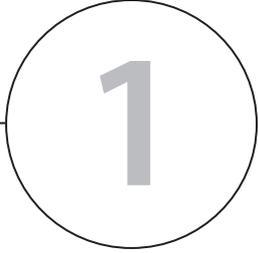

Introducing the Culture of Good



Do you think there's something magical about chips and salsa (other than how delicious they are)? We do! These two ingredients seem to be what it took to change the culture in our business and to create what we think is the most unique corporate operating system on the planet: the Culture of Good. The seeds of what we've come to call our Culture of Good movement, which is what this book is all about, were planted over many discussions involving chips and salsa. As you read on, you might want to grab some chips and salsa for yourself as we share our story.

One of us, Ryan McCarty, was a practicing pastor, and the other, Scott Moorehead, is CEO of TCC, a thriving telecommunications firm with more than 800 stores and 3,000 employees. However, our true identities might be hard to guess when you take a first gander at us. Ryan is what you could call edgy: funky glasses, tattoos, earrings, and a manly beard. He ain't your father's pastor. Scott, who is partial to the jam band Phish, is clean-shaven but has the mouth of a sailor. Be warned: the pages that follow will contain some mild profanity. For example, Scott has been known

to conclude his company-wide talks with his patented phrase: “Namaste, bitches.”

We both come from Marion, Indiana, a small rural town just over an hour north of Indianapolis. But it wasn't until we met up at a Mexican restaurant that we really got to know each other. What we recognized almost immediately was that we had chemistry, something you might see between two brothers. While we look different on the outside and often approach issues from a differing point of view, we also share something deep inside our cores.

Think about what happens when you have two electrical wires. On their own, they look ordinary enough. But when you cross those live wires, ZAP! You get sparks.

The day our wires first crossed came in June 2012, about a week before we met up for chips and salsa. It was at God's House, the church that Ryan and his wife, Katara, had started on their own a decade or so before in their home in Marion. Just like he did almost every Sunday, Ryan was sharing his sermon with the 300 or so folks who had shown up for the service.

As it happened, Scott was sitting in a pew in that auditorium with his wife, Julie, and his kids that day. His parents had been going to God's House for about a year, and, for some reason, Scott decided to bring his family along that Sunday. That was something, because, as Scott admits, he's not that into church. But there he was, in the audience, when Ryan got up and started sharing his message.

But rather than throwing around fire and brimstone, Ryan was talking about something inspirational: he was asking why we do what we do. “If our why isn't bigger than our what,” Ryan said before he had ever heard of Simon Sinek, who popularized a similar theme with his book *Start with Why*, “we can become discouraged regardless of what we are doing in our lives. So what is your why? And does it equal your what?”

Strangely enough, this was the second time Ryan had given this particular sermon—which made it the one and only time he ever repeated a sermon of any kind. Was that some kind of divine sign? Ryan would probably say yes. Scott, eh. The important point was that the message of having your why equal your what struck Scott right where it counted: his heart.

At that time, Scott was running the company his parents had founded a few decades before. He was young and ambitious and had put the company on a fast track of growth. The wireless business was booming, and TCC was positioned to ride right to the top of the industry.

Or was it?

Scott had begun to wonder what it was that motivated him and his employees. The company was growing rapidly and expanding geographically away from its original nucleus. The challenge of running the business was that it had stopped becoming a mom-and-pop shop. The threat was that it would lose the identity that got it to where it was. If you run a small company that is tied closely together, getting everyone motivated and headed in the same direction is an easier task. But as you grow, challenges occur in getting everyone headed the same way for the same reason.

The management style at TCC had always considered the feelings of the employees first. Scott calls this the third dimension of leadership. Many managers make two-dimensional decisions. Those two dimensions are the *X*- and *Y*-axes of the lines that make up spreadsheets. Behind those calls are easy decisions that take no real art or soul. The business was at a turning point where less of the third dimension seemed to be happening, and Scott wanted it back.

Now, here was this funky pastor talking about your why equaling your what. Scott was intrigued. Check that—he was inspired. He wanted to know more about this guy.

Later on, Scott asked his parents whether they had Ryan's phone number. They did. So he called Ryan, introduced himself, and invited him to lunch later that week. And that's when those two wires connected—ZAP!—over a basket of tortilla chips and salsa. Magic ensued.

Scott talked about how inspiring Ryan's message had been and how he was hoping to bring more of the why back into his business. "Our company already does so much good, but our employees don't know it," Scott said. "We cut checks to organizations all the time, but nobody gives a damn about it. Maybe you can help mentor me to help the employees understand the why behind this." Scott then asked Ryan about how he and his wife ran their church.

"We started with four people, and now we have nine employees," Ryan told him. "Our mission is simple: we inspire people to go out and do good. We call it making uncommon love common."

"I want to figure out how to inspire people in my business," Scott replied. "If the employees would be inspired more, then the customers would be inspired. Imagine if we did that in every city we serve. It would go beyond the employees. It would impact communities, hundreds of thousands of people. That's some Tony Robbins kind of shit right there!"

With that, Scott pulled out a pen and began to draw a figure on a napkin. "It's like a circle that feeds itself," he said. "The more our employees care, the more customers will be drawn to us. And the more customers who choose to do business with us, the more we can give back to our communities. It's a virtuous circle of success!"

As he sat there munching chips and listening to this potentially crazy Phish-head, the more Ryan was blown away. He knew Scott's folks a bit, but he was clueless until then as to what they did or that Scott was running a billion-dollar business with thousands of employees.

But the more he listened to Scott and the kind of impact he wanted to make on his employees and in the community through his business, the

more excited he became. Every week he tried his best to make an impact on the lives of the 300 parishioners who showed up each Sunday. Imagine what might happen if he could help inspire thousands of TCC employees. Even better, what would happen when those employees were empowered to go out into their local communities and do as much good as they possibly could?

“I have an idea,” Ryan told Scott. “You should hire me.”

Scott did eventually hire Ryan, but that’s another story for later.

A Culture of OK versus a Culture of Good

We’ve written this book as a way to chronicle our journey together in changing a corporate culture without a plan and building a new operating system dubbed the Culture of Good, or COG. But, to be frank, when we started this, we didn’t even really know what a company “culture” was. “I used to think if you had culture, it meant you drank your coffee with your pinkie in the air,” says Scott. But we’ve evolved that definition over time. Now, we define culture as what most of your people are doing most of the time inside your organization as it relates to your norms, beliefs, and values. Or, to put that another way, your culture is the true secret sauce that sets your organization apart from every other organization. “I believe that no matter what your company sells, no matter what it does, no matter how many inventions or patents you have, the one thing that nobody can steal is your culture,” says Scott.

This movement that became the operating system was founded on the basis that if we did the right things for the right reasons, our employees and customers would agree and we would all win. We have learned that when you encourage your employees to bring their hearts and minds—their souls, if you will—to work with them on a daily basis, amazing things happen. Little did we know that by setting out to do the right things for the right reasons, we would create a system that would

not only give us a competitive advantage in our business but also fuel our growth and success.

We have learned that you don't have to separate doing good from doing your job because they are one and the same: that you give as much as you get. It's what we call "the give equaling the take." When you give people the permission to care at work, you can change the world.

We have learned that great employees can inspire your customers, and having a common cause shared by both is paramount. That's the secret sauce. It's never doing those three components in silos but rather doing them all at once.

But don't take that the wrong way either. We recognize that most companies out there give back in some way. Corporate social responsibility programs, or CSRs, as they're called these days, have become all the rage. If you own a business, perhaps you cut a check at the end of the year to help out a few nonprofit organizations. Or, maybe, if you work for a progressive-minded boss, he or she gives you the chance to volunteer while you're still on the clock. You might even find ways to do all of the above away from the office on your own time, which is absolutely a noble thing to do.

The challenge we've taken up in our business in partnership with the people we work with is to think about doing good as more than just a series of "programs" or corporate-sponsored initiatives. What's missing is that when you label something this way, it makes it feel forced, fake, inauthentic, or even somehow incomplete. Be honest: how enthusiastic are all of you about that latest CSR program you have in place at the office? Are you truly passionate about the belief that in doing your job every day, you are doing real good? How do we take those moments of generosity and turn them into a movement that inspires contagious passion not just in our communities and among our employees but also with our customers? Or, to put that another way, **how can we take what might be a**

decent-enough organizational culture, which you might call a Culture of OK, and transform it into a Culture of Good?



We've been indoctrinated to the notion that the nonprofit and for-profit worlds are not only separate from each other but also at odds with each other. We've been taught that businesses are unethical and greedy and that it's only nonprofits that deliver any good in the world. But what we've learned is that when your employees and your customers rally to a common cause, good things—even great things—result. That's because this represents a symbiotic balance, where what we take equals what we get.

The magic happens when you find the sweet spot where your cause, your employees, and your customers intersect. (With or without chips and salsa!) You uncover your company's soul.

The mistake so many organizations make is that they tend to attack each of these different areas as separate “programs.” Maybe it's a new customer loyalty campaign you're running, or perhaps it's an employee engagement effort you've recently invested in. It could even be rallying everyone together to do something for a “good cause.” But you lose balance when you chase those goals separately.

The magic of the Culture of Good is when you find a way to tackle all those goals **at the same time**. Employees can tell when organizations create efforts like CSR initiatives simply to check a box or salvage their brand. But if you want to reinvent your culture—to embrace the notion of building a Culture of Good—you need to really be authentic and intentional about it.

You can't win someone's heart and mind if you just focus on a new employee engagement program or a new methodology to gain new customers. Both of these miss the “sweet spot”—the soul—where cause, employees, and customers intersect.

For us, it comes back to the message that everyone in our business needs to connect his or her **what** with his or her **why**. When you can do that, you know what you end up with? Happiness. We can admit that slinging cell phones, as the employees at TCC do, is not the most glamorous job in the world. Yes, getting the first crack at playing with the newest toys on the market doesn't exactly suck. But our employees aren't saving lives like ER nurses and paramedics or firefighters and policemen and policewomen do on a daily basis. When you talk to associates at TCC, we think you'll be surprised by how passionate they are about what they do on a daily basis. Why? Because we have collectively learned to appreciate that every time we sell something to a customer, we all have a larger common cause we're working for—and it's not when the transaction ends.

Now imagine what our world would be like if every employee working at a for-profit company went to his or her job every day feeling like he or she was volunteering at a nonprofit organization with a higher purpose? What would happen if we intentionally tore down those walls that separate simply going to work from doing good as a result of our work? There's no better feeling than finding your calling in life and being able to share it with others—to have your **what** equal your **why**. That's the kind of goal we're after by building a Culture of Good. But this outcome doesn't happen by accident. As we've grown the Culture of Good from that initial sketch on a napkin into the core of how we run our business now that it encompasses 800 stores and 3,000 employees, we've had to answer some challenging questions, such as:

- When we're hiring, we want to hire people who will flourish within the Culture of Good. But how do we attract people who will embrace our vision for that?
- How do we, as an organization, teach people (both formally and informally) about how the Culture of Good drives everything we do in our business on a day-to-day basis?
- When someone does something amazing—where he or she is really living out the Culture of Good—what do we do to quickly recognize, celebrate, and reward his or her accomplishments?
- Does our organization encourage people committed to the Culture of Good to stay and thrive? How do we react to employees who don't connect with our norms, values, and beliefs?
- What metrics do we need to track or even create to measure our progress in reaching the goals we have set for ourselves, such as assessing our engagement with the communities we serve?

- When we make a decision, from executive level down to our customer service reps, do we ask how will it impact the lives of our employees, our customers, and our organizational cause?

We also strongly believe that you have to build a financially sustainable business as you start implementing this system. We're not here advocating for some newfangled philanthropy program. Rather, we're experimenting with something new and profound: the idea that **you can do good while you work and that good can drive your bottom line**. As an organization, we rely on systems and processes to keep our stores working smoothly. But every process, every meeting, every checklist needs to tie back to the Culture of Good. It's the *why* behind what we do. Doing good and doing our job don't have to be separated like we've been taught. We all spend so much of our lives working in our jobs. Shouldn't we find just as much fulfillment in that time as we do in our time away from work? When we think about business leaders such as Warren Buffett, Bill Gates, and Mark Zuckerberg pledging their billions to help the world, shouldn't it beg the question about what could have happened if they had been able to do as much good at the time they were building up their businesses? Or, to say that another way, what could the impact have been if they got every one of their employees to join them on that ride all along? Imagine what we can do if we do good *while* we are doing our work in a way that benefits our fellow coworkers, our communities, and our customers. Don't you think that would feed your soul as much as your bank account?

And we totally get the idea that running a business with three dimensions can be hard, especially if you're growing at the rate and to the scale that we are. You almost need to be some kind of Jedi to be able to maintain your focus on doing good as the financial pressures mount during your continued growth. Trying to balance the budget and maintain our fiduciary responsibilities to our employees while also pursuing a purpose as a company is freaking painful.

Real costs ARE associated with running an initiative such as the Culture of Good. And yet the benefits and the payoff from that investment can be intangible and hard to quantify on something like a profit-and-loss statement. Yes, we can talk about how we fed several thousand people by volunteering at a food bank or how in the first year of our School Rocks initiative (more on that later) we helped 60,000 kids by giving them backpacks filled with school supplies. But when you're the CEO who is responsible for bank debt, payroll, and making sure the company continues to operate, the direct connection with investing upward of \$400,000 in backpacks or in paying someone's salary for a day as a volunteer may not be obvious. Making decisions like that can give you real headaches. It's hard to sell karma.

But if our company isn't financially sustainable, if it doesn't make enough money to survive, we can kiss the Culture of Good good-bye. That's why it's essential to understand that our culture is not just about plunking down thousands of dollars into a new program and mandating that people take part in it. That won't work. Plenty of companies have tried this approach, including household names, only to see those programs die over time from lack of passion and participation. We've achieved our results by simply shifting our focus on a few budget lines that were there anyway. The financial support to roll out the system came from our ability to upend traditional thinking and reallocate to the progressive mind-set that this would work in the end. It was a bet on the long. The only way it works is by building trust—a ton of it—based on the message that the more people know we do good, the more good we can do. It's about giving your people *permission to care*. That's the purpose we strive for every day, and it's how we feed the soul of our company.

It's a cold, hard fact that if we did away with our Culture of Good efforts at TCC and ran the company along two dimensions, where our goal was to maximize profits at the expense of pursuing a purpose, we might

very well make more money. We could then stroke a check and donate a bunch of money to good causes run by other good people. What's wrong with that approach? you might be asking. That's what most companies and successful people do, right? Yes, and taking this approach is neither right nor wrong. A ton of good has been done in the world as a result of donated money.

The challenge we have given ourselves, however, is to put our employees and ourselves out there in a different way. We want to give them permission to care at work. The world already has enough non-profits. That's why our story isn't about how we built some kind of new philanthropic program. Our Culture of Good began as an idea over chips and salsa and sketched out on a napkin. But we also knew that just coming up with a slogan we could slap on the wall wouldn't be enough. We needed the Culture of Good to be woven deeply into the DNA of the organization. It needed to be at the forefront of every interaction with our employees, at every touch point with our customers, and part of every active outreach we made to the communities we operate in. In fact, we've even made this part of how we evaluate every employee, where half of his or her review is based on how he or she impacts the three components of the Culture of Good. Why? Put simply: because we want to make the world a better place and have a shit ton of fun while making a boatload of money. Those are the kinds of impacts and purposes that drive us forward on our journey.

And in case you haven't noticed, today's workers—especially millennials—seek out workplaces that embrace a bigger cause. That means that if you want to attract, or even keep, your best employees, you might need to rethink the connections between doing work and doing good and how they can be directly related. As the famed business guru Peter Drucker said, your best workers have options, and you need to manage them as if they were volunteers. That's why it's essential to create the kinds of conditions

that connect the notion of doing good while you do good work for your employees. When you do that, great things can result.

For instance, 92 percent of TCC's workforce is made up of millennials between the ages of 25 and 35. Those younger workers expect a lot from their employer and, as a result, tend to move between jobs quite a bit. In our industry, turnover averages about 66 percent. But the millennials at TCC, especially those between the ages of 25 and 35, tell us that our Culture of Good gives them a sense of fulfillment at work (the average age of our employees is 28.5 for what it's worth). That's a big reason why our turnover is down 25 percent—even though our workforce has more than doubled over the past five years. That's saved the company about \$3.7 million a year! People want to work with us because they know they can make a difference in the world where they work.

Since we implemented our Culture of Good at the start of 2013, we've also seen a dramatic impact on the bottom line of our business. Top-line revenues of the business have gone up 200 percent, and same-store sales are up 70 percent; perhaps more impressively, our operating income is up 490 percent. That's right: we're more profitable as a result of embracing the Culture of Good, which has allowed us to do more good as a result. To be more specific, we have multiplied the amount we have donated to good causes by a factor of six since 2012—TCC now contributes \$1,300 per employee each year, and rising, to good causes—and that doesn't even count the thousands of hours of volunteer time and personal contributions our employees have made during this period. We've proven that by doing good, you can help grow a profitable company, which then enables you to give back to the world in amazing ways. Outlets such as *People*, *Forbes*, *Inc.*, *The Huffington Post*, and *Fox Business* agree. At the time this book went to print, we secured nine national media stories about TCC's Culture of Good, resulting in more than 85 million impressions with an ad equivalency value of \$703,954.

Have we blown your mind yet?

But don't just take it from us. Here's what Paul Duyvejonck, one of our regional account managers, wrote us in an e-mail in the wake of our first annual backpack giveaway (which we'll talk about in more detail later):

I'm sure you're getting plenty of THANKS from around the team today and will in the near future, but I needed to get this out. I've been involved in many companies "giving back." This usually means giving a donation, or sitting under a tent trying to pretend to be engaged for an hour or so. The fact that you created a culture, and embrace our team relaying this culture throughout the nation, is unspeakable. Like I said, just wanted to give a quick thank you, and I'm anxiously awaiting the next opportunity to truly show why #TCCROCKS.

Thank you, Paul, for summing up nicely what the Culture of Good is all about—as well as what we mean by finding your company's soul.

Our Journey Continues

It's important to acknowledge that we didn't always know how to reach the goals we set for ourselves. In fact, we're still learning and growing. We weren't following any plan or how-to checklist we had read about (though that might have helped if we had). In truth, we started this journey simply because our hearts told us it was the right thing to do.

Because we were flying by the seat of our pants, letting our hearts tell us what the best path might be, we've made our fair share of mistakes and missteps. The journey started with an idea, and early on, we were just two people with a vision. But over the past few years, as we have shared our vision with the team, we have inspired others to join us on our journey. If you ask people today at TCC about the Culture of Good, you get

passionate answers in return. Without much prompting, they will tell you countless stories about how the Culture of Good has made a difference to them, their customers, and the members of the community—which is our shared cause. We've even included some of those stories in the pages that follow.

Maybe we could have had even more of an impact on the lives of our employees, customers, and community members if we had figured out things sooner. What's important is that we have had an impact—a sizable one—in just the few years that we have been on our Culture of Good journey. And our message is starting to spread: we now have other companies approaching us and asking for our help in building their own Culture of Good. We even have had a major children's hospital ask us, a retail company, to come talk to them about what we have been building. A key goal we have is helping you flatten out your own learning curve, which is also the goal behind why we started a new organization called the Culture of Good, whose goal is to help you learn from our own journey of what happens when you give people the permission to care at work.

We both recognize that the experience we went through was something that is very unique to us. But that doesn't mean you can't leverage and build on it. Every one of us has had events in life that have caused us to ask questions such as: Why am I doing what I'm doing? Why am I going to work today? Does what I do in my daily grind really matter?

Maybe it was a personal accident, the loss of a loved one, or even a national tragedy. The list is endless. The point is that in the wake of that moment, did you do anything about it, or did you just go back to your day-to-day?

Our specific set of circumstances gave us the opportunity to create something special. Our call to action was there, and we took it. Perhaps your own call to action will be reading this book. If it is, what kind of action will you be inspired to take next?

In the pages that follow, we'll share what we have done to build our Culture of Good and why. We'll also share the things we tackled that didn't work out. We're continuing to experiment and to push forward as a way to keep our momentum rolling and to avoid what happens to so many cultural initiatives like this in other companies: apathy. You know, the point where the excitement of something new wears off and everyone just drifts back to doing his or her work the way he or she used to.

That's a real danger, especially if you fail to keep stoking the fires of passion in your people. If done correctly, the power of the Culture of Good is that you achieve long-term sustainability rather than just quick jabs of excitement to the organization. The Culture of Good will keep everyone fired up to come to work and be a part of something bigger from the first day until the last. It becomes a normal daily effort that keeps an elevated sense of worth inside of every one of the company stakeholders. Apathy be damned.

The point is that if you're considering taking your organization down a similar path as we have gone or asking your boss or employer to think about your workplace in a different way, make sure everyone's heart is in the right place first. If you aren't authentic, your employees, your customers, and the members of your community will see right through you and you will fail. If you aren't ready to think beyond the two dimensions of a spreadsheet and believe that you can be even more successful by bringing in that third element of feelings, well, this book probably isn't for you.

We're also challenging you to think about how to tie doing good into the daily routine of how you go about your business. Some organizations do events where, for instance, everyone within the company focuses on community service for one day together. And that's great. Charities such as Habitat for Humanity need help building homes. But your cause (just like your employee and customer engagement efforts) needs to be a year-round focus.

If you are ready to think differently about how you can do good better through your business, to help everyone inside your organization have permission to care on a daily basis, then read on! What follows is a combination of our individual stories and how, beginning at that Mexican restaurant with chips and salsa, we embarked on a journey to try to change the world. Big goals, we know. But that truly is what fuels us. We hope to fuel you as well by sharing our story.

We have written this book together, and so the narrator in the pages that follow reflects that. But we're also very different in how we talk and tell stories, so you'll also see examples of how we write as individuals. We'll start by each sharing our own backstories and the struggles and victories we had in our lives that eventually led us to that chance encounter in church. Then, we'll talk about the early days of the Culture of Good and the different experiments we undertook to lay the foundation for our authentic intentions for what would come later. We'll continue by sharing how we worked to connect magic moments and transform them into a movement. We'll also talk about how we have worked to make the Culture of Good sustainable over the long term rather than having it feel like just another annual program. Next, we'll share recent efforts and some feedback we have received from our employees and partners about the kind of impact the Culture of Good has had on them. Finally, we'll pull it all together and show you the magic of engaging your employees through giving them permission to care. This will empower you to use your COG to show your customers that you have a competitive advantage while driving and leading your business toward greater success.

As a bonus, we've also plugged in a few questions at the end of each chapter for you to reflect and chew on. Asking yourself these questions can also be a way for you to discover your own path to building a Culture of Good. We have shared what finding a company's soul looks like for us; your version will be very different. But our goal is to help you get there.

We hope to inspire you to rethink how your business or the place where you go to work every day can be a force for good in the world and how, by joining together, we can truly change the world. That's what giving people permission to care is all about.

As a way to get started, let us share some more about who we are and where we came from.

Questions to Consider

Scott's questions:

1. Why does your business, or the company you work for, do what it does? What's your higher purpose?
2. Do you think that doing good with your business or your job and making money are complete opposites?
3. Does your organization or the company you work for struggle to maintain millennial workers? Do you want to change that?

Ryan's questions:

1. What kind of good does your organization or the company you work for pursue already? Can you imagine how you could build on that and turn it into a movement?
2. How does your organization engage in a cause that matters? What would it look like if people engaged with your cause actively throughout the year? What difference could you make?

The Backstory

2

If you want to hear the story of how the Culture of Good came to be, you first need to learn about the two main characters who helped drive its creation. That's because we each come from such different places—completely separate ends of the spectrum, really. In one corner was Scott, the academic entrepreneur who was a product of a traditional family upbringing, a college grad, a fast-track executive, and very well-off by the time he was 35. And in the other corner, you had Ryan, who moved 15 times when he was growing up, was educated by doing charity work to better families' lives in America's inner cities, and spent his time raising funds to complete his next big idea to make the world better for the less fortunate.

In each of our minds, we were taking advantage of the other's strengths and what the other person had to offer. As Ryan admits, "I had ideas but limited money, and Scott had money but limited ideas . . . We needed each other." But, really, our goal was the same: we wanted to give people permission to care at work and in turn make the world better. Our give

equaled our take. The magic we created when we teamed up is what makes our journey together worth reading about.

Scott

It was Scott's parents, Steve and Phyllis Moorehead, who taught him about the ingredients that he and Ryan would eventually use to cook up the Culture of Good. But it was up to Scott to discover the full recipe. "They gave me my moral fibers," says Scott. "They were my first mentors, and they taught me the power of giving back. If they had been greedy, none of this would have happened.

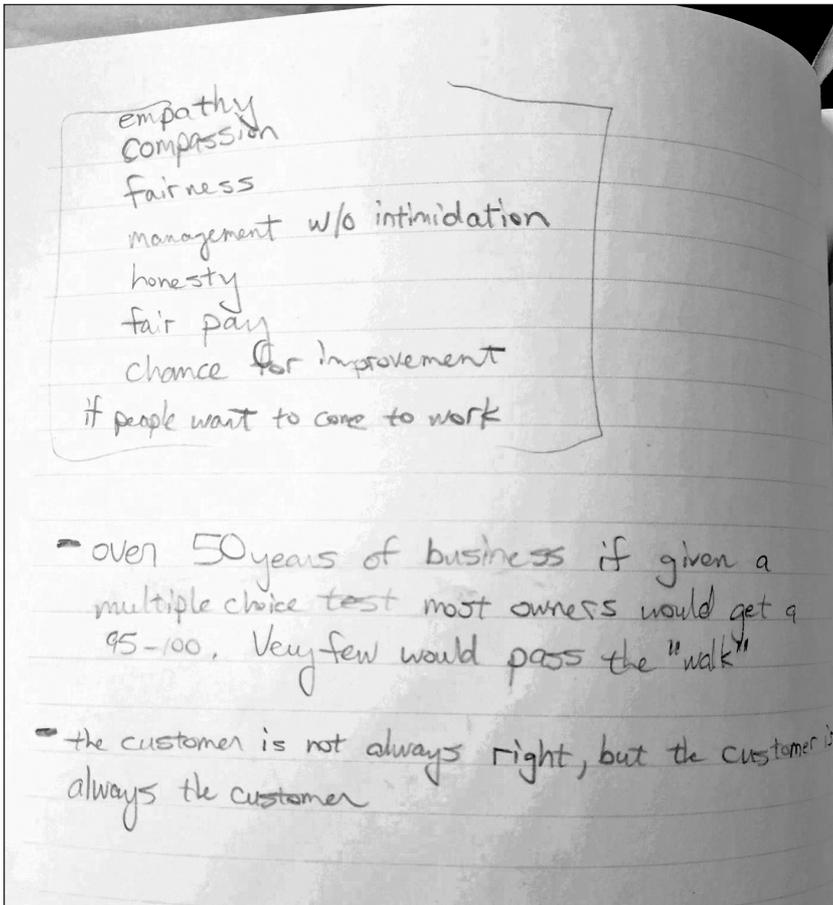
"My father followed in his father's footsteps in electrical contracting," says Scott. But Scott's parents later sold that business and started another focused on doing local area networking and business telephone systems. Business telephone systems led them to an opportunity in the world of wireless way back in 1990. They ended up selling the legacy system company and devoting 100 percent of their effort to building a new company in the twilight of their careers. By the mid-1990s, they had grown that business up to 50 locations, all in Indiana.

That was also around the same time that Scott was going to school at Purdue University. He had worked for the local area networking part of the business during the summers. By his second year at Purdue, Scott started working part-time in a TCC retail store right in West Lafayette, Indiana. He continued to work there as a retail sales consultant all the way through school until he graduated.

When he graduated, he started working full-time for his parents. Things were starting to explode within the cell phone industry, and they knew they wanted to eventually transition out of the business. But before they would hand over the reins to Scott, they suggested that he spend time working in every position of the company as a way to really get to know the business inside and out. They wanted to humble him to some degree.

The Backstory

And that's what happened: he spent nine months doing everything from sweeping floors to running payroll and hiring new employees. "It was like I was a powerful young Jedi that they were trying to stop from going to the dark side," says Scott. He learned a lot—especially about his parents' philosophy of treating the people inside the business. His dad had a placard of sorts on his desk all those years that contained the following wisdom: "Hire smart, go bonkers, have grace, make mistakes, love tech, start all



A snapshot of Scott's notebook and takeaways from his parents.

over again.” Scott even has a picture of a handwritten page of notes he took during a conversation with his parents that included words and phrases such as “empathy,” “honesty,” “fairness,” “management without intimidation,” “compassion,” “fair pay,” and “chance for improvement.” He also wrote down that “the customer is not always right, but the customer is always the customer.”

Scott’s dad was past retirement age and wasn’t interested in keeping up with what had become a rapidly growing and dynamic industry. So Scott bought his parents out at a price where he’ll still be paying them for years to come! “I took a big chance, and it freaked me out,” says Scott, who was just 30 at the time. “But I feel like my parents wouldn’t have sold the business to just anyone. They trusted me, which was big.”

Scott married his high school sweetheart, Julie, when he turned 25. He then had his first child at 29 and his second (and last) at 31. But the mixture of success at work and the lack of a great work/life balance, combined with some bad lifestyle choices, led to stress in his personal life. Things were starting to fall apart. By the time he turned 35, things were pretty bad personally—and pretty darn good at work. But the stress in his personal life was starting to creep into work efforts and take its toll. The summer of 2012 is not a time that either of us will soon forget. That’s the year things got worse, all due to a pure-hearted effort to show his 5-year-old son how to skateboard.

Unfortunately for Scott, he might have lost a few memories from before that time. That’s because one day in August of that year he was being a good dad who was spending some time with his son and teaching him how to ride a skateboard. Nothing too crazy—no 360 jumps or half-pipe twists, just skating down the road. But something went wrong, horribly wrong. Scott fell and busted his head open. The result of this was a quadruple contiguous skull fracture, a double hematoma, and, ultimately, a traumatic brain injury.

Fortunately, he was alive. But his brain was damaged, potentially irreversibly. Even as he began his rehabilitation process, it really hit home that something seriously bad had happened when he couldn't complete a simple word search puzzle. "That scared the heck out of me," he says. Even today, he hasn't regained his sense of smell—another consequence of the injury. "It's one of those crazy stories where you realize that life is short and can end in an instant," says Scott. "I was young at the time, and I was successful. So I wasn't thinking about continuity or what would happen in the long run. But then, wham, you get knocked off your pedestal not because you failed but by nearly passing on. It was a 'holy crap' moment for me to realize how everything could get swept away from me so fast."

The good news was that he had already put good people into leadership positions inside the company. That allowed him to recover while knowing that the business could continue until he got back—rather, if he got back.

"That was an interesting transition," says Scott. "Before the accident, I was at the center of so much in the business. And now I was forced to withdraw from that role."

He began to wonder what his future would look like if he didn't get better. How would he provide for his family? Thoughts of working as a greeter at a big retailer haunted his waking moments. He admits that even before the accident, when he was a young and seemingly successful CEO, he had begun to lose sight of what made him happy. He had found success, but it hadn't created happiness. He had begun to lose touch with his soul. The accident only made all the bad parts of his life worse. Scott soon became depressed. He turned to drugs and alcohol as a way to cope. As a result, he started to feel parts of his life spiraling away from him. His life was officially out of control. Both personally and professionally, he was walking a very dangerous line.

Ryan

When Ryan was just 6 years old, his life took a very tragic turn. “I remember coming home from school as I did every day,” he says. “But one day everything in my life changed. Within a year of my mom being diagnosed paranoid schizophrenic, her disease caused her to take her own life. I came home from learning to read in the first grade to hearing that my mom was gone. I had to learn to either get bitter toward the world or not pretty quick.” Having his mother stolen from him at such a young age wasn’t fair. To add to his struggle, his father, a veteran of the Vietnam War, was battling drug addictions.

But Ryan didn’t go through this heartbreaking time in his life alone. Along with others, his first-grade teacher, Rebecca Overley, was there for him. “When I went to my mother’s funeral, she came for me. When I cried in class, she held me,” says Ryan. “Knowing her impact on me during such a difficult time in my young life was undeniable and would ultimately shape my mission in life. When we met again years later, she continued to say, ‘Ryan, I was there for you.’ The idea of simply being there for people inspired me in my life purpose from that conversation forward. Every one of us has the ability to use our everyday work to be a catalyst for making a positive impact on a person in need.” This experience has since become the filter for discovering his life purpose. As Ryan describes it, “I’m still that 6-year-old boy with no mom and a drug-addicted father. This is the whole reason I do what I do. There are other little Ryans out there who need to know someone cares.”

When Ryan was 11, he moved to upstate New York, where his family became caretakers at a summer camp. Camp Comanche took disadvantaged kids from the city and brought them up to the Catskill Mountains for the summer. At the young age of 14 he became a camp counselor and began his journey to discover ways he could have a greater impact on others. While Ryan was in New York in the summer of 1993, he also worked

for Pastor Bill Wilson, who would become a key mentor of his and from whom he learned a lot about what it means to love and to give back. Pastor Bill always taught Ryan, “The need is the call.” “I never forgot that finding my calling meant meeting the needs in the world around me,” says Ryan. “That summer in 1993 wrecked my life from being what I would call normal. I had to live for something bigger, something significant.”

Years later, with his wife, Katara, Ryan cofounded the Center for Success, an afterschool network for at-risk children. This charitable organization provides youth in need with food, mentors, tutoring services, and athletic programs. The first Center for Success was in his hometown of Marion, Indiana, where he grew up and experienced the loss of his mom. The center has since expanded to Pontiac and Detroit, Michigan, as well as Zambia, Africa, as a school for hundreds of children. “It’s rewarding to make a difference in the lives of these deserving children, just as my elementary school teacher did for me in my time of need,” says Ryan.

Ryan’s father remarried and has been addiction free since 1983. Mrs. Overley, the elementary school teacher who was there for him when he needed someone the most, still keeps in touch to this day. Here’s a quote she recently shared with Ryan in a Facebook message:

*Maybe the journey isn't so much about becoming anything.
Maybe it's about un-becoming everything that isn't really you
so that you can be who you were meant to be in the first
place.*

“If I can offer that understanding to others, then I have accomplished part of my calling in life,” says Ryan, who also joined his wife in starting a church in their house, God’s House, where Scott and he would eventually make their first connection.

“I remember telling Katara after Scott and I had lunch at that Mexican restaurant about how excited I was for the chance to work with him and to

see how I could help plant the seeds of doing good within his company,” says Ryan. “He had given me the sense that he wanted to hire me and that it was just a matter of knocking out the paperwork.”

Meanwhile, Ryan was admittedly going a bit nuts about what was happening with his potential job at TCC. “It got parked for a while,” says Ryan. Then he got a call from Scott’s wife, Julie, letting him know that Scott had fallen off a skateboard and was airlifted to emergency care.

Creating the Spark

After Ryan got that call, he began visiting Scott in the hospital while he and Katara and their two girls, Bria and Brenna, also spent time with Julie and their kids, Mason and Marlee. “I remember having a couple of conversations with Scott as he suffered from really severe headaches,” Ryan recalls. “During one of those talks, he told me about how he had come to newly appreciate the need for a family and friends and being loved. He said that was the stuff in life that mattered most. But he also talked about leaving a greater legacy with his company, that he wanted to pursue the things we had talked about back at that Mexican restaurant.”

“I had a shift in my life,” says Scott, who also admits he doesn’t completely remember those bedside talks. “My focus switched from the success of the company to the legacy that I could leave. It became important to me to make an impact. And the assets I had to do that were my organization.”

Eventually, as Scott slowly got better and ultimately left the hospital, he made the decision to bring Ryan on full-time in February 2013—the exact same day that he also hired Katie Wiley, his in-house attorney.

“I was convinced that he would eventually hire me,” says Ryan.

“I don’t have the same amount of certainty that Ryan does that he was going to come work for us,” says Scott. “I wasn’t sure what he would do.”

“I didn’t either,” says Ryan with a laugh.

“When I hired Ryan and Katie, my brain wasn’t functioning at a particularly high level,” says Scott.

“Which worked out for us because I might not have been hired if your brain was working,” says Ryan.

“Ha, read into it what you want,” says Scott. “But the idea of building a legacy has definitely become a priority for me. I wanted to add folks like you and Katie, who could help me with that effort.”

By January of 2014, Scott’s life hit bottom. After being tossed out of his own house and family, he was faced with a choice: get help or keep going down the same path where he’d probably end up divorced and, eventually, dead. He decided to pull himself out of work and get help. He then spent three months in rehab, where he spent countless sessions with psychologists, counselors, and coaches.

One huge lesson that Scott came to realize and that he now teaches is that he needed to be happy, first, before he could become successful. With an unrelenting will to save his family and his life, Scott stayed close to Ryan. And even as they worked on the Culture of Good together, Scott believes Ryan was secretly working on him as well. With that help, Scott evolved over time into what his friends now call Scott 2.0. “Hitting bottom as Scott 1.0 and having the timing work out the way it did gave way to what was a relentless focus on figuring out how to show everyone in the path ahead that happiness came first and success would follow,” says Scott. “This gave jet fuel to the effort and determination to achieve a Culture of Good.”

Now that Scott was back, he needed Ryan’s help with finding ways for his company to transform as well. All the ingredients were in place. They just needed to find the right recipe to bring them together to evolve from a Culture of OK into a Culture of Good.

The question was, what did the first step in that journey look like?

Questions to Consider

Scott's questions:

1. Where do you find your happiness?
2. What do you want people to take away with them when they hear your story?
3. If you are a leader of your organization, have you surrounded yourself with clones or with people who are different from you?

Ryan's questions:

1. In what ways can you live bigger in your world more than what your title or role dictates?
2. What are you doing now to affect what people would say about you at your funeral? How do you want to be remembered?
3. How can you take the pain of your past and use it as a way to discover your calling and purpose?