



*CENTER FOR CATHOLIC STUDIES*

**TO:** WBC AND MICAH PARTICIPANTS  
**FROM:** MONSIGNOR RICHARD LIDDY  
**SUBJECT:** "GREAT COMPANIES ARE LED BY MISSIONARIES, NOT MERCENARIES"  
**DATE:** WEDNESDAY, MAY 29, 2013

- **Welcome and self introductions**
- **Woodstock Business Conference Mission Statement**

The mission of the Woodstock business Conference is to establish and lead a national and international network of business executives to explore their respective religious traditions in order to assist the individual executives:

- To integrate faith, family and professional life,
- To develop a corporate culture that is reflective of their religious faith and values, and
- To exercise a beneficial influence upon society at large

The Conference, grounded in the Roman Catholic tradition, welcomes believers who are open to and respectful of one another's religious tradition. It is committed to the conviction that ethics and values grow out of one's religious heritage.

- **Scripture Reading: Matthew 28: 16-20 Commission of the Apostles**
  - **The eleven disciples made their way to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had summoned them. At the sight of him, those who had entertained doubts fell down in homage. Jesus came forward and addressed them in these words:**
  - **"Full authority has been given to me both in heaven and earth; go, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations. Baptize them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."**

- **Teach them to carry out everything I have commanded you. And know that I am with you always, until the end of the world!”**

## **Great Companies Are Led By Missionaries, Not Mercenaries**

### **Forbes Magazine**

Since 2000, famous billionaire investor John Doerr, partner at Kleiner Perkins Caufield & Byers, has often discussed an important aspect of the world’s greatest entrepreneurs.

In a 2000 interview reported by Knowledge@Wharton, Doerr described the five characteristics that distinguish truly great ventures:

- The greatest companies are led by *missionaries*, not *mercenaries*;
- They have top-notch, passionate leadership;
- They operate in large, rapidly growing and under-served markets;
- They have reasonable levels of financing; and most importantly,
- They work with a sense of urgency.

What distinguishes companies led by mercenaries from those led by missionaries? In Doerr’s opinion, while the two might seem similar at first glance, they are in fact very different:

Mercenaries are driven by paranoia; missionaries are driven by passion. Mercenaries think opportunistically; missionaries think strategically. Mercenaries go for the sprint; missionaries go for the marathon. Mercenaries focus on their competitors and financial statements; missionaries focus on their customers and value statements. Mercenaries are bosses of wolf packs; missionaries are mentors or coaches of teams. Mercenaries worry about entitlements; missionaries are obsessed with making a contribution. Mercenaries are motivated by the lust for making money; missionaries, while recognizing the importance of money, are fundamentally driven by the desire to make meaning.

Which kind of entrepreneur are you? At our company, Fishbowl, we’ve worked to embody the missionary style of business and leadership for every step of our lives.

Recently, I had the chance to visit about missionary versus mercenary leadership with the senior executive of another mission-driven company in our region, Burke Alder, vice president of marketing for Lendio. Lendio matches small businesses with lenders, free of charge, greatly improving the likelihood of getting the financing they need to grow and prosper. In his words, Alder describes the differences in missionary versus mercenary management, and the way this differentiation has helped Lendio meet its own business goals:

## ***Start with the “Why”***

*In my mind, the concept of missionary leaders starts with the “why” of the organization. Not the mission statement—which can be highly confusing—but the “why” that speaks to the company’s passion and vision for changing the world. TOMS shoes is a great example. “We are in the business to help change lives. For every pair of shoes purchased we give another pair to a child in need.” In Lendio’s case, our passion is to fuel the American Dream. We want to help small businesses find the financing they need to grow, hire employees and make a difference in the economy.*

## ***Make People Matter***

*In a missionary culture, people matter. A missionary-focused company wants to make people’s lives better. Knowing the “why” of the company’s purpose inspires and motivates people. The “why” influences the reasons people want to work for a company. Companies that do this well appreciate the value of every person in their organization.*

*In a mercenary culture it is the complete opposite. There is poor training and high turnover. People are motivated through and live in fear, rather than success. Employees are afraid to “move.” They’re afraid a mistake could end up costing their job.*

## ***Focus on the Long Term***

*Missionary leadership is about building a company based on solving a problem that needs to be solved—a problem big enough that you’re willing to focus on it for the very long term.*

*Mercenary leadership, on the other hand, is short sighted. Most conversations are about selling the company. It is looking for the short win—the build-to-flip model of creating a company. Employees also end up with a shortsighted view of the business, resulting in shortsighted decisions.*

## ***Collaborate***

*A missionary style company appreciates two-way feedback. Much of the company’s desire is to help people and to improve their lives. In a missionary culture you can make a mistake and still be okay.*

*In a mercenary company, feedback moves only one way—from the top down. These companies don’t promote collaboration well. They are not good at interdepartmental communications. They don’t do a good job of prioritizing resources. These companies are filled with people who are not truly engaged. At every level, this difference affects the way the business interacts with its customers. Employees don’t exemplify a company’s passion or its mission or vision when they talk to customers, whether face to face or over the phone.*

I agree completely with Burke Alder's assessment. Every priority he named is one that we strive to uphold in our own business as well. John Doerr famously noted one more incentive to build a missionary-focused company: Missionary-focused companies are ultimately the most profitable and financially successful. So when you consider the alternatives, which kind of entrepreneur—missionary or mercenary—are you? As always, I welcome your thoughts.

David K. Williams

- **Be Attentive:** Look around! Are you surrounded by people of passion or of paranoia? How do these conditions impact individual behavior and your organizational culture. What drives or animates your engagement?
- **Be Intelligent:** How does this split of the world into two camps affect your work? Can you be a missionary in a mercenary organization or a mercenary in a missionary organization? What are the consequences for you? For your colleagues?
- **Be Reasonable:** In mercenary organizations there seems to be a top down orientation with a strong focus on what and how questions. In a missionary organization strong attention is spent on the who and why questions? As you look at your work how do you balance or order these questions in your work?

**Be Responsible:** How and with whom do you receive and give feedback in your organization? Does this article validate your feedback performance or does it solicit a change in your expectations and behavior? This article begs the question of the level of engagement of the people in your organization and our own assessment of our engagement as leaders in our organization. Any action steps for you or your organization.