

Spiritual Business Principles  
for  
Sustainable Success

Michael Shevack



# Spiritual Business Principles for Sustainable Success

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Our Free Enterprise System is one of the greatest spiritual advancements that humankind has ever devised.

Through it, billions of people add their energy, their talents, and yes, their dreams to a shared vision, a world vision: all humankind participating in positive, up-lifting, wealth-producing, productive, industry and freedom.

***Freedom! It's not just the underpinning of our Free Enterprise System, but also its promise and purpose!***

Today, the world is getting smaller. There are mind-boggling new technologies: intelligent ma-

chines, the internet, genetic engineering. These are enhancing human creativity and enterprise. They are also radically altering our relationship to value, which is the foundation of all enterprise, economics and wealth.

***These Spiritual Business Principles for Sustainable Success are a general spiritual guideline for how to conduct business in this new era.***

## What is meant by “Spiritual”?

The Free Enterprise System is, by its very nature, a spiritual system. By the word “spiritual” is meant: *Engaging in freely-chosen relationships between participating individuals, for the mutual benefit of all.*

The individual is the driving force. Not governments. Not institutions. Not banks. Not corporations. The individual *Spirit* is the force of entrepreneurship! *The Entrepreneurial Spirit*, as it has been

called, is shared, organized, structured, into all our various institutions. But, our institutions are not the foundation of the Entrepreneurial Spirit. When we think that, we enslave our Entrepreneurial Spirit, not set it free.

When Entrepreneurial Spirit is used in a way that violates people, exalts “economic machines,” over Life itself – putting coins before care, profit before purpose, development over decency – such a business will not only become destructive, it will also self-limit, plateau and tumble, sometimes dragging whole nations along with it. Why?

**There is a spiritual foundation to all human activity. That which does not serve the goodness of Life, is not supported by Life. This spiritual principle is operative in business, no less than any other aspect of Life. Businesses which serve The Good will grow, prosper, and contribute mightily, because they have the spiritual support of Life Itself.**

These *Spiritual Business Principles for Sustainable Success*, when applied, can ease or even prevent business plateaus, cycles and collapses. They can guide us on how to use our Freedom wisely, so we can strengthen our Entrepreneurial Spirit. They can help invigorate the spiritual foundation upon which all human industry and economy rests.

## Life-Centered Priorities

*Spiritual Business Principles for Sustainable Success are Life-Centered.* Life-Centered Priorities are not based upon monetary goals, business policy, economic theory or custom, no matter how time-honored.

They are priorities – some things more important than others – based upon the nature of Life, “How Life Works.”

Life-Centered Priorities are Real-Life Priorities, priorities built into the nature, the very structure,

organization, “design” of Life, what some, more religiously-minded people, have called “God’s laws.” However, these are not primarily “religious,” nor are they up for theological debate or religious war. They are universal, spiritual, built into “The Way Life Works,” Life-Centered Priorities are Life’s “Operating System,” so-to-speak.

**The spiritual secret to producing Sustainable Success is conducting business according to Life-Centered Priorities that are correct.**

What is meant by *correct*? The word comes from the Latin, *co-regire*, meaning “to govern together,” or “co-govern.” Correct Life-Centered Priorities are those that engender cooperation, synergy and harmony in all aspects of Life, including human industry.

There are two basic kinds of Life-Centered Priorities:

1. Value Priorities

2. Relationship Priorities.

Both are indispensable for Sustainable Success in business.

### Life-Centered Value Priorities for Sustainable Success

*Value Priorities* are based upon true necessity. Some necessities are, obviously, more important for sustaining Life than others. After all, if we are not breathing, we can’t do business. If we are sick, we will not achieve.

*Life-Centered Value Priorities*, in their correct order of priority, necessary for achieving Sustainable Success, is as follows:

- 1) Health
- 2) Peace
- 3) Freedom
- 4) Wisdom
- 5) Full Potential
- 6) Continuous Improvement

## Value Priority #1: Health

After possessing Life itself, Health is obviously the most important Value Priority. If business is destructive to human health it undermines the sustainability of business activities. The labor force is destroyed and capital is drained.

*Business must enhance Health, not undermine it. Sustainable Success is always Life-Centered.*

## Value Priority #2: Peace

Conducting business in a way that produces Peace, with harmony and healthy human relations, produces a stress-free environment that encourages economic and geo-political stability. This will strengthen the bottom line, as well as the currency of all nations.

*Business must enhance Peace, not undermine it. Sustainable Success is always Life-Centered.*

## Value Priority #3: Freedom

Our Entrepreneurial Spirit requires Freedom. Freedom must be expressed with respect: Respect *first* for people! Respect last for institutions (including those “too important to fail”.) Any Freedom which is aimed only at making profit, will not sustain itself, because is not aligned to “How Life Works.” Business must serve the Purpose of Life: Goodness, or we will lose our Freedom.

*Business must enhance Freedom, not undermine it. Sustainable Success is always Life-Centered.*

## Value Priority #4: Wisdom

True Wisdom is about *Truth, Care and Balance*, in that order of priority: Seek the Truth in all business activities. Care for your own self and others. Balance needs and wants correctly, in a way that always, minimally, causes the least harm. Wisdom is the stabilizing factor in economics. Not currency

rates or market conditions.

*Business must enhance Wisdom, not undermine it. Sustainable Success is always Life-Centered.*

## Value Priority #5: Full Potential

Individuals must express their Full Potential in business. Whole economies and nations must express their Full Potential. The expression of the Full Potential of everything and everyone, including the Full Potential of the spiritual tool called “money” should be the goal of all business activities.

*Business must enhance the Full Potential of Life, not undermine it. Sustainable Success is always Life-Centered.*

## Value Priority #6: Prosperity

If the above Value Priorities are not in the cor-

rect place, the Prosperity we earn will not be sustainable. Create Prosperity in a way that undermines Health, and you’ll spend money on medical bills. Create Prosperity in a way that doesn’t promote Peace, and wars will erupt that undermine economies. Prosperity is the natural Life-result of business conducted with correct Value Priorities.

*Business must enhance Prosperity, not undermine it. Sustainable Success is always Life-Centered.*

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These six Value Priorities, in their correct order, form the spiritual mind-set by which one should evaluate all business activities and contracts. The more business reflects these spiritual priorities, in their correct order, the more effortless business will be, and the more profitable they will become. They will be more spiritually-aligned to “How Life Works,” the Priorities built into Life.

If you examine “what went wrong” in any business venture, you will always discover Value Pri-

orities that were not in their correct order. Therefore, you can use these Value Priorities as a diagnostic tool to assess the potential for good business and make better business deals. You can also use them to study your past decisions, both good ones, and bad ones, and learn from them.

## Life-Centered Relationship Priorities for Sustainable Success

Applying Value Priorities to real-life relationships is a science but also an art. For instance, applying Value Priority #3, Freedom, to a newborn infant is not the same as applying it to teenager or a thirty-six year old.

The Value Priority may be the same, but the Life relationships are different.

Relationship Priorities are Life-Centered Priorities that help guide us to create correct relationships for Sustainable Success.

Life-Centered Relationship Priorities, in their correct order of priority, necessary to achieve Sustainable Success, are as follows:

1) Yourself 2) Another 3) All Others 4) Future Generations 5) All Life and the Planet 6) Continuous Improvement.

## Relationship Priority #1: Yourself

Our Entrepreneurial Spirit requires us to be “selfish.” You must celebrate the freedom of your own ambitions and dreams and translate them into real-life material success. When you put others first, but fail to take care of Yourself first, your Entrepreneurial Spirit is weakened. You contribute to creating excessive governmental control that drains capital. You lose your competitive edge.

*In business, enhance the success of Yourself first; don't undermine Yourself ever. Sustainable Success is always Life-Centered.*

## Relationship Priority #2: Another

While all business decisions should put Yourself first, they should always consider their effect on Another. “Another” is a human being just like you, who must be respected as you must respect yourself. Even your toughest competitor is deserving of respect. Business that is all “me” and not “you” cannot create Sustainable Success; its success will be narrow, imbalanced and short-lived.

*Business must enhance the success of Another, not undermine them. Sustainable Success is always Life-Centered.*

## Relationship Priority #3: All Others

Business does not just involve individuals but also groups of individuals— companies, communities, legal systems, even whole nations: All Others. Individuality should strengthen organizations, not weaken them. Organizations should

strengthen individuals, not weaken them. If both organizations and individuals are not mutually strengthened, something is spiritually wrong and business will falter.

*Business must enhance the success of All Others, not undermine them. Sustainable Success is always Life-Centered.*

## Relationship Priority #4: Future Generations

Short-sighted decisions are doomed for short-lived success. Sustainable Success benefits not just one generation but also the next, and the next. There’s nothing more despicable than one generation profiting at the expense of the next; it is tantamount to “eating your young.” Our future generations are our next business leaders, our next customers.

*Business must enhance the success of Future Gen-*



erations, not undermine them. Sustainable Success is always Life-Centered.

## Relationship Priority #5: All Life and the Planet

There is a great interdependency between human lives, all living creatures, our environment and planetary resources. Sustainable Success means acting in a way that considers the effect of business practices upon *All Life and the Planet*. Developing profit at the expense of living creatures and our living world, is never correct. Profit should serve Life first; Life should not serve profit first. That's enslavement. Not Freedom.

*Business must enhance the success of All Life and the Planet and not undermine them. Sustainable Success is always Life-Centered.*

## Relationship Priority #6: Continuous Improvement

Business without Continuous Improvement is doomed to plateau. If new growth is not re-established, the plateau will become an undertow and businesses will drown.

One should implement Life-Centered Priorities, doing the best one can do at any moment, but always seeking Continuous Improvement beyond that.

*Business must enhance the Continuous Improvement of everyone and everything, not undermine them. Sustainable Success is always Life-Centered.*

These six Relationship Priorities, in their correct order, form the spiritual mind-set by which one should evaluate all business activities and contracts. The more business reflect these spiritual priorities, in their correct order, the more effortless business will be, and the more profitable they will

become. They will be more spiritually-aligned to “How Life Works,” the Priorities built into Life.

If you examine “what went wrong” in any business venture, you will always discover Relationship Priorities that were not in their correct order. Therefore, you can use these Value Priorities as a diagnostic tool to assess the potential for good business and make better business deals. You can also use them to study your past decisions, both good ones, and bad ones, and learn from them.

### Summary

These Life-Centered Relationship Priorities together with the previous Life-Centered Value Priorities are the simple spiritual principles necessary for creating the Sustainable Success we need in this era.

### A Final Word About Competition

One might think these Value and Relationship Priorities are just “too idealistic for the ‘real’ world,” not “practical.”

Putting business on a correct spiritual footing is practical! It’s practical because you are building a larger, more purposeful, vision of Life into your business. More aligned to Life, Life Itself will more readily support your business. You will swim with the flow of Life, not against it. This will enhance your competitive edge!

Remember too, the word *competition* comes from the same root word in Latin as *competence*. The best competition does not mean you put yourself first at the expense of another, employing Relationship Priority #1, but forgetting Relationship Priority #2. The best competition is competing with yourself, improving your competence on all these Value and Relationship Priorities. Then, your competition will be forced to emulate your behav-

ior, and improve themselves.

Through these *Spiritual Business Principles for Sustainable Success*, we can create business, and indeed, an entire world economy, that can expand and improve continuously.

In principle, growth is unlimited, when it is spiritually-aligned.

Here's to your Success! Sustainable Success!

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## About the Author

Michael Shevack is an ordained rabbi, a leader in inter-religious dialogue, the author of six books. He's been a consultant and business counselor to many executives and companies. His column on *Spirituality in Business* appeared in *Success Magazine*.

Rabbi Shevack is on the Board of Directors of the Center for Spirituality and Health Education at Stonybrook (SUNY), where he taught Spirituality on a graduate level in the School of Social Welfare. He teaches Business Spirituality at the Iacocca Institute for Global Entrepreneurship at Lehigh University.

Prior to his ordination, Rabbi Shevack was an award-winning Madison Avenue Creative Director. His work on Apple Computers won at the Cannes Film Festival. His campaign *Gillette. The Best A Man Can Get* is still running in over 120 countries around the world.

Rabbi Shevack is the Social Responsibility Officer of The Patton Foundation, founded by Helen Patton, the granddaughter of General George S. Patton. His teaching organization: *The Association for Universal Judaism* is actively engaged in teaching real-life spirituality to students of all faiths and no-faith around the world.

Rabbi Shevack is married to wife and artist Teddy Frank, and has three children, Christian, Adam & Zoe. See: [www.michaelshevack.com](http://www.michaelshevack.com); [www.universaljudaism.org](http://www.universaljudaism.org)