

**by Kevin Roberts / CEO Worldwide, Saatchi & Saatchi**

## Foreword A personal view

Anita Roddick was one spirited woman. In her interview in this book by Mike and Helga Pratt, *Sustainable Peak Performance*, she speaks of The Body Shop as a communications company that sold some great products. She was upfront about being an activist fighting injustice, making the world a better place, and creating opportunities for everyone. The messages and communications had to be, she says, daring, exciting, sexy, and riveting – “without, like, hitting you on the head.” I shared a conference stage with Anita in 1998, in San Francisco, at the State of the World Forum. I was presenting, for the first time in North America, a new theory on inspirational leadership that I had developed with colleagues from the Waikato Management School in New Zealand, Mike Pratt, Clive Gilson, and Ed Weymes. I was not long into the role as CEO of Saatchi & Saatchi, having taken on one of the highest profile turnaround roles a company could throw at you. I was searching, searching for some fast keys to unlock the intuitive “Nothing Is Impossible” spirit of

Saatchi & Saatchi while accelerating it out of perilous financial waters. And I wanted to know the secrets for staying at the peak once you arrived. I had learnt everything I knew up until then from working in some of the world’s great corporations – Gillette, Procter & Gamble and PepsiCo – and while being awed by their rational capabilities, I felt vulnerable and lacking in something more emotionally sustaining.

Mike and I felt that corporate case methods were driven largely by military metaphors – target, deploy, capture, conquer; and we felt that learning about corporations by studying other similar corporations had been exhaustive and exhausted! Instead we turned to the hyper-competitive world of professional sport to see what we could learn. We felt there were enough differences and parallels between sport and business to make a productive study. And we loved sport!! We weren’t so much interested in the players on the field as we were intent on discovering the underlying spirit of each organization and the metaphors and practices they had developed, both consciously and subconsciously, to stay on top year after year.

The big question we set ourselves: “How do you stay on top?” In business we wanted to apply our

learnings to the core problem that besets many organizations – have two good years, then a down year, two good years, another down year. Breaking this cycle and sustaining continuous growth and improvement – without sacrificing your values, beliefs, and principles – is the Holy Grail. We were after a western version of Kaizen.

After immersion in a dozen of the world's top sports organizations, we were surprised, and delighted, at what we found and with the model we deduced. First, as always, there was language: *inspiration; inspirational dream; inspirational player*. Inspirational Leadership became our framework for defining purpose, harnessing emotion, stimulating the unreasonable power of creative culture, unleashing game-changing ideas, and developing mental toughness in corporate organizations. Command and control was displaced by unleash and inspire. Dream / Challenge / Focus became the defining action structure. And Family. Family is the most demanding unit possible – equally demanding of high performance, and dedicated to making people feel loved. Family is the tough option, not the soft one; dynamic tension, constantly evolving, adding and integrating new members, always balancing

past, present and future; both stable and chaotic.

Our book *Peak Performance: Business Lessons from the World's Top Sports Organizations* was published and we started a consultancy to teach and apply our methods in some of the world's top companies. Mike and I continued to pump away with the “what's next?” question and arrived at the same place via different routes. In 2000 I wrote a memo to the CEO of a company suggesting they embrace the coming green revolution. It would be a major connection point with consumers; it would help the environment because they used natural resources, they would save cost, and they would be positioned as thought leaders and innovators. It was a case of arriving well before time, and it took a couple of years before I had a home for this restless and not fully formed thinking.

Meanwhile Mike had turned the Waikato Management School on its head and committed it to sustainability – in their own day-to-day practice, and in theory development. This was important. I often quote Edward de Bono – “There's no point in being brilliant at the wrong thing.” Mike brought together many collaborators from business, academia, the media,

central and local government, utility companies – and started a deep and ongoing conversation. The starting point was that sustainability needed to operate through a wide lens: economic, social, cultural, and environmental. My personal sustainability commitment is to youth justice, I support the Turn Your Life Around Trust in Auckland. My corporate commitment is to bring sustainability into the heart of Saatchi & Saatchi, and in 2008 we acquired the Act Now consultancy in San Francisco led by Adam Werbach. Favorite saying: “Act now, apologize later.” Adam has been associated with Wal-Mart’s program to turn each of their million-plus people into personal sustainability advocates. At Saatchi & Saatchi we have shifted the language from Green to Blue to focus on individual nano-practices. Do One Thing. DOT. Do Another Thing. DAT. And so on.

The big question Mike and Helga asked for this book was: “Is there a better way?” A sort of rhetorical question because the overwhelming answer is “YES”. You’ll meet several entrepreneurs across the world (including Putumayo Music founder Dan Storper who I met on a plane years ago) who with inspirational purpose have developed fantastic companies that a) make great products and b) have social change

as their purpose. None of these companies have “corporate social responsibility” programs – this is their entire business! In *Sustainable Peak Performance* we meet up (again) with the wonderful phenomena of Flow (energy+joy). We get to explore with people who have the foresight to anticipate what is becoming or what could be. There are a bunch of value creation models you can start implementing in your own company today. There is language to change your world. There is a ton of spirit, which (I remember) comes from the Latin *spirare* – to breathe.

I am a radical optimist. I want to inspire everyone to help make the world a better place. Where to start? In the words of Anita Roddick, “**Just do something!**”