

Purpose: The Starting Point of Great Companies
by Nikos Mourkogiannis

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Reviewed by David W. Gill www.ethixbiz.com

Nikos Mourkogiannis is a business leadership consultant (www.panthealeadership.com) with a distinguished track record for more than thirty years. *Purpose* represents a kind of distillation of his best insight into leadership and organizational development and success. What Mourkogiannis means by purpose is something like a fundamental driver or aspiration of our human nature (a “call to action” p. 46). He tries to make a clear distinction between purpose, on the one hand, and mission, vision, and values, on the other. And yet “when a company is driven by a Purpose, the vision, mission, and values flow naturally from that purpose” (p. 54). So there is an intimate, organic relationship.

Mourkogiannis identifies four fundamental purposes. First is *discovery*. Tom Watson, IBM, Sony, Intel, and Virgin are examples of this purpose at work. Second is *excellence*. Warren Buffet, Berkshire Hathaway, BMW, and Apple are his examples. Third is *altruism*. Sam Walton (“anything to help the customer”), Wal-Mart, HP, and Nordstrom are his examples. Fourth is *heroism*. Microsoft, Ford, and Exxon-Mobil are his examples.

This is a terrific book for current and future business leaders to study and ponder. Mourkogiannis is right on target to praise the insight of Collins and Porras in *Built to Last* about the centrality of “preserving the core” (purpose) in great, enduring companies---and to criticize their view that the *content* of the purpose matters little (except that it must be more than just making money). His choice of the four great purposes is very insightful. Even after reading his learned insights, however, I still prefer to say that there are two (not four) fundamental purposes embedded in human beings: “creativity/innovation” and “help somebody/fix something.” These track with Mourkogiannis’s *discovery* and *altruism*; His *excellence* and *heroism* themes are better viewed as subsidiary to creating something (excellently! heroically!) or helping others (excellently! heroically!). A compelling, effective corporate mission, in my view, “taps into” one or both of these great themes. Challenging and enabling your people to “invent”---and/or “help somebody/fix something”---energizes and brings out their best performance and most meaningful work experience.