

## Quelle:

AUSZÜGE AUS DEM ARTIKEL: BO BURLINGHAM, THIS WOMAN HAS CHANGED BUSINESS FOREVER, IN: INC. MAGAZINE (06.06.1990)<sup>1</sup>

[...]

What's worrying her at the moment is language. You know, words. Language is primary, she says, and it makes her nervous to find a whole new vocabulary creeping into her company. For the first time, people are talking about such things as three-year plans, net income, and average sale, and she doesn't like it, not one bit.

Language isn't all she's upset about, either. She's also feeling real annoyance, she says, at this obsession with meetings. We're getting to a point where we can't fart without calling a meeting. And if I'm bored by them, and I run the bloody thing, Christ knows what other people must be thinking." Then there's the problem of people spilling coffee on the new carpeting at headquarters, another thing that's been bugging her lately. Not that coffee stains rank high on her list of global concerns. But that's beside the point. "It's a symbol, a metaphor for a whole way of thinking. That lack of housekeeping, that lack of care. We talk about being lean and green. We deny that we have a fat-cat mentality, but I can see it creeping in. The paper that's wasted. The lights left on after a meeting. What it comes down to is arrogance. We think we're so brilliant, we're so successful that anything we do is all right, and that attitude really pisses me off."

[...]

What's even more extraordinary than The Body Shop's growth record, however, is the effect the company has on the people who come in contact with it. Indeed, it arouses feelings of enthusiasm, commitment, and loyalty more common to a political movement than a corporation. Customers light up when asked about the company and start pitching its products like missionaries selling Bibles. Franchisees, employees, and managers talk about the difficulty they would have going back to work in an "ordinary" company. [...]

[...]

Such activism has, if anything, enhanced The Body Shop's mystique. Once viewed as an intriguing but irrelevant remnant of the 1960s, it has increasingly come to define the main - oar s in the London Underground to the advertising on commercial television, British companies now tout their ecological virtues. Far from a curiosity, The Body Shop is the symbol of this new business consciousness.

But environmentalism does not explain the attraction of The Body Shop, not even when coupled with a personality as dynamic as that of Anita Roddick or a manager as capable as her husband, Body Shop chairman Gordon Roddick. On the contrary, people tend to be suspicious of companies that profess devotion to social causes, and with ample reason. When altruism and business lie down together, neither one gets a good night's sleep. Indeed, it's generally expected that neither one will be alive in the morning.

What The Body Shop elicits, however, is the opposite of suspicion. [...]

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<sup>1</sup> Quelle zu dem Essay: Janis Maximilian Meder, „Business shapes the world“. Das westeuropäische, verantwortungsbewusste Unternehmen der 1970er- und 1980er-Jahre, in: Themenportal Europäische Geschichte, 2023, URL: <<https://www.europa.clio-online.de/essay/id/fdae-116631>>; Burlingham, Bo, This woman has changed business forever in: *Inc.*, vol. 12, no. 6, (June 1990), pp. 34 ff, online unter: *Gale Academic OneFile*, URL: <[link.gale.com/apps/doc/A9057385/AONE?u=humboldt&sid=bookmark-AONE&xid=c5511808](http://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A9057385/AONE?u=humboldt&sid=bookmark-AONE&xid=c5511808)> Accessed 25 Jan. 2023.

[...]

Anita brings the same attitude to every aspect of The Body Shop's educational system, even to something as basic as the company newsletter. Aside from the format, it has almost nothing in common with other examples of the genre. For one thing, it reads like an underground newspaper. More space is devoted to the company's campaigns to save the rain forest and ban ozone-depleting chemicals than, say, the opening of a new branch or the dropping of an old product. Even the latter, moreover, are handled with humor and flair. The design is dramatic, the graphics arresting. Sprinkled throughout are quotes, bits of poetry, environmental facts, and anthropological anecdotes.

Once again, the difference is Anita. She may be the only chief executive of a \$100-million business who actually invests time and energy in the company newsletter. Her brother is part of the team that puts it out, operating from a Macintosh outside her office. She herself suggests articles, checks copy, chooses illustrations, and changes design. The point is not lost on people in The Body Shop. This is not some throwaway.

[...]

The key word here is bond. For Anita is not just educating and motivating employees. She is not just selling cosmetics to customers. She is not just selecting franchisees, or establishing trade links with people in the Third World, or setting up factories to hire the unemployed. She is creating a community, a global community. The common bond, moreover, is not merely a mutual desire to save the Amazon rain forest. Rather, it is a belief that business should do more than make money, create decent jobs, or sell good products. The members of this community believe that companies should actually help solve major social problems-not by contributing a percentage of their profits to charity, but by using all their resources to come up with real answers. Business is, after all, just another form of human enterprise, as Anita argues. So why should we expect and accept less from it than we do from ourselves and our neighbors?

[...]

Business on that level is exciting and rewarding. It is also very human. It is a simple activity centered on direct relationships between people. "I actually see it as ennobling," says Anita. "It's been going on for centuries. It's just buying and selling, with an added bit for me, which is the magical area where people come together-that is, the shop. It's trading. It's making your product so glorious that people don't mind buying it from you at a profit. Their reaction is, 'I love that. Can I buy that?' You want them to find what you are doing so wonderful that they are happy to pay your profit."

But businesses seldom remain on that level, not successful ones at any rate. They grow. They hire employees. They acquire assets and make commitments. Life gets complicated. Management structures are created. Responsibilities are delegated. Control becomes an issue. Reporting systems are developed. Financial discipline is introduced. And along with it comes a new language-the language of budgets and profits, of return on investment and shareholder value. In the process, business ceases to be just trading and becomes, in Anita's words, "the science of making money."

Professional management is the common term for this way of running a company. In the world of business, it is generally considered to be a good thing, not to mention an inevitable and necessary consequence of growth. Without it, we are told, a company can never reach its full potential. Sooner or later, it will be overwhelmed by chaos and die. The only way to avoid that fate-short of selling out or staying small-is to develop sophisticated, financially based management systems, to "cross the threshold" and become a full-fledged, major-league corporation.

But business is charged a steep price for this kind of "success." The bill is paid in the currency of cynicism-the cynicism of customers, of employees, of the community, even of other businesspeople. If companies are in business mainly to make money, you can't fully trust whatever else they do or say. They may create jobs, they may pay taxes and contribute to charity, they may provide an array of goods and services, but all that is incidental to their real purpose: to generate profits for shareholders.

Indeed, cynicism is so much a part of the way we view business that we don't even notice it until it is missing. No matter whether people hate business or love it, they share the same cynical assumptions about it. Then there's Anita Roddick.

Anita simply does not believe that companies need ever cross that threshold and start making decisions by the numbers. She finds it hard to understand why anyone would want to. "That whole goddamn sense of fun is lost, the whole sense of play, of derring-do, of Oh, God, we screwed that one up.' I see business as a renaissance concept, where the human spirit comes into play. How do you ennoble the spirit when you are selling moisture cream? It's everything we do before, during, and after we manufacture. It starts with how we look for ingredients. It's the initiative and the care and the excitement. It comes from education and breaking rules. And let me tell you, the spirit soars-God, does it soar-when you are making products that are life serving, that make people feel better and are done in an honorable way. I can even feel great about a moisture cream because of that."

[...]

Meanwhile, the pressures to conform keep growing. They come from shareholders, who want to maximize their earnings. They come from franchisees, who push the company to expand faster than its resources will allow. They even come from some employees and managers, who might be willing to sacrifice a little derring-do for the stability security y think financial planning would allow. But mostly they come from the world in which The Body Shop operates-a world that doesn't care much about a company's social responsibility or its empowerment of employees if the benefits don't eventually show up on the bottom line.

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Janis Maximilian Meder, „Business shapes the world“. Das westeuropäische, verantwortungsbewusste Unternehmen der 1970er- und 1980er-Jahre, in: Themenportal Europäische Geschichte, 2023, URL: <<https://www.europa.clio-online.de/essay/id/fdae-116631>>.