



Olivier
Onghena-
't Hooft
∞ The
Book
of Noble
Purpose



LANNOO
CAMPUS

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**I dedicate this book to
the beauty of Life.**

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Foreword



This foreword is a collection of testimonials from a variety of different business sources. The sources concerned are all people who I regard as inspiring and in their own way each has been touched and moved to passionate action by a noble purpose.

‘All the same, it’s strange that at the beginning of the 21st century, questions were asked about the rationale and the purpose of companies, the famous “why?”. Every company has a mission, and the stakeholders of this mission are apparent: its human capital (its employees), its clients, its shareholders, and its partners (suppliers, environment ...). Shareholder value is an absolute aberration, which we now pay for with inequality, social and environmental discomfort, and distrust towards the company. An enterprise in the 21st century will be either moral, or it will not be at all. That is why I salute Olivier Onghena, who has taken on the subject to remind us all of this fundamental truth, which we have always applied to Châteaufort, namely that happy associates make happy customers, who, at their turn, make the shareholders happy. In that order. A noble purpose is a purpose that satisfies everyone involved, and it will be nothing if not fair.’

Daniel Abittan

Co-founder & President, Châteaufort

Founder, Acuitis

‘I first met Olivier in Mount Abu in Autumn 2015. I was touched by his genuine desire to serve humanity and bring the concept of noble purpose into the work he is doing. It is excellent that a book has been written about this. As we develop mastery over our thoughts and feelings, our innate nobility emerges in our thinking and behaviour. Spirituality is the awareness that allows all this to happen and brings a life of deep happiness.’

Dadi Janki

Spiritual Head, Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University

‘While philanthropy should by definition be driven by a noble purpose, the reality is that motives are often not so transparent, and much of it is still driven by other interests including ego, reputation and power. In this book, Olivier gets at the heart of why purpose matters in all aspects of life.’

Silvia Bastante de Unverhau

Global Philanthropy Expert

‘Olivier Onghena has written a must-read primer for anyone on the quest for meaning and purpose in business and in life... Read this book – and learn from one of the best.’

Tomas Björkman

Founder, Ekskäret Foundation

Author, ‘The Market Myth’ & ‘The Nordic Secret’

Full member, Club of Rome

‘Olivier’s book offers an interesting perspective on the importance of Purpose. For a business leader, it all starts with the why: a clear definition of the noble purpose of the company, which is its meaningful contribution to the people and the world. It generates more engagement from the employees and helps attract and retain talent. It also leads to a stronger bond with customers, as they become contributors to the noble purpose.’

Francis Blake

Chairman, Derbigum

‘Our society is constantly changing. Climate, inequality, polarisation. A multitude of challenges in a complex and ever-evolving world. At the same time, we develop technological innovations that we can perfectly apply to achieve a better world. So why don’t we do so on a large scale? More than ever, we need a connecting story, a noble purpose. From a personal, authentic viewpoint, this book will inspire as many people as it possible can.’

Piet Colruyt

Impact investor & Founder, Impact Capital

‘There are special moments in our lives when we decide on an essential bifurcation without suffering the effort we’ve put in or the risks we’ve taken. Because this decision is part of a mindful personal path, and it is the natural consequence of the mainspring we chose in the deepest depths of our being. That is why Olivier’s teachings are essential.’

Jacques Crahay

CEO, Cosucra

President, Walloon Union of Enterprises

‘I am convinced that the notion of purpose will become the central concept of the future.’

Herman Daems

Chairman, BNP Paribas Fortis

Chairman, KULeuven

‘Having meaning and purpose in your personal life and at work transcends age and culture; it engages the brain, feeds the soul and lifts the human spirit. At the Adecco Group, what we do goes far beyond just the financial. We exist to help people around the world be inspired, motivated and prepared to embrace the future of work. In short, we are intrinsically driven to make the future work for everyone. I am heartened to see the topic of noble purpose coming alive through this book, reinforcing how we should all strive to make a lasting and positive difference to the world around us.’

Alain Dehaze

CEO, the Adecco Group

‘For many years, I’ve known Olivier Onghena as a passionate man with a mission. I very much appreciate the consistent way in which he calls upon and inspires those responsible in various segments of our society to find their purpose. *The Book of Noble Purpose* will certainly prove to be an important contribution. For this reason, I would like to share my motivation why I do what I do. I remain socially active because I want to contribute to a society where everyone receives equal opportunities to grow, as described in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. When I commit to various projects, my starting point is human dignity and knowledge, freedom and responsibility, involvement and tolerance, and the right to live a meaningful life.’

Luc De Bruyckere

Founder, TAJO

‘For a strong brand like La Monnaie in Brussels, the noble purpose has become a more reliable compass than any mission statement can formulate. The ephemeral character of any stage performance and its non-quantifiable added value are perfectly reflected in the ‘why’ of our organisation: to elevate consciousness about ourselves and society through the profound experience of opera. A noble purpose, therefore, entuses all stakeholders to participate in our project. Thanks to Olivier’s inspiring book, I hope that many more leaders of all kinds of organisations will get inspired to give noble purpose the centre stage it deserves.’

Peter de Caluwe

General Director, De Munt-La Monnaie

‘Companies with a purpose attract better people and retain their people better. As a result, they outperform their competitors that operate without a purpose. Based upon his own personal and unique experiences, Olivier Onghena takes us through the why, the what and the how to find that purpose for your company, and for yourself, and shows you that, once you found that purpose, you just create a better and more balanced life for yourself and those around you.’

Patrick De Maeseneire

Chairman, Barry-Callebaut

CEO, Jacobs Holding

‘In my role as CEO of Ageas, I have been frequently triggered to reflect fundamentally about the concept of purpose, the mission of our company. In the early days after the collapse of the Fortis Group, it was about survival. After some years we could start thinking more positively about the future, the real purpose of our business. The conclusion was that we were not just there for our shareholders, our customers and our employees. As an insurance group, we have a fundamental role in society by providing people with security in case of adverse events and by investing in responsible initiatives. Our current strategic plan reconfirmed and even strengthened this stakeholder model with an explicit reference to the society in which we act. I’m convinced that the DNA of Ageas and all its employees is driven by a noble purpose to create societal value in combination with economic value. Thinking about purpose and the reason to exist is a must for every actor in society, both in private and professional life. Let this book be a motivation to take some distance from the daily rat race and be an inspiration to reflect on the purpose of our being and of the organisations we are involved in.’

Bart De Smet

CEO, Ageas

Incoming chairman, Federation of Enterprises in Belgium

‘In business, it is as it is with humans: our visions, our goals and our actions can be guided by the awareness of a purpose in life. This sense is all the nobler as it is in relation to and in service of others. Businesses, too, live only to serve – except when they only seek vanity. It’s the others who give us our reason for existence and the energy to continue on our path. This path can be sustainable and for the benefit of all, if we respect equality and, now more than ever, our planet. Thank you, Olivier, for making me proceed on this path of consciousness.’

Philippe Dorge

Deputy Director-General, La Poste Group

'It's odd... Nobody wakes up in the morning thinking 'let's destroy the climate or get some toddlers in Asia to work'. Yet this is exactly what is going on each and every day. In our addiction to short-term profit, we all resemble a junkie destroying his own vitality for a profit high. We are ready to integrate a few fundamental values in our market system. People? Planet? Ubuntu? Karma? Let's start with a new profit definition that includes costs of people and planet. Read this book! Let's dream, dance and deliver: share ideas and dreams, dance coalitions of the willing, deliver a systems change!'

Volkert Engelsman

CEO, Eosta

CEO, Nature & More

'I am very grateful to Olivier for enkindling the nobility in people with this book. When we are born, we often do not know what we are meant to be doing on this earth. You will be presented with plenty of choices later. The extent to which you make these choices is subject to on your upbringing and education. Whether or not you persist depends on your willingness to do so through your intellect, personality, genes and willpower. Achieving your goals requires inner processes involving multiple motivations, which often clash because of the many circumstances that you have to overcome. But never forget your pride, which will hopefully always lead you to noble goals.'

Axel Enthoven

Designer

‘The purpose of life is to be happy. The moment to be happy is now. The place to be happy is here’. That’s what Gérard Blitz, founder of Club Med, said. Seventy years ago, Club Med set out on a quest for happiness in harmony with nature. This quest was limitless, centred around values that are still as valid now as they were then, in a world marked by the folly of men and nature: freedom, kindness, accountability, a pioneering and multicultural spirit. It is a tremendous mission that, together with the women and men of this company, we strive to carry on, all over the world, by reinventing ourselves constantly, with respect for the environment and our hosts. And that gives so much meaning to our actions. The testimonies gathered in Olivier Onghena’s book remind us just how much the existence of a noble purpose incorporates a fundamental level of engagement from the women and men in the company. This is not the least of its merits.’

Henri Giscard d’Estaing

Chief Executive Officer, Club Med

‘My leadership team and I had the pleasure of working with Olivier throughout 2019 and witness the impact of having a noble purpose on the whole company. As a biopharmaceutical company focused on developing new medicines for patients with severe diseases, formalising our noble purpose (“transform the patients’ world by helping them realise their hopes and dreams for a healthy Life) was extremely valuable to the whole organisation. From workers in the factory, researchers in the labs, commercial people in front of our customers, we are all aligned around our noble purpose, which fills us with pride, energy and a sense of duty and urgency. I am convinced that this book will further broaden and deepen society at large of the importance of leading a purposeful life.’

Peter Guenter

CEO, Almirall

‘Is “noble purpose” the next buzzword? Is it a temporary fashion? Will Wall Street, the next career move, fear for risk, or year-end bonus erase one’s “noble” ambition? I really hope not, because I remain convinced that over time, the most, if not the only successful ventures are the ones where you want to reach a purpose that supersedes everything. This is why Brussels Airlines’ vision was “to bring people together” instead of just “transporting people from A to B”. This little sentence changed everything when we had to decide against many “wise advisors” and faced a lot of adversity to become the only non-African airline connecting the three countries hit by the Ebola crisis in West Africa to the rest of the world in 2015. Happily, we have people like Olivier Onghena, who remind us why we are there and what a venture stands for!’

Bernard Gustin

Chairman, Elia Group (and former CEO of Brussels Airlines)

‘Within both the academic and the medical world, a noble purpose may appear an obvious driver of ambition as academic teachings, scientific research and medical acts all aim at serving mankind. Reality, however, is different, as research is not always driven by noble purpose and medical acts might have other incentives besides helping those in need. Following his personal journey in the search for a purposeful life, Olivier Onghena-’t Hooft introduces us to the world of noble purpose, which could be a source of inspiration for those academic researchers and health care providers aiming for a more purposeful professional activity, including focus on disease prevention, higher patient satisfaction and health-economic savings for society.’

Prof Dr Peter Hellings

Professor, Universities of Leuven, Ghent & Amsterdam,

Founder & President, EUFOREA

‘I have been working with Olivier for many years, and he supported me in different organisations to establish a noble purpose. Be different, do good and be successful! The roots might already be existing in the company, but you need to discover and develop them in group work, and Olivier is an incredible adviser and profound teacher. I was very surprised by the organisational motivation, increased energy and astonishing business success that followed. A prerequisite is a sincere approach linked to credible values. Then the noble purpose will connect welfare, happiness and success. This book is a real must-read (and do) for any leader and entrepreneur.’

Stefan Hoetzl

CEO, TEKA Group

Group Executive Committee member, Heritage B

‘Being ready to make a difference is what gets me up in the morning, improving the world step by step. Setting a noble purpose and facilitating teams to make a difference aligned to that purpose is what all leaders should do. And there are enough noble purposes to pursue: addressing climate change, reducing inequalities, making society disease free...’

Bruno Holthof

CEO, Oxford University Hospitals