

The business of (your) life

Margaret Beaton 11 June 2012

It's a truism for *many* of us. We are defined by our career and work. But it's true for *all* of us in another, more fundamental way. The guiding principles that drive us in our personal lives are identical to those that drive us in our business lives. This week I was struck by an [article](#) on the life and career of Harvard's Clayton Christensen, one of the world's leading business school academics and author of many seminal books.

The article is based on Christensen's latest book with the challenging title of [How Will You Measure Your Life?](#) Skim this hyper-link to get the gist of the book's theme in which he explores the synergies between economic logic and personal conviction, but for me there's one big idea here.

The same causal linkages that drive success in business are just as effective in our private lives. Or is it the other way round? No matter, in the end both count. The message that leaps from Christensen's pages for my clients and me is this. Success and happiness stem from being values driven. In our personal and professional lives we are driven by our values to get what we want.

How we individually weight and order the importance of core values such as honesty, novelty, responsibility, excellence, self-respect and freedom determines how we make decisions and allocate our resources of time, energy and money.

How we interpret these values varies between our private and our business lives. For example, for my spouse excitement means enjoying different vacation destinations privately whereas in business it means constantly seeking new and better ways of doing things. The hierarchy, or order of importance, in which we rank values in acting on them may also differ in the two contexts. At home, freedom may mean no planned activities this weekend, personal space is paramount. Whereas at work freedom is less important and quiet time is foregone if an important client calls. For some values though there can be no difference in situational interpretation—honesty is honesty.

There are two big challenges in all this. Do we know why we are driven in a particular way, that is, do we truly know our values and how we make trade-offs amongst them? Are we being true to ourselves by acting consistently on our values over time and in all situations?

If you can answer yes in a considered and informed manner, then you are on the path that leads to success and happiness. More especially if you've learned to align your career/work interpretations with your private/family interpretations.

Business engages in realising alignment all the time in the familiar vision-values-mission-strategy-feedback process. In our personal lives we should do the same. Not that we should draft the personal PowerPoint pack in bed at night; that should be forbidden, as it is in our home. Rather by reflection and engaging in dialogue with the significant others in our lives we can indeed define what we want, why we want it and how we can go about getting it.

The measure of our success, that is our feedback to ourselves, is the extent to which we are living our core values and aligning their expression in our personal and business lives. The business of your life and your life in business should be at one.

To end. Are you sure about your core values? Do you know which of your values are paramount and take precedence in tough spots? Are you using your values to measure your own success and happiness?

This post was written by Dr [Margaret Beaton](#), a director of [Beaton Executive Coaching](#) and [Beaton Research + Consulting](#). You can also find Margaret on [LinkedIn](#).