

"Greatest force in nations, markets, business: TRIBALISM"

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Lunchtime Plenary Speech by Dr Patrick Dixon, for Fortune event New York November 7th 2001, close to Ground Zero. Dr Dixon has been ranked as one of the 20 most influential business thinkers alive today (Thinkers50 - 2005 survey) and is author of Building a Better Business.

Other speakers at event: Gary Hamel - Chairman Strategos, Kathleen Turner - Actress, Mayor of New York, Jorma Ollila Chairman / CEO Nokia, Tom Brokaw - NBC, Helge Wehmeier - President Bayer, Stephen Case - Chairman AOL Time Warner)

"Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for your warm welcome at this significant time.

As I stood at Ground Zero I was reminded that during the Second World War, my own city of London was bombed, until one home in four was damaged or destroyed. And you stood with us to win that war, shoulder to shoulder. And now we stand with you, in your own time of uncertainty about the future.

And it is the nature of that future, the deep desire for a better kind of future, that is my theme today.

We can have the greatest business strategies, plans to profit from chaos and from market consolidation, plans for faster decision-making, clever restructuring and all the rest, but my experience is that these things have limited power to capture and inspire the human spirit, to connect with the real passions people have. And the time to do so is now.

Never has there been a time of greater restlessness in the workplace. A crisis of purpose. Faced with tragedy, the universal human response is to return to the things which are most important in our lives.

This is a time for greatness - and we have seen greatness,

This is a time for noble ideals and the highest principles, for deep reflection, for fresh understanding.

I believe it is these very ideals that will underpin sound long term economic recovery, restore energy and confidence to consumers.

The old ways are gone and many are standing around, asking profound questions about where we are going: as individuals, as families, as communities, and as nations.

Out of evil has come great good - and I see a great wave of concern and compassion sweep not only across this great city but across every State in America.

There is indeed a passion, more than perhaps we have seen for a generation, a deep feeling in the depths of our being that something has to change, and that we want to make a real difference, we want our children to have a different kind of future. (And you know, it has absolutely nothing to do with shareholder value, bottom line profit or an annual bonus.)

I want to share with you the most positive and encouraging four words that I have ever heard, when it comes to corporate life or human motivation.

These four simple words, one single phrase is the key to the future, to the biggest value shift in 50 years, a profound popular revolution NOT caused by Sept 11 but hugely accelerated BY it.

These four words will be the basis of all future marketing campaigns, every mission statement, every political slogan, every business success and economic health.

These words explain all consumer behaviour and attitudes, in every nation, and will determine our future.

They have the power to transform the global culture clash we see today, to unite very different peoples in co-operation and understanding.

The light dawned for me as a result of four common reactions to the future. People call me a [Futurist](#) because I am often asked to guide global corporations through tomorrow's headlines. I guess my job is to live in 2010 and to see tomorrow as history.

But one thing I know: whenever I talk of the future, people want to talk to me about themselves, the passions they have and the concerns they hold for themselves, their families, their communities and the world as a whole.

First let's take technology - in all its forms. I love technology, I had my own IT startup in 1979, and today I have a cyberbubble in my home: it's a TV studio and a web TV station, enabling me to broadcast on satellite or to link semi-permanently at almost zero cost to a client the other side of the world. I surf the net at 2 megabits per second while floating on my swimming pool. My personal website has had 25 million requests in year.

In my pocket I carry the world's first injectable PC: a device the size of a grain of rice with software, hardware, processor, memory, transmitter and receiver. It carries its own power pack, which collects electromagnetic energy from the air, and will last 100 years. Hitachi's latest design is just 0.2 mm in size and this is only the first day of the digital age.

In my country we use them to trace our animals: outside my country people tell me our cows are barking mad, our sheep are frothing at the mouth and it's always raining cats and dogs.. Seriously though, these outbreaks got huge publicity, created fear but in truth were limited and

are over.

Similar biochips are giving sight to the blind and hearing to the deaf. The next generation will be able to control their environment by thinking alone - now we have learned how to grow brain cells into the surface of chips.

But the more I talk technology, the more people talk to me about relationships.

It's the same with biotech. The digital revolution has the power to change what we DO but the genetic revolution has the power to change who we ARE.

Your own genes work in carrots and cabbages - as do scorpion poison genes which mean cabbages kill caterpillars - but what about people? Actually carrot genes work in your body too.

Human genes have been added to pigs. They have low fat meat, but are blind, impotent and suffer from severe arthritis.

Human genes have been added to Salmon - and they grow to four times their usual size in just 12 months.

We have cotton which is growing pure rabbit fur, insects with extra eyes on their wings, rabbit embryos combined with human embryos to make hybrids - just some of the million such experiments around the world in the last year. And we may be only weeks away from the birth of the first human clone, or indeed from the first act of war using a genetically modified virus.

You see, all genetic code is written in Microsoft basic - and a word processor is all you need to cut and paste. You are 86% the same as an earthworm, 88% the same as an insect and 98% the same as a gorilla!

At the same time we are seeing real miracles of science and medicine. It's now possible to take bone marrow from a mouse, treat it and inject it back, so that the cells wander around the body until they find damaged brain or heart or liver - and make a perfect repair. A miracle indeed.

But as I say whenever I talk of genetics, as a physician (I am one by my first training) as well as a [Futurist](#), people talk to me about their concerns - not for themselves, but for the whole of humanity. A sense that biotech is running ahead, out of control.

For years the great fashion has been the pursuit of self: self fulfilment, self actualisation, self realisation, as if self was the only part of the human heart.. Well self-interest may be dominant, but it's not the only driver ..

My second observation is the huge growth of positive interest in work-life balance - an unfortunate phrase because it implies that life is not work and that work is the opposite to being fully alive.

If work-life balance is about anything, most people tell me it's about having time for relationships outside of work, it's about family, their special inner circle.

(Actually in Britain I confess we have a particular problem in this area: on current trends we will all end up divorced before we have time to get married. and every child will be in a broken home.)

According to large surveys, work-life balance is now No 1 or No 2 career priority across America, the UK and Japan, a huge shift. Ten years ago surveys showed entirely different motivation. And the younger these executives are, the greater the value they place on getting a life.

Half of corporate America wants to work four days a week for less money. You know why? So they can reduce their hours from 100 to 80.

This motivation gap is the result of a total rethink about work.

And I tell you this: as people share with me their own stories of personal pain, hard decisions and how they feel their careers have damaged those they love - or once loved, I am often deeply moved. I know that these things really matter to people - more than selling products or running organisations.

I'll never forget Mark, a New Yorker in Europe for a two week course. On the first day he interrupts me as I'm talking about value trends, and says he wishes he was back home. There's a sharp intensity in his low voice, eyes casted down.

He left in a blazing row with his thirteen year old son who hates math. "You must do it", dad says. The cab is waiting for him and he's already late.

"You don't understand," son replies.

"You need it to do well and get a great job."

And then flows the truth, the secret feelings that would set a fire in Mark's heart and change his life forever.

"I HATE your job." His son is sobbing now. "I'd rather sweep the streets. I've seen what YOUR JOB has DONE to mum, and I HATE what it's doing to ME."

In that moment of truth, reality dawned. Deep down inside, Mark knew he cared a thousand more times about his family than the next share bonus. In any case, one more set of bad figures and he could be out anyway.

When did he last weep over sales figures? But when did the bank last ask him how they could support his life at home? Many companies treat families as if they don't exist, and two career households as if they are from the planet Zed. And the more senior you are, people often tell me, the greater the active discrimination can be against anyone who seems to have even a remote interest in life outside work.

Do you know more than a quarter of your best executives have thought seriously of turning down promotion, to get balance back. It's a major issue in the War for Talent - what's the point of attracting the best if they don't want to achieve THEIR best?

So family is a vital positive motivator.

We see the third reaction to the future in the amazing boom in volunteering over the last fifteen years. Six out of ten Americans give an average 200 hours a year each! - actually it's risen yet again since September 11.

That's around 20 billion hours a year! If each was paid for at an average industrial rate, that national gift of time is equal to 4% of GDP or 12 % of the Federal Budget, as much as spent on agriculture and space, education, training, technology, employment, social services and transport.

This is a growing people movement. But why do they do it?

Because they really want to put something back. They CARE about their community, their city, this great nation and beyond. I've seen this spirit over and over in my own work in many of the poorest nations in the AIDS field.

I know company Chairmen who are frustrated that a half million bonus still fails to keep someone from pushing off. Everyone finds they're paying inflationary salaries just to stand still.

But ask that same person what they do in their own time for NOTHING, and you will find their REAL passion. Connect with that same passion at work and they will follow you to the ends of the earth - and you won't need to pay them a single dime.

The fourth reaction to the future is seen in the prolific growth of activist and campaigning groups. People aren't interested in politics, hence only half America voted for a President. Left right politics is dead. Instead we have wars waged by opinion poll and focus group. People today are driven by issues which capture their imagination and stir them up inside.

Response to terrorism, animal welfare, child labour, nazi gold, human rights, environmental damage, loss of natural habitat, global warming - there are thousands, well served by the 1.6 million charities collecting money to save the world.

And the reason? Because there's a strong positive feeling across this nation and in many others, that we should be concerned about the future of humanity as a whole - indeed about the whole earth. These concerns are often expressions of spirituality and life-changing faith.

And I began to understand:

Despite popular myths that most people are only really concerned about No 1, most of the PASSION I was hearing was about these other areas, or corners of the human heart: concerns about special relationships, community and the greater world. These concerns vary hugely in strength from person to person, but all will be increasingly significant in a future domestic and global market where every value is being questioned.

Why am I doing this? What's the point of working for a company whose ways I don't respect, whose products I disapprove of, and who treats its people and their loved ones badly?

Life's too short to waste on things that don't matter.

The light began to dawn. I began to see that the foundation stone of these concerns for self, family, community and world was just one single thing:

The desire to build a better world.

Building a better world is the ultimate slogan and mission statement - in each of Four Corners of the Human Heart.

A better world for myself in every way - why else do I drink that cup of coffee

A better world for my family

For my community

For all humanity

Building a Better World is a principle that is instantly familiar because without knowing it, as I say, it's been inside us all the time:

Red Cross: Together we can save a life

Wall-Mart: We exist to give ordinary folk the chance to buy the same things as rich people.

Walt Disney: We make people happy

Mary Kay Inc: Enriching women's lives

Merck and Co: Business is preserving and improving human life

But it's not just about business, it's national [leadership](#) too. JFK, M Luther King, Churchill and Nelson Mandela all knew by instinct how to trigger all the passions people have.

FOLLOW ME AND I PROMISE YOU A BETTER WORLD

Satisfying you as an individual

Supporting family, those we care for

Strengthening our community

Sustaining the rest of humanity

Actually, building a better world starts at birth and is practised daily in almost every American home

We have four teenagers and it's certainly practised in our own home. Every parent seeks to build a better world - indeed it is the only principle that works. The aim is to convert a naturally self-centred small child into a wonderful, responsible young adult who is going to achieve really great things, yet is considerate to others and a great citizen.

Every High School rule abides by this same powerful principle backed by mutual consent. "These school rules mean a far better world for everyone." Failure to win the better world argument results in anarchy.

Every court case in America today hangs or falls by the Better World principle. Take Microsoft: is it a better or worse world to have a powerful monopoly or to break it up?

Or take drug patents in poor nations in the last few weeks. Does it build a better world when HIV medication made under patent is so expensive a doctor in Uganda has to save all his income for a decade to treat one patient? One by one all the drug companies stopped their joint action in South Africa for breach of patents, after a huge international outcry - despite active support for them from President Bush and our Prime Minister Tony Blair.

The collapse of this court case will impact the profits of multinational drug companies for at least decade. The greater the health benefits of your new discovery, the greater the pressure will be to give it away.

So what went wrong: these huge companies had great products, a powerful business case, a clear moral and legal issue - but misunderstood the new values shift.

Do you know that your registration fee for this benefit two day conference in New York is large enough to employ an aid worker for a year in most countries of the world. These kind of contrasts will mean many other industries come under pressure - not just those making medication.

Building a better world will stretch corporations to the very limits as they adjust to the radical values revolution and a new kind of culture clash: this time between consumers and corporations.

Good news: Great values means great business. That's why ethical investment funds are growing so fast - and often outperforming the rest of the market.

Great investment, low management charges, protecting your family's future security, and every dollar works in the community to build a better world.

Our vehicles are terrific to drive, keep kids safe, use less gas, are less polluting and are built in factories which take great care of people. All in all we are a great company.

But lousy values means no business at all. See what happens if your company is found employing loads of children 8,000 miles away in India.

People say - you can't change the whole world. That's true but you can change someone's world somewhere.

Together we can make the difference.

Together we stand for hope and for freedom.

Together we stand for compassion, liberty and justice.

Together we stand for the sake of our children and all children everywhere.

This is the ground on which I stand.

And I believe that this is the passion of the American people.

It will be the passion of every successful corporation.

These are the only foundations for a sustainable future, for a successful, secure economy and

a great nation.

These are the principles around which cultures can co-operate instead of clash.

They are the root of every society, every civilisation, and of every religion.

Appealing to all 4 Corners of the Human Heart means that people will be proud to buy your products, proud to work for you, proud to join forces with you.

Because they believe that you are building a better future.

Building a Better World is the key to our future business, our corporate calling and our path of destiny.

Together, we will find a better way."