It dimension, the goal is to accomplish the organization's mission, enhancing its ability to continue doing so in the future, and delivering outstanding long-term returns to shareholders. In the interpersonal We dimension, the goal is to establish cooperative, trusting, and mutually respectful relationships, a community of shared purpose and values in which people feel they belong. In the personal I dimension, the goal is to live in a state of flow, feeling a transcendent happiness that comes from living in full integrity, with one's principles and ideals."

As you can see from this quote, Dr. Kofman draws heavily from his interest in Buddhist tradition and other streams of spiritual beliefs that are outside of the Judeo-Christian tradition. The text is enlivened by quotes from many sides of the spiritual spectrum and psychologists. As a result, the material will speak directly and deeply in places to virtually any reader, regardless of background and beliefs.



The risk he points to is a real one: If we don't make our intentions explicit and specific, people will take the knee-jerk route of looking after themselves. That self-focus is the basis of much bureaucratic behavior, procrastination, avoidance, poor customer service, misconceptions, disbelief about what needs to be done, poor communications and over-reliance on tradition.

A key exhibit in the book can be found on page 17 where Dr. Kofman draws a contrast between relying on unconscious versus conscious attitudes in business. Here are the unconscious attitudes and their conscious counterparts:

Unconscious Attitudes.....	Conscious Attitudes
Unconditional blame.....	Unconditional responsibility
Essential selfishness.....	Essential integrity
Ontological arrogance.....	Ontological humility
Unconscious behaviors.....	Conscious behaviors
Manipulative communication.....	Authentic communication
Narcissistic negotiation.....	Constructive negotiation
Negligent coordination.....	Impeccable coordination
Unconscious reactions.....	Conscious reactions
Emotional incompetence.....	Emotional mastery

The book goes on to devote a chapter to each of the seven conscious attitudes (excluding conscious behaviors and reactions from the list above). Since those attitude titles are not exactly self-explanatory, let me see if I can explain each a little more.

Unconditional responsibility is the Victor Frankl concept of determining your response to a situation, even if it is a situation you cannot change. You take charge of choosing your response.

Essential integrity is acting in accordance with your values, even if the results are less than perfect.

Ontological humility is being open to seeing what's going on from the perspectives of others and valuing those perspectives.

Authentic communication means sharing your emotions, opinions and knowledge openly with those who appear to be headed in the wrong direction . . . and encouraging them to do the same. From that baseline, you can then proceed to develop options that may better fit what's needed.

Constructive negotiation is focused on finding a great solution for everyone, rather than simply winning your point.

Impeccable coordination involves making informed commitments, staying on top of what's needed to meet those commitments and letting others know when things go wrong to devise solutions that may improve matters.

Emotional mastery means being able to function objectively, even if something outrages or frightens you.

As you can see from these terms and concepts, Conscious Business is a book of applied psychology by someone who is well versed in the field. The strength of that approach is that Dr. Kofman can reference psychological works that you may know well to give you a touchstone. The drawback is that the book can

seem to be too academic if you aren't familiar with the terms and references.

Two things humanize the book from those weaknesses:

(1) Each chapter opens with an extended example of a business problem involving unconscious behavior and reactions. The key concepts are then explained and applied to turning the extended example into a way of employing conscious behavior and reactions.

(2) Dr. Kofman has had many interesting experiences that he deftly weaves into his story. I was especially impressed by his learning from having lived in a totalitarian regime in Argentina as a youth and his mountain climbing experience in South America.

All that said, the opening of this book was awfully abstract and academic. It wasn't until page 42 that I began to resonate with the material. So be patient. The book is quite accessible and interesting from that point on.

12 of 12 people found the following review helpful.

I can't think of anyone who shouldn't read this

By Julio P

The hard part about starting or running a business is not the long hours, the tight deadlines, or the stresses of being overworked in the face of an insecure future. The real challenges that make or break us surround dealing with our own integrity, our priorities, and conflicts with others.

This book covers those challenges and offers many tools and examples of how we can manage them and come out ahead having built a stronger foundation and a stronger company.

I personally can't stand the idealistic tones of the book but I will admit, unlike most of these books that I have read, this one is much more grounded in the harsh challenges of reality such as the fact that, while in business and in dealing with others failure is not an option but success is not always achieved.

If you read this book you will find yourself referencing it as you deal with life on any level because the authors clear mind and direct language gives you the language to describe and communicate the situation and how best to manage it.

16 of 18 people found the following review helpful.

Learning to be conscious. Learning to be.

By A Customer

Conscious Business is a wonderful way to understand that the only way of making our businesses and lives be what we want them to be is by doing the effort of becoming aware, of becoming present and becoming completely responsible players.

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