



a synopsis of

they  
will be

# giants

21st Century  
Entrepreneurs  
and the  
Purpose-Driven  
Business Ecosystem

**By: Robert Kim Wilson**

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## A Message from Kim Wilson, The Author

This book, **They Will Be Giants** / *21st Century Entrepreneurs and the Purpose-Driven Business Ecosystem* (PBDE), has been over three years in the writing, and based on over 30 years helping small and medium enterprises become 'Giants'.

This book describes a new entrepreneurial business model which capitalizes on one of the most underutilized assets available to literally all aspiring entrepreneurs – their own business ecosystem. The primary purpose of this book is to provide concepts, methods, and tools that significantly increase the likelihood of success for entrepreneurs and their respective ecosystem constituents.

We know that your mind set dictates the current attitude and direction of your current business ecosystem. Giants will help adjust that mindset to better envision and execute business transforming changes - by leveraging, improving and increasing your PDBEs.

Giants is not here to serve companies and organizations interested in modest incremental business changes. There are countless consultants and advisors that can help you tweak your business operation for the better.

Instead, Giants is here to assist and help accelerate the growth and expansion to businesses interested in transforming, growing, and innovating.. Giants provides insight and experience at world class levels for supporting your intention to fully transform your business.

We have self published *They Will Be Giants* to prove that by using our own Purpose-Driven Business Ecosystems, we can successfully create a global initiative in support of entrepreneurs, creating an international community of purpose-driven entrepreneurs. We all benefit!

This overview offers a few high level concepts and suggestions that will enable the reader to begin thinking, learning, and (maybe even) creating some actions within their own businesses and organizations.

So instead of the typical 5-8 pages one might normally find in a short preview of a new book... we decided on approximately 40 pages of content.

Please consider some of the following material as a spark for tuning your own entrepreneurial mindset. We purposely provided several key elements for you to consider, including an overview of our 9 Core Tenets for Developing a Purpose-Driven Business Ecosystem, and the 7 Attributes of Successful Business Ecopartnering.

I sincerely hope you enjoy the selected excerpts from Giants, introducing our uniquely innovative business model – the Purpose-Driven Business Ecosystem. Individual copies of the book can be ordered from Amazon.com. For bulk orders, please contact our office.

**Robert Kim Wilson**  
**Author – They Will Be Giants**  
**July 20, 2016**

## How We Structured The Content

The excerpts we have selected are presented in sequential order as they appear in the full publication. However for purposes of this particular collection of excerpts, I have, of course, skipped over a substantial portion of the text of the book (over 400 pages)

In the interest of brevity for this particular selection of excerpts, we have removed a number of the graphics and pictures, except for the most critically important illustrations.

In general then, we have structured this collection of excerpts from *Giants* to provide the reader a relatively easy read, in terms of the logical flow of content.

We have also created a margin on the left side of each page, for your notes as you read along, have questions, or find something particularly relevant to your enterprise.

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## Who Are The Giants?

We have titled this book **They Will Be Giants** in reference to the entrepreneurs and leadership of the small to medium sized companies coming into existence in the new millennia. Indeed, you and your fellow entrepreneurs will be viewed in the history books of our future – as Giants of our time.

At or near the end of your own personal journey, the boon you will be granted is one of becoming a Giant.

And what do we mean by referring to 21st Century entrepreneurs as future Giants? To answer this question, a bit of context will be helpful.

We are already seeing a growing trend of respect and appreciation of the rapidly expanding world of entrepreneurs and business start-ups. We will expand on these trends in Chapter 2, but if you are reading this book it is highly likely you already fully realize the entrepreneurial spirit is alive and ascending across the planet.

The easy assumption about entrepreneurial “Giants” would be the obvious. Surely we must be referring to the guys who began as start-up entrepreneurs and ultimately made billions. Guys like Steve Jobs, Mark Zuckerberg, Sergey Brin and Larry Page, Jeff Bezos, Larry Ellison, Bill Gates, Jack Dorsey, and Travis Kalanick; all of whom certainly qualify as entrepreneurial giants. This assumption of course would be validated in terms of the massive organizations – as well as the monumental sums of money – these guys have generated through their entrepreneurial endeavors.

However, these iconic household names in technology industries are not the only giants we are referring to in our title.

Nor are we necessarily referring to other, perhaps lesser known successful

entrepreneurs like Evan Spiegel, the 23-year-old co-founder of Snapchat, Bre Pettis, founder of Brooklyn-based 3-D printing company MakerBot Industries, or Godfrey Sullivan, CEO of the big data company Splunk – all of whom were listed on Forbes 2013 Top Entrepreneurs.

When we speak of new millennial entrepreneurs as being the future Giants of the business we are not necessarily weighing in on individual financial success. Nor are we referring exclusively to just those small start-ups that will eventually become the next Apple, Facebook, Google, Amazon, Oracle, Microsoft, Twitter, or Uber.

***The standards of business excellence for the 21st Century are already proving to be dramatically different than those of the previous century. Of course, financial success is still very high on the list, but we are also experiencing a rapidly growing rise in the importance of other outcomes attributable to entrepreneurial efforts.***

In our context we use the term Giants in reference to all entrepreneurs who are considering, or already started, the business version of a Hero's Journey. Almost every entrepreneur wants her/his start-up to become the next industry leader and create significant wealth for themselves, their teams, and their stakeholders. In that case they would be “giants” by the success standards that were prevalent towards the end of the 20th Century.

But the standards of business excellence for the 21st Century are already proving to be dramatically different than those of the previous century. Of course financial success is still very high on the list, at least in the first few decades of the 21st Century. But, we are also experiencing a rapidly growing rise in the importance of other outcomes attributable to entrepreneurial efforts.

Much more of our sentiment on this topic will be discussed in Chapter 2 when we dive deeper into the business problem we are solving with our Purpose-Driven Business Ecosystem. So at this point in our narrative flow, we will simply highlight three important facts that give the foundation of our story of entrepreneurs as 21st Century Giants.

### **Fact #1: Most entrepreneurs will not realize a successful exit from their own business venture.**

As late as 2013, Bloomberg reported 8 out of 10 entrepreneurs who start businesses fail within the first 18 months. The data produced by the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) is not much more encouraging. According to the SBA, a third of all start-ups fail within the first two years, and almost 60% will fail by their fourth year.

One of the more successful “start-up schools”, Y Combinator, added an even more frightening statistic. Originally started in March 2005, as of May 2013 only 37 of the 511 companies that had successfully graduated from this business accelerator have been either sold for, or are now worth, more than \$40 million.

<More detail on this topic is included in the book>

## **Fact #2: The next major innovation force in worldwide business is represented by the entrepreneurs of today.**

In today's global business climate, one of the most significant and substantial trends in worldwide business is represented by the start-ups and early-stage entrepreneurs of today.

The general media has been increasing its coverage of entrepreneurial businesses in countries such as the US, China, and India. These countries are becoming well known for their start-ups – especially technology based businesses – which are not only respected, but encouraged and strongly supported by governments and private investment.

*If you are fully aware of the published “dismal odds” of the likelihood of success as an entrepreneur – yet you move forward with your concept for a startup business anyway – conventional public opinion might say one of two things. Either... (a) you were somehow forced to start your own business, i.e., you had no other choice, or (b) you are simply delusional, if not downright crazy.*

Perhaps a bit lesser known for entrepreneurship are countries like Brazil, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Turkey, Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands, Russia, Colombia, Chile, Israel, Canada, South Korea, and Argentina to name a few. These countries also have rapidly growing entrepreneurial “hotspots” in major metropolitan areas, which similarly are beginning to realize stronger governmental and private sector support.

In all cases of course, the rapidly growing public interest is correlated with the rapidly growing positive impact these entrepreneurs are having on regional and national economies. They are producing more jobs and generating greater variety of exports.

<More detail on this topic is included in the book>

## **Fact #3: When entrepreneurs work together toward common goals, they are significantly more successful.**

How does one reconcile Fact #1 with Fact #2? Fact #1 dramatically suggests the entrepreneurial journey is strewn with casualties of dismal proportions. Yet, Fact #2 convincingly submits entrepreneurship is on the rise across the planet.

If you are fully aware of the published “dismal odds” of the likelihood of success as an entrepreneur – yet you move forward with your concept for a start-up business anyway – conventional public opinion might say one of two things. Either... (a) you were somehow forced to start your own business, i.e., you had no other choice, or (b) you are simply delusional, if not downright crazy.

But we know better. And if you're reading this book, you know better, too. If, according to Fact #1, the individual entrepreneur is at risk for failure, that risk is lessened by the individual entrepreneur working cooperatively and synergistically with other entrepreneurs. And, that group of entrepreneurs is working in concert with other individuals and groups who are making themselves available to support the “entrepreneurial industry”. We have just defined the reality of an entrepreneurial business ecosystem.



## **The six classic challenges for Entrepreneurs**

Earlier in the book, we presented a brief discussion on the entrepreneurs' perception of their basic needs and challenges. Their perceptions are usually pretty accurate and represent very real needs and desires.

However, the entrepreneurs' perceptions of their basic needs are typically driven by the prevailing mindset of last year's business. We made the argument that last year's mindset and business model might need a bit of tweaking if this year's entrepreneurs are to survive going forward.

***In our 30+ years' experience we have found the greatest challenges for running the day-to-day SBE organization are best expressed in terms of leadership enablement. That is, entrepreneurial leadership – including owners, stakeholders, and decision makers – will tell you it inevitably boils down to these six areas:***

- 1) Limited experience***
- 2) Limited competency***
- 3) Limited bandwidth***
- 4) Limited resources***
- 5) Limited time***
- 6) Limited cash***

In the sections that follow, we offer a more generalized problem statement representing the challenges faced by 21st Century entrepreneurs. We offer our perspective in an effort to simplify the discussions throughout the remainder of this book – on how an effective business ecosystem can help solve each and every one of the basic challenges faced by the contemporary entrepreneur.

For the small business with talented people and great product... the marketplace poses many challenges that can be ominous, if not downright threatening. In our 30+ years' experience we have found the greatest challenges for running the day-to-day SBE organization are best expressed in terms of leadership enablement. That is, entrepreneurial leadership – including owners, stakeholders, and decision makers – will tell you it inevitably boils down to these six areas:

- 1) Limited experience
- 2) Limited competency
- 3) Limited bandwidth
- 4) Limited resources
- 5) Limited time
- 6) Limited cash

The next six subsections will give a brief definition for each of these problematic areas.

### **Limited Experience**

Many, if not most, entrepreneurs have superior knowledge and experience in their chosen business product areas. However, they often times have incomplete real-world business experience across many areas of critical importance to the ultimate success of their business. A very common example is many early stage companies have exceptional technology and product development experience, but have very little experience in marketing and selling, particularly at a scope and level required to geometrically grow revenues.

### **Limited Competency**

Almost by definition, a new start-up or an early stage small business is filled with smart, energetic, and often resourceful people. However, the knowledge and skills required to fully operate and manage a successful business inevitably are considerably broader than the founders may have

originally anticipated. Skills are needed across all facets of business – leadership, management, product development, marketing, sales, product distribution and delivery, operations, customer service, administration... not to mention the numerous specialty areas expertise such as legal, accounting, regulatory compliance, and more. In general, very few SBE's have all of these competencies inherently available to their enterprise.

***Everyone understands the value of a “business support network.” But few have the insight, time or resource availability to provide the kind of focus needed to build a great network that fully meets their needs.***

### **Limited Bandwidth**

The bane of small business is often heard expressed by leadership in terms of “bandwidth.” In this case we are referring to the management's and staff's collective ability to perform multiple tasks on a timely and effective basis. A major area of these tasks is often communication capacity – not as much the technological variety – but the ability of individual personnel to relay critical information to other persons who require that information to perform adequately in the course of doing business. Entrepreneurial bandwidth is also constrained by the ever-increasing volume of “apparent business emergencies” which suck the energy from strategic improvements by the executive team.

### **Limited Resources**

“We never have all the resources we need to perform at the level I would like to see us accomplish...” is a quote we hear from virtually EVERY entrepreneur with whom we have ever worked. In fact, this is the core rationale when an entrepreneur is asked why she/he is seeking angel or venture capital investment – the money is needed to purchase the resources necessary to go to the “next level.” And in the area of Limited Resource, we most frequently encounter limited talent in key areas of business development, marketing and sales. Everyone understands the value of a “business support network.” But few have the insight, time or resource availability to provide the kind of focus needed to build a great network that fully meets their needs.

### **Limited Time**

You need to act quickly to capitalize on market opportunities (as opposed to the limited personal time reflected in bandwidth). In this particular challenge, we are referring to the proverbial “window of opportunity” for designing, developing, testing, and launching your marketplace offering. In many, if not most cases of entrepreneurial vision, the founding team has developed a concept for a market offering that addresses a critically important need. Especially in areas involving market offerings involving technologies and other innovative services/products, there are frequently other potential offerings under development in parallel time lines. If the entrepreneur desires to gain marketplace advantage by declaring first-to-market advantage with the prospective solution – then the particular time window of opportunity is almost always assumed to be limited. Even in the circumstance where the so-called competitive solutions are not even known to the entrepreneurial team, it is simply a best practice to assume there is limited time to introduce the innovative, new solution into the target markets envisioned by the entrepreneur.



## Limited Cash

Are there any SME business owners that don't religiously use the mantra, "Cash is King"? For the companies that have identified the barriers to success in the form of limited competency, limited bandwidth, and limited resources, the knee-jerk remedy is cash. They have been taught (or programmed) that the main remedy for our limitations is to obtain large blocks of cash in order to purchase whatever is needed to alleviate all these limitations that are keeping the entrepreneurs from the outstanding success that their companies so rightfully deserve.

*In the book, we discuss the classic challenges of contemporary entrepreneurs by listing five general barriers that cover the majority of entrepreneurial human resources difficulties. If you ask an entrepreneur how to overcome any one or all of those challenges, he will likely say investment funding.*

It is certainly no surprise that a typical dream for most start-ups is to eventually gain the trust – and funds – of investors. The common vision is that with sufficient capital infusion, at strategic steps along the path of early stage growth, the enterprise will be afforded sufficient cash to sustain its growth at the desirable rate.

There are actually several problems with this particular approach or mindset. Through the course of the book we address many, if not most, of these problems. However, perhaps the most significant of these problems resides in the difficulty of obtaining the funding in the first place.

The simple fact is – the process of researching, applying for, and obtaining investment funds from the angel or venture capital communities is indeed a demanding, complex, and exhausting process. And, this process is typically an enormous drain on the already limited resources of the entrepreneurial team.

## The common challenge for Investors

Although this book largely discusses the challenges and solutions for entrepreneurs of small businesses, we believe this discussion would be incomplete without including the perspective of the investment community that quite often will support the same entrepreneurs.

In the book, we discuss the classic challenges of contemporary entrepreneurs by listing six general barriers that cover the majority of entrepreneurial human resources difficulties. If you ask an entrepreneur how to overcome any one or all of those challenges, he will likely say investment funding.

Giants provides insight into the needs and desires of the investment community... discussed at a relatively high, generalized level. In the following discussion we are seeking to provide the perspective of investors, as they would appreciate being viewed by the entrepreneurial community in general.

## Problems experienced by Investors

In comparison to entrepreneurs, investors live in a very different world. To provide the appropriate context for this discussion we will humbly seek your indulgence, while we belabor the obvious and list four fundamental

***These substantially differing mindsets – the entrepreneurs contrasted with the investors – are typically at the heart of the problems and challenges faced by the investor in the entrepreneurial game.***

differences between entrepreneurs running companies, and the investors who might consider investing in those companies. Here are a few of the most obvious differences between entrepreneurs and investors:

- Investors have sufficient amounts of discretionary money...  
Entrepreneurs often have insufficient money to accomplish their business objectives.
- Investors actually expect to lose money on a significant number of their investments... Entrepreneurs expect to make money with their business, and certainly do expect to provide a healthy ROI to the Investor.
- Investors are interested in and therefore participate with several (often many) different companies simultaneously... Entrepreneurs are focused on one company – their own.
- Investors pursue a fundamentally different core purpose – which is typically NOT to fulfill the mission of any of the individual companies in which they invest.

In considering the above fundamental differences in the business lives of entrepreneurs versus investors, we might boil this discussion down to a core difference. It would be a fair comment to suggest the individual commercial mindset of a typical investor is substantially different than that of the typical entrepreneur. For example consider their respective (a) levels of business experience, (b) understanding of capital leverage in the marketplace, (c) emotional predisposition toward the mission of any given business, and certainly their perspective, (d) track records at making money in the open market.

Why is this a big deal? If the topic is money... there could not be a more clear delineation of a buyer/seller role. It's the classic situation sometimes referred to in business as The Golden Rule – “the guy with the gold makes the rules.”

These substantially differing mindsets – the entrepreneurs contrasted with the investors – are typically at the heart of the problems and challenges faced by the investor in the entrepreneurial game.

Here again, there is a complicated and often intensely involved relationship between the investor and the entrepreneur who is seeking cash. For our purposes in this discussion we will highlight a few areas to illustrate the interpersonal dynamics of this problem space. Some of the more significant challenges to the community of investors are:

- Difficulty in remaining current with the most promising areas of opportunity – In their respective areas of interest, investors report having increasing difficulties in keeping abreast of areas of highest promise. Especially in industries such as high tech, healthcare, communications, or for that matter any technology driven market sector, the volume of data and rate of evolving business models create a potentially overwhelming task for the individual investor to maintain current awareness.
- Many new opportunities presented to the investor on a regular basis – By their own choice investors would like to be exposed to a relatively large

***One investor is quoted as saying, “People are embarrassed to talk about their failures, but the truth is that if you don’t have a lot of failures, then you’re just not doing it right, because that means that you’re not investing in risky ventures... I believe failure is an option for entrepreneurs and if you don’t believe that, then you can bang your head against the wall trying to make it work.” We feel this helps sum up the frustration – and therefore the heart of the problem faced by investors – they often feel that exceptionally high risk is simply part of the game of entrepreneurial investment.***

number of investment opportunities on a regular basis. This creates the situation where there are exceptionally limited time windows available to make an investment feasibility judgment.

- Entrepreneurs’ understanding of the investment cycle – With few exceptions the typical entrepreneur enters the investment seeking process with an inadequate understanding of the investor’s perspective and the types of information required for an expedient funding solicitation process. In fact there is very often a misunderstanding by the entrepreneur of the investor solicitation process in general.
- Failures or sub-par ROI’s at a very high percentage – Ask an Angel Investor about the expected typical won/lost ratio on overall investments and you will likely get something like... “To be successful I must maintain an average that for every 10 investments, one will be a big winner, two or three will break even, and the rest will lose money [... to varying degrees].”

### **Investor’s strategic approach**

In response to the challenges described in the previous section, the serious investor has developed a remarkably adaptive strategic approach having two core parts.

The first and most obvious part of the investor strategy is to evaluate the potential of the business idea being presented by the entrepreneurial team asking for money. The investor will only invest in a company believed to hold the highest potential for a positive return, with the lowest apparent risk. The second part of the investor’s strategic approach is equally as important as the first. In fact many investors will argue it is even more important than evaluating the business idea. The investor must also evaluate the people who will run the business.

Even when the occasional great business idea pops up on the investor’s table, there must be an initial judgment on whether the proposing entrepreneurs can indeed successfully implement the business they are proposing.

Investment judgments are made in many cases on a rapid fire basis in spite of certain naïvetés the entrepreneurs may represent in ignorance of the basic needs of a good investment evaluation.

Like any complicated business situation, the entrepreneur-investor relationship has been subject to a wide and varied array of metaphors. Some investors use a horse racing metaphor to capture the essence of their strategy. If the business is represented by the horse, the CEO or executive leadership is the jockey. The metaphor suggests one might have a strong and fast horse, but without a good jockey they will not win the race. In fact, many investors will emphasize their investment is actually “a bet on the jockey” (and not necessarily the horse).

Probably our most favorite metaphor for the potential entrepreneur-investor relationship is that of a marriage. In one sense or another, the entrepreneur

is looking for a partner in commercial wedlock. To be consummated, the marriage must be legally sanctioned with contractual agreements, during which there is:

(A) an exchange of vows where the business plan becomes the marriage promise;

(B) then, there is the symbolic exchange of value where the interchange of money-for-equity becomes the ring of holy matrimony;

(C) there is indeed a honeymoon period during which the marriage partners are emotionally connected over the grand promise and possibilities for the future; and

(D) then, the honeymoon is over and the investor and entrepreneur get back to business as usual; with the exception they are now legally bound in a relationship (for which the entrepreneur often had no training on what to expect). You can probably see how this metaphor can be squeezed... ad nauseam.

<More detail on this topic is included in the book>

## Business Network or Business Ecosystem?

***The concept of business networking is the process of establishing a mutually beneficial relationship with other business people, within a meaningful framework of value for the individual or group actually doing the “networking.”***

It is important to the core premise of our discussion to differentiate between *business networks* versus *business ecosystems*. If you fully grasp the distinction between these two concepts, you are well on your way to gaining high-value from this book.

A business network is a particular grouping of elements of commerce that are, in one way or another, connected to a central (or common) connection point. Thus, by definition a business network forms a “net” of interlinked elements. For our purposes, herein, we most typically refer to a business network as an interlinked collection of individuals.

The concept of business networking is the process of establishing a mutually beneficial relationship with other business people, within a meaningful framework of value for the individual or group actually doing the “networking.” There is no disagreement that a professional network of individuals is a critically important contributor to a person’s success. The enormously popular and valuable online service LinkedIn is a good example of this.

With the growing rise in popularity of the term business ecosystem there is a blurred line of distinction between the two terms – network and ecosystem. In some respects, one might see the terms business network and business ecosystem as synonymous, or very similar in function. In fact, a frequent answer to the question “what is a business ecosystem?” Inevitably begins with “it’s my network!”

And from a traditional perspective this is not altogether an incorrect answer. But inasmuch as this entire book is dedicated to the difference between a network and an ecosystem, let’s take some time to dive into this thread of discussion.

For the 21st Century entrepreneur it is critically important to distinguish between a business network and a business ecosystem. Once you fully understand the difference between your business network, and the opportunities you already possess to develop your own business ecosystem... your entrepreneurial life will be changed in a major, meaningful way.

***“The term... ‘business ecosystems’, refers to intentional communities of economic actors whose individual business activities share in some large measure the fate of the whole community.”***

Earlier, we offered various examples of what contemporary literature has to say in defining “business ecosystems.” These definitions do indeed have some practical application, especially within the academic community. We offered these basic definitions as evidence of conventional thinking on what might be called the concepts of ecosystems in business.

For our purposes the contemporary definitions of ecosystem concepts are a good start, but they are far from sufficient.

### **What is a Business Ecosystem?**

This book has been prepared to support entrepreneurs and innovators looking to improve their business performance. In this light we must not only discuss concepts but also methods and applications (of those methods), and do so within the context of the recognizable real world.

Given this need we will offer an in-depth perspective on ecosystem definitions in the following sections. We begin with explaining a bit more about our own definitions, which will serve as a common starting point from which we can best move conceptually forward.

We have introduced the “Godfather” of the phrase business ecosystem, James F. Moore. Moore’s own short version of what he intended to convey by inventing this terminology, went something like this:

“The term... ‘business ecosystems’, refers to intentional communities of economic actors whose individual business activities share in some large measure the fate of the whole community.”

Far be it from the authoring team of *Giants*, to show any disrespect (or sacrilege) in suggesting an alternative definition to that given by the Godfather himself. But in the interest of making a bit simpler a concept that can rapidly become highly complex we humbly propose an alternative wording for our definitions.

For purposes herein we will use the following three simple, high level definitions to provide context in our discussion:

**Ecosystem** = a system formed by the interaction of a community of living organisms with their environment, in conjunction with the non-living components of their environment.

**Business Ecosystem** = a commercial form of an ecosystem; in this case any business system of interconnecting and interacting parts, as in a given company and the communities, markets, and technologies in which it conducts its activities.

**Purpose-Driven Business Ecosystem** = a Business Ecosystem [as defined above] formed for a specific purpose and set of values determined by the originator of said ecosystem. [See Section 3.4 for further definitive discussion on purpose-driven business ecosystems.]

***Purpose-Driven Business Ecosystem is a Business Ecosystem formed for a specific purpose and set of values determined by the originator of said ecosystem.***

There was inherent wisdom in Moore's original application of the biological term ecosystem to a business environment. The term ecosystem was used by Moore because of its inherent implication that all of the actors involved within a defined ecosystem are interdependent. Further, and even more importantly, the term ecosystem implies that its inherent interdependencies result in the sustainability – and ultimately the success – of the ecosystem as a whole.

There is yet another critical nuance in referring to business environments as ecosystems... alluding to the “organic nature” of a given business ecosystem. This means that in order to survive, the actors within the ecosystem will continue to interact on an as-needed basis. In other words the ecosystem will continue to function... one way or the other, regardless of the desires or intent of any singular individual actor.

This is a critically important premise of this book. So we will expand on this point.

In our view, a business ecosystem is considerably more than what we typically think of as a “business network.” It is the entire environment in which you conduct your business.

A Business Ecosystem is comprised of:

- The relationships among/between the contributing leaders
- The interplay of businesses themselves
- The specific products and services – combined synergistically
- The social environment
- The evolving technologies
- The financial systems
- The incentives and rewards
- The collective market sectors & niches
- The communities in which the businesses reside
- The collective vision of its innovators, leaders, and stakeholders
- The perceived competitors
- The layers of interaction between participants – simultaneously occurring
- ... And much more...

As you begin to look into a given part of your own business ecosystem, it becomes even more interesting when you recognize that each component of the ecosystem possesses four major characteristics:

- Elements
- Attributes
- Relationships
- Time lines



For example, a given company in your ecosystem (a component) contains its people (elements) who each possess skills, knowledge, motivations, etc. (attributes). These people each have professional and social interactions and joint work potential (relationships), and all of the preceding characteristics are subject to availability and circumstances (time lines).

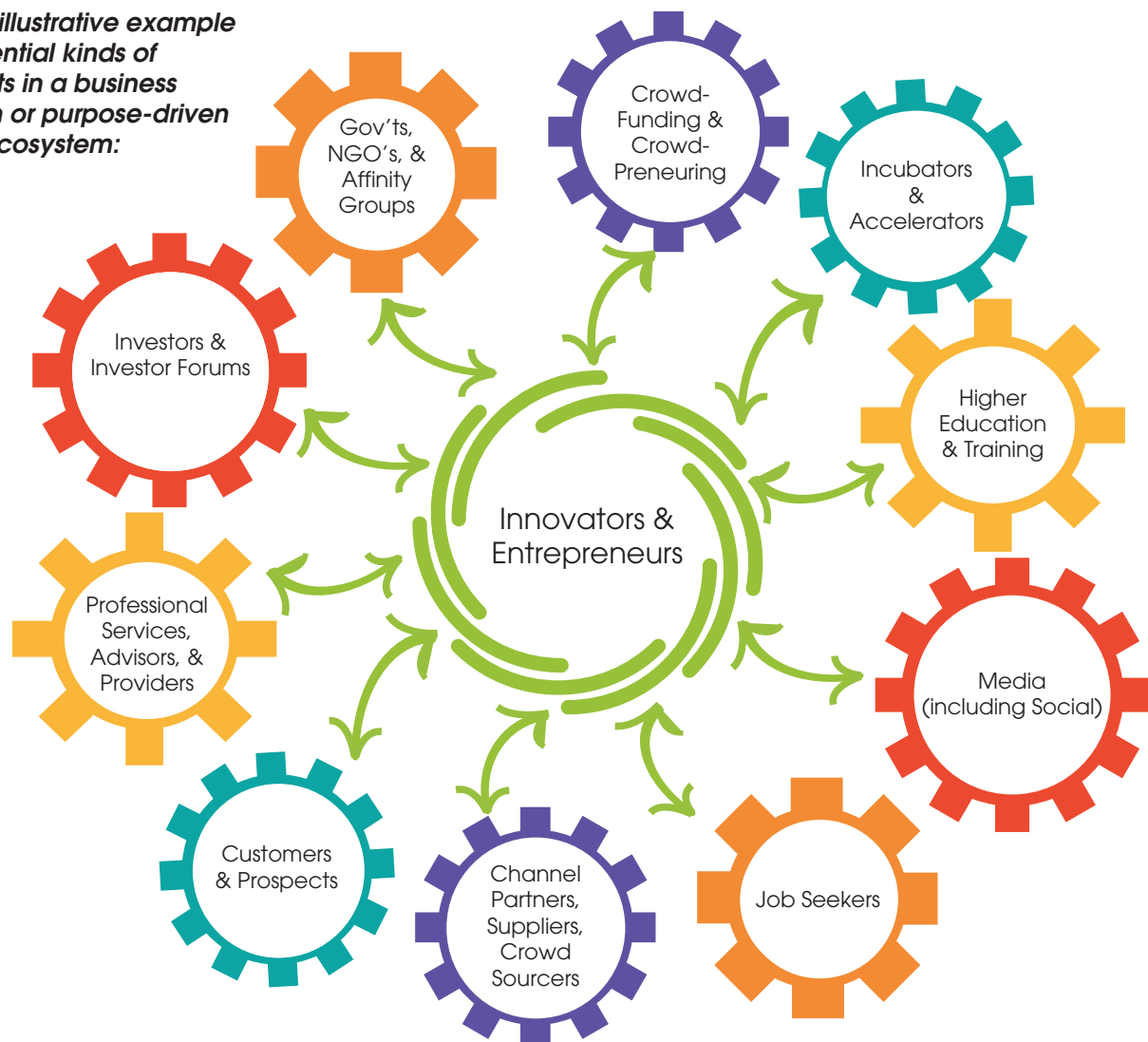
This means, of course, that if you already are a participant in a business – regardless of the stage in the entrepreneurial life-cycle – you are already part of a business ecosystem. You are continuously interacting with other individuals, organizations, and enterprises of all sizes and shapes. Otherwise, many of the business results generated by your own entrepreneurial efforts would never materialize.

The purpose of this book is to help shape your thinking and activity towards a model that exerts substantially stronger influence and control over the results produced by your business ecosystem.

You might think about the distinctions this way:

- A business network creates opportunities,
- A business ecosystem creates results, and
- A purpose-driven business ecosystem creates optimal results, [in the context of the purpose of your business].

***Here is an illustrative example of the potential kinds of participants in a business ecosystem or purpose-driven business ecosystem:***



## Why do we call it a “Purpose-Driven Business Ecosystem”?

Business ecosystems produce results. Whether or not an ecosystem has been well conceived and executed from the beginning, or whether it has been one of the variety that might be labelled “organically grown”, it will generate business results in either context.

***Although it is often the case that one entrepreneur will work with another entrepreneur to bring their respective enterprises together in a mutually beneficial manner, it is seldom the case that an individual entrepreneur will actually take the time to plan and map out in advance, an ideal ecosystem to best support each of her/his products and chosen markets.***

We know the organic variety of business ecosystems produce a wide spectrum of results, much of which are beyond the scope of control by the companies within that ecosystem. From the perspective of the members or players participating in the ecosystem, these results are sometimes great, sometimes mediocre, and sometimes detrimental to desired progress. And often times, the business ecosystem outputs are both capricious and unexpected – and therefore inadequately prepared for by ecosystem participants.

You may feel that you already know well the nature and characteristics of your own business ecosystem, but you must always ask yourself the question, “Are we controlling or influencing the outcomes as well as we would like?”

Let’s again turn to the phrase business ecosystem from James Moore, who said: “A *business ecosystem*... can also be conceived as a network of interdependent niches that in turn are occupied by organizations. These niches can be said to be more or less open, to the degree to which they embrace alternative contributors. One of the most exciting ideas in business today is that business ecosystems can be ‘opened up’ to the entire world of potential contributions and creative participants.”

Moore’s point is hugely important. He is basically suggesting that a business ecosystem can perform almost any activity or function that may positively contribute to the organization that “owns” that business ecosystem. He goes on to say:

“In order for companies to co-evolve their goods and services, they must find ways to align their visions, so that research and development investments are mutually supportive, and capital investments and operating processes are synergistic. Companies must establish interfaces and protocols for putting together their contributions. Most important they must dialogue closely with customers so that what is created is what the customer wants and is willing to pay for. Mastering these challenges, of what might be called “distributed creativity,” is the aim of the ecosystem organizational form. The conventional hierarchical firm does not effectively address the breadth and importance of inter-firm relationships. The unaided market is not able to achieve inter-firm coordination sufficient to justify players aligning their dreams, plans, and product road maps.”

Following the logic presented by Moore, here is a critically important key point. Although it is often the case that one entrepreneur will work with another entrepreneur to bring their respective enterprises together in a mutually beneficial manner, it is seldom the case that an individual

entrepreneur will actually take the time to plan and map out in advance, an ideal ecosystem to best support each of her/his products and chosen markets.

We call it a **Purpose-Driven Business Ecosystem**.

We have added the phrase Purpose-Driven to encourage the mindset that any business leadership team can quite literally, strategically plan and execute much of the ecosystem in which it lives and flourishes.

*If a business ecosystem has organically “stitched itself together” over a period of time without a great deal of overall purpose or major context in mind... then, by definition it could not possibly be a “purpose driven” business ecosystem. You will heavily rely on your business ecosystem to support your business. Expressed in slightly different terms you will want your business ecosystem to help drive the big picture results that you seek for your business.*

As we pointed out, any business ecosystem will produce results. But by exerting purpose and direction upon your own ecosystem, it will significantly increase the probability it will produce the results you desire. If your ecosystem has evolved and been shaped based upon the purpose and results you desire... it's purpose-driven.

The entrepreneurial team can exert much greater control over the results of its optimal ecosystem, by carefully exerting selective control over the process and context of ecosystem development.

It is easily understood that in nature, humans can [for example] help produce a more healthy, vibrant garden... by carefully selecting, controlling, shaping and/or nurturing the plant life, animal life, water systems, chemistry, minerals, microbes, sunlight, etc., that comprise the whole environment in which that garden exists.

Similarly, a knowledgeable executive team can help shape the elements and environments of the entrepreneurial community in which its own business operates. If you are an astute entrepreneurial leader, you know well in advance the results that you want to see in your business. With those results in mind, you are able to evaluate your current ecosystem in the context of how much it will likely contribute to helping you achieve those results.

See Section 8.1 in the book, entitled, *Defining Your Business Ecosystem Purpose* for further information about what we mean by “purpose-driven”.

### **Example of business ecosystem value**

It is called a purpose-driven business ecosystem. We have distinguished between the conventional, sometimes referred to as *organic* type of business ecosystem vs a true Purpose-Driven Business Ecosystem.

Any business ecosystem will produce results. But, by exerting clearly focused purpose and direction upon your own ecosystem, it will significantly increase the probability it will produce the results you desire. If your ecosystem has evolved and been shaped based upon the purpose and results you desire... i.e., it's purpose-driven.

Section 5.5 in the book offers a typical example of a situation in which an entrepreneurial team selected a clear purpose to address through its business ecosystem. The entrepreneurial team had decided to generate much greater

confidence and reliability over the results of its current business ecosystem, by carefully exerting selective control over the process and context of ecosystem development.

One of the most popular applications of our Purpose-Driven Business Ecosystem methods is to work on improving company sales and marketing productivity.

Here is a scenario that we have witnessed from many tech companies. In this case they are applying principals of purpose-driven business ecosystems to the discovery of new partners to sell their product:

- Your company's sales are below your expectations at this particular point in the life-cycle stage of your enterprise.
- You have decided to look for support for your sales and marketing efforts via potential alignment with other companies or independent sales teams... essentially turning to your existing business ecosystem for help.
- First you make a list of any companies, groups, or individual professionals – collectively we will refer to as potential ecopartners – with whom you already have an existing relationship.
- As you list each potential ecopartner, you also make note of some of their respective customers (that you are aware of), especially those customers that may be of interest to your company.
- While making this list of potential ecopartners, you also make note of specific individuals in these companies and their customers who you feel may have relevance to your business, in one way or another.
- When you have completed the list, you “take a step back” [figuratively] to gain a larger perspective on the collective impact of this group of companies on your sales.
- You notice although there is little actual closing of sales for your company, there appears to be a significant amount of activity among your business ecosystem partners that might attract potential customers to use your products.

So, your first major realization: if you were to enter a sales partnering agreement with several of the companies with whom you already have a good relationship, you can effectively accomplish at least three major purposes.

- 1) You rapidly gain access to potential buyers of your company's products/ services – i.e., increase the volume of your own sales pipeline.
- 2) You expand the market value of your ecopartner with the additional offerings you have added to their marketplace portfolio.
- 3) Together, you and your ecopartner effectively increase the value to your partner's customer by providing a joint solution – the component value of your product combined with the value of your partner's product.

With this promising discovery, you can continue developing and analyzing your external business relationships that might hold relevance to your company's sales and marketing efforts. Through this iterative process you make other additionally promising discoveries such as:

- You also notice that several companies on your list are in a new market sectors that you have not yet entered, but appear to be attractive options for your company at this particular stage of your business growth.
- You discovered more specifics about the problems your ecopartners are solving for their customers, and thus gained additional insight into how your company could add value.
- You further realize that your company can certainly bring additional value to your ecosystem partners' current markets.

***Critically important benefits are realized by applying resources and assets that were already available to you through the mechanism of your purpose-driven business ecosystem.***

This particular scenario has much more substance and opportunity as you can imagine. But for our purposes here this should give you a reasonable idea about the potential of applying a strong and well focused purpose to capitalizing on your business ecosystem as a tool for growth.

In summary, by applying a simple analysis of your existing business ecosystem to a specific significant entrepreneurial need (such as the above-stated purpose), you gained valuable insight into:

- 1) Gaining new customers through referrals from existing networks
- 2) Gaining new customers through providing joint solutions, integrated with your partners' offerings
- 3) Entering new markets through your existing partners
- 4) Potential business growth and expansion through new partners, i.e. by repeating various other scenarios similar to the one described here

These critically important benefits were realized by applying resources and assets that were already available to you through the mechanism of your purpose-driven business ecosystem.

## **The 9 Core Tenets for developing a Purpose-Driven Business Ecosystem**

The distinguished gentleman responsible for the quote on the left is the 1969 Nobel Prize winner in physics for his work on the theory of elementary particles. At first it may seem that theories on quarks and hadrons may be a bit metaphorically distant to the world of business. To the contrary, Dr. Gell-Mann's quote is spot on for what this book is all about. In fact he goes on to say in the same context as the quote above... "Someone should be studying the whole system, however crudely that has to be done, because no gluing together of partial studies of a complex non-linear system can give a good idea of the behavior of the whole."

***"Today the network of relationships linking the human race to itself and to the rest of the biosphere is so complex that all aspects affect all others to an extraordinary degree."***  
**Murray Gell-Mann**

The authoring team responsible for this book is indeed the "someone" studying the whole system – in this case the business ecosystem. And by no means are we the only ones who are making efforts to glue together all of the "non-linear components" that comprise the organization and environment of a successful start-up business.

Just as there is a natural order in the universe of physics, mathematics, biology, and perhaps even in the world of business... there is similarly a natural starting place for creating and cultivating your business.



In the process of designing and implementing a Purpose-Driven Business Ecosystem there are basic principles underlying the implementation of the tailor-made version best suited for your particular business. Chapter 6 provides these basic principles in the form of what we call the 9 Core Tenets for developing your own purpose-driven business ecosystem. But before diving into our discussion on these critically important tenets, a bit more context may help.

*In summarizing the meaning and value of each of the 9 Core Tenets, we find it useful to group them into three categories of guidance.*

*We have defined each of these along the lines of conventional business planning, addressing (A) operational, (B) strategic, and (C) leadership areas of consideration.*

In Chapter 5 of the book, we discuss the vital importance to entrepreneurial leadership of your TLC [Think, Learn, Create] cycles, and the often underestimated value of large enterprise work experience in its relative contribution to entrepreneurial initiatives. Chapter 5 also looks at the critical importance of relationship capital, and the inherent value of marketplace acceptance of your company becoming a thought leader in your industry.

These areas of consideration were offered as suggestions which will be significant to your own process of creating or re-thinking your business in the context of our discussion throughout this book. Chapter 5 will help you determine if our concept of a purpose-driven business ecosystem makes sense for your own entrepreneurial vision.

If your decision is yes – you and your company/group want to move ahead with improving your own business ecosystem – then you should pay close attention to the contents in this section (Chapter 6 of the book). As you will discover over the next few pages, our tenets are vital to establishing the foundation for moving forward with initiating the design, implementation, and management of a productive, value enriched purpose-driven business ecosystem.

In our extensive experience in [what is now referred to as] business ecosystem architecture and execution, we have found these particular 9 Core Tenets to represent the most important contributors to your framing of a successful purpose-driven business ecosystem.

In summarizing the meaning and value of each of the 9 Core Tenets, we find it useful to group them into three categories of guidance. We have defined each of these three groups along the lines of conventional business planning, addressing (A) operational, (B) strategic, and (C) leadership areas of consideration.

The first three tenets address **operational** needs in the development of your company's purpose-driven business ecosystem...

**1. Balanced Internal/External Business Focus** – The earlier you begin to work directly with potential external business partners, stakeholders, future customers, domain experts, etc., – i.e., your own business ecosystem – the more quickly you will realize success when you officially decide to “go to market” with your formal new product [and/or service] release. Customers are your best advocates if they are engaged in receiving value from your product/service and their advice and input can make a crucial for



mutual success.

**2. Outside-In Business Design** – A purpose-driven business ecosystem will help you complete a better product design, but it will additionally help develop an optimal business design that best supports the product. If you fully understand the best possible customer experience associated with your particular marketplace offering, then you will correspondingly be able to generate the strongest business ecosystem that will support that end result with your customer.

**3. Customer Value Chain Mindset** – Your entrepreneurial leadership team must assure that your business, the customer, and all business ecosystem participants that exist between your internal organization and your customer, will operate at levels that your customers will find exceptionally compelling and attractive. The delivery of value to your customer must be abundantly apparent at all levels to the customer.

The middle three tenets address **marketplace strategy** needs in the development of your company's purpose-driven business ecosystem ...

**4. Everyone's a Potential Ecopartner** – Business leadership in spirit and in action, is best accomplished through active, disciplined collaboration between you and the companies, teams, and individuals that you deem having greatest value contributions (directly or indirectly) to your customers. It therefore is critically important to be continuously vigilant for identifying and recruiting new ecopartners that increase the value of your company to your customers, as well as to your business partners and other ecopartners.

**5. No Competitors** – In the design of your Purpose-Driven Business Ecosystem one of the best places to begin looking to strengthen areas of your overall business capabilities is with businesses that you formerly may have considered competitors. There are almost always opportunities to position companies that you now view as competition, to become contributors to your company's market offerings – and do so in a way that is mutually beneficial to all concerned... especially your customer.

**6. Continuous Innovation** – This becomes another vital point that distinguishes between a business ecosystem built by day to day necessities of operational survival, versus a true Purpose-Driven Business Ecosystem that was carefully planned, implemented and continually nourished to best serve its customers and the market in which it flourishes. Ever-increasing examples of innovation give your customer the perception of your business as a caring, quality, high value-driven company... and create a stronger bond of customer loyalty with your company.

The last three tenets address your **individual entrepreneurial leadership** role in the development of your company's purpose-driven business ecosystem.

**7. Your Own Community** – In designing and growing your own Purpose-Driven Business Ecosystem you are essentially building your own business community. By continually imaging your Purpose-Driven Business Ecosystem as your own community you will think of more and more ways to give and extract value within the ecosystem dynamic functioning. And as your business community learns to project the values and character of your company, you are essentially strengthening your company's brand. In fact your own business ecosystem can become one of the strongest contributors to your brand.

*We are not necessarily suggesting that you must fully embrace each and every one of these 9 Core Tenets in order to be a raging success in your entrepreneurial efforts. We are however recommending strongly that the greatest likelihood of your entrepreneurial success is directly correlated with the level to which your business leadership reflects the intent underlying these valuable principles.*

**8. Conscious Capitalism** – In the 21st Century a successful business ecosystem by definition will be highly effective and productive in bringing substantial value to the collective stakeholders, participants, and community in which it resides. Your enterprise or start-up will ultimately become an integral part of such a successful business ecosystem, to the degree you provide balanced focus and an energetic expression in service to the people and the community in which you conduct your business

**9. You are the Heart** – The participants in your well-planned and executed Purpose-Driven Business Ecosystem will be naturally drawn to work with you and your company, based upon the results you consistently generate. When you establish your leadership at the heart of your own purpose-driven business ecosystem, it presents a highly compelling business opportunity that is bound together through the tangible and intangible nourishment your leadership provides.

These 9 Core Tenets will support and stimulate your thinking, learning, and creating your very own purpose-driven business ecosystem that best supports your entrepreneurial vision.

By following these 9 Core Tenets your entrepreneurial leadership team will improve its opportunities for developing a well-balanced and highly relevant collection of companies and individuals contributing to the success of your entrepreneurial business.

We are not necessarily suggesting that you must fully embrace each and every one of these 9 Core Tenets in order to be a raging success in your entrepreneurial efforts. We are however recommending strongly that the greatest likelihood of your entrepreneurial success is directly correlated with the level to which your business leadership reflects the intent underlying these valuable principles.

With these 9 Core Tenets in mind, Chapters 7, 8, and 9 of the book suggest a variety of methods and tools for initiating the process for redesigning your current business ecosystem, in the purposeful direction of becoming a true Purpose-Driven Business Ecosystem.

# Initiating Your Business Ecosystem Design

If indeed you accept the premises and concepts provided up to this point in our discussion, you may now be ready to start taking action. Your main question at this point then, “How do I convert my current business ecosystem – into an effective Purpose-Driven Business Ecosystem?”

***The thought might occur to you, “I definitely see the value of improving my current business ecosystem. So I can just slide some of these new ideas into my daily routine... when I have the time to work with it...” In a narrow sense, that would be OK. But it would not be ideal. In another sense, continuing with business as usual could even be fatal to your business.***

There may be a tendency for your entrepreneurial leadership team to continue with much the same day-to-day activity that you are used to. The thought might occur to you, “I definitely see the value of improving my current business ecosystem. So I can just slide some of these new ideas into my daily routine... when I have the time to work with it...” In a narrow sense, that would be OK. But it would not be ideal. In another sense, continuing with business as usual could even be fatal to your business.

On the one hand we fully appreciate the vast majority of entrepreneurs are already stretched to the limit. Not only do we understand your thought process along these lines, but we are definitely empathetic to your concerns. In Section 2.4 of the book, we describe the six classic challenges for entrepreneurs, so you can be fully confident that we understand your mindset going in to this potential task of building and improving your business ecosystem.

But in that same vein we remind you that we have repeatedly proposed the purpose-driven business ecosystem as a proven strategy for reducing the negative impact associated with those classic entrepreneurial challenges mentioned in Section 2.4.

So our strongest advice to you, if you have indeed decided to work on your business ecosystem – is to simply commit to your team (and perhaps to yourself) “Let’s just get started!” Commit to avoiding any possible logical or emotional justifications that create the proverbial paralysis through analysis. It is extremely likely that once you tune your mind with the approach and tools we are offering herein, you will at some point in the near term begin to grasp the substantial upside potential of a legitimate purpose-driven business ecosystem.

At that point, you will be extremely pleased with your decision to get started on this transition.

The next three chapters of the book – Chapters 7-9 are dedicated to providing you and your entrepreneurial leadership team with a collection of methods and tools for designing, implementing, and managing your Purpose-Driven Business Ecosystem.

Chapter 7 is entitled Initiating Your Business Ecosystem Design, and provides a simple yet proven starting point to planning your own the purpose-driven business ecosystem. Our recommended approach should be straightforward to grasp and relatively simple to implement.

Chapter 8 focuses on Implementing Your Purpose-Driven Business Ecosystem giving you a systematic approach for applying the newly developed business ecosystem design you derived as a result of the process described in Chapter 7.

The methods and tools offered in Chapter 8 are focused on helping you determine the best possible approach to planning and executing the launch of your newly evolving business ecosystem.

***Tech startups' ecosystems are quite frequently strong in product development, but often sparse in sales and marketing support. This can be particularly debilitating for as most experienced entrepreneurs are well aware – without customers and sales, it may become almost impossible to obtain investment funding.***

Chapter 9, entitled Managing Your Purpose-Driven Business Ecosystem, provides a structural framework and process/work-flow for directing the business ecosystem created as a result of the procedure described in Chapter 8.

This chapter provides a wealth of methods and experience-driven best practices for exerting effective control over your business ecosystem projects, as well as levying strong influence among the critically important ecopartners that will provide the greatest contributions to your business. The following sections provide a recommended approach to starting the process of planning and developing your very own Purpose-Driven Business Ecosystem.

### **A 4-Step process for designing your Purpose-Driven Business Ecosystem**

If you are an entrepreneur, then by [our] definition you are already involved in a business ecosystem. Depending on where you are in the entrepreneurial life-cycle... your business ecosystem may be quite sparse; or it may be reasonably plentiful with numerous active players.

From another perspective your business ecosystem could be very well-balanced across all aspects of your business's operational need fulfillment; or your ecopartners could be abundant in several areas and non-existent in others. For example, tech start-ups' ecosystems are quite frequently strong in product development, but often sparse in sales and marketing support. This can be particularly debilitating for as most experienced entrepreneurs are well aware – without customers and sales, it may become almost impossible to obtain investment funding.

The initial question you must ask yourself is how efficient and effective is your overall business ecosystem in its present state? Is it addressing directly – or creating opportunities to address – a significant proportion of the priority needs of your company? Is it helping your leadership team on the Classic Challenges for entrepreneurs? [see Section 2.4 of the book]

This line of questioning can only be answered from a perspective on how your company is operating in the context of your business goals and objectives. If you are not hitting your financial targets, or missing your projected milestone dates, then there is a good argument that your business ecosystem is not complete... nor is it well aligned with your business plan.

Actually there are no earth shaking trade secrets to accelerate the planning of a project for refocusing your business ecosystems to a stronger, more results-oriented design, i.e., for a purpose-driven business ecosystem. It is of course true that you must make room in your daily business task list to change your business ecosystem model. But, the task of initiating this planning process is not as complicated or time-consuming as you might initially think it could be.

***Conducting the 4-Step process is vitally important to initiating the ongoing development of a purpose-driven business ecosystem that will significantly improve the productivity of your business in general.***

The work logic is indeed very straightforward. Simply put, early on in your business ecosystem design process you must conduct a thorough assessment of the relative status of your business at this particular point in its life-cycle [often called the As-Is state]. From that perspective you can then map that current state into a vision of where you instead would rather be [often called the To-Be state]. The gap between the As-Is state and the To-Be state is where you need to do your work.

This logical process that we've adapted for our entrepreneurial colleagues is mostly a common sense approach to problem solving: Here is where we are now, and there is where we would like to be – so we must plan to traverse that gap, from here to there.

We call our specific approach to initiating your business ecosystem design the 4-Step process. In naming our initial ecosystem design process we intentionally avoided trying to sound clever or overly caught up with branding a “new, slick procedure”. We are offering you a simple forthright process, so we wanted to brand this approach by giving it a common, functional name.

This will provide you with a project framework for beginning a resolute effort to design your future [To-Be] business ecosystem, with the additional feature that it will become purpose-driven.

Conducting the 4-Step process is vitally important to initiating the ongoing development of a purpose-driven business ecosystem that will significantly improve the productivity of your business in general.

As a dedicated and passionate entrepreneur you most likely already have a very “full plate” in terms of your daily workload. In Section 2.4 we acknowledged the core challenges that are heavily impacting your company's ability to generate the kind of progress that you would like to see.

We mention your workload at this particular point in our discussion, based on the typical kind of feedback we get from entrepreneurial leadership when we start to describe the process required for developing and launching your very own Purpose Driven Business Ecosystem. That feedback is characteristically along the lines of, “I'm not sure if I really have the time to do this right now,” or “How can I find the time to implement this process, when I'm already slammed with more work than I can handle?”

With no hesitation whatsoever, we [the authoring team of this book] fully

understand and appreciate your dilemma. In fact, that is precisely why we dedicated considerable discussion in Chapter 2 to the classic challenges and daily demands on the 21st Century entrepreneur.

But our main response to the entrepreneurial plea for this dilemma – these classic challenges that you face daily in your entrepreneurial journey, are precisely why we wrote this book!

If you can prioritize and rework your schedule to include the methods and processes we have outlined in *Giants*, some of the most significant challenges your business faces will diminish, if not go away altogether. The entrepreneurial ecosystem model is indeed a top trend for the future of business.

If you take a bit of effort to dig deeper into our recommended methods and processes, you will soon discover that we have made every effort to design an ecosystem development program that (a) executes all of the necessary steps, yet (b) is remarkably sensitive to accommodating any

potential challenges you might have such as limited experience, undeveloped competencies, minimal bandwidth [time], incomplete resources, or insufficient cash on hand.

For this reason we have selected an initial assessment and planning process that should be well within your inherent business capabilities.

The 4-Step process we have provided is very basic indeed. The actual steps themselves make no pretence of being unusual or unique. We are simply defining the effort of building a more effective business ecosystem, in the language of implementing a standard project. For that reason we offer basic project execution methodology.

<This section can be found in more detail in the book>





# Implementing Your Purpose-Driven Business Ecosystem

***A core idea underlying the MVP concept is the quicker you are able to get an acceptable version of your product into the market, the quicker your future customers will provide you important feedback that will help you improve and sharpen the value of your product.***

In Chapter 7 we described the first major task in developing your own Purpose-Driven Business Ecosystem. We addressed this task as a potentially significant redesign of your current business ecosystem, depending on the particular stage that you happen to be in your entrepreneurial life-cycle. The result of completing the 4-Step process for planning your purpose-driven business ecosystem is basically a plan to redesign your existing business ecosystem in order to transform it into a more productive, well-managed extension of your company.

There is a key question that many of you might ask on the topic of launching your purpose-driven business ecosystem. That question is, “How do I know when our company is ready to build my own purpose-driven business ecosystem?”

The origin of this question often appears to come from a natural entrepreneurial mindset of wanting to be exceptionally well organized prior to beginning a new project. Especially in the case of early stage entrepreneurs, there is a tendency toward wanting perfection – with product, service, or any other marketplace activity – prior to going external into the market. You typically want your product perfected before its initial market launch, and similarly you want your marketing material to be flawless to assure the best possible impression of your company and your product. This is an admirable desire and not without certain merit. However in the entrepreneurial world – perfection is not always possible, nor is it even the best business strategy.

Most of you are probably aware of the concept of an MVP – Minimum Viable Product. In product development the MVP represents a particular version of the product with the potential of the highest return on investment, versus the risk that same product represents. A core idea underlying the MVP concept is the quicker you are able to get an acceptable version of your product into the market, the quicker your future customers will provide you important feedback that will help you improve and sharpen the value of your product.

This is essentially the same idea behind Agile software development – stick to the Pareto principle. All parties will learn as they go that the details of the original intent/purpose can and will change significantly once the idea crystallizes. You don’t want to waste effort on things that are not important (or more accurately discover that they are less important than others you uncover later in the process).

The idea of an MVP can be contrasted with the belief that we have heard so many times in the past from entrepreneurs, “But don’t I want my first product version to be as flawless as I can make it?” This question is frequently accompanied by the clichéd comment, “We only get one chance to make a first impression!”

***The Purpose-Driven Business Ecosystem model presented in this book is intentionally designed for rapid adoption to your own business. There is little doubt that an effective and productive purpose-driven business ecosystem can potentially represent a substantial responsibility to the entrepreneurial team. But that does not necessarily mean there is a need to thoroughly and meticulously plan your transition from your current business ecosystem, to your more productive purpose-driven business ecosystem.***

Many entrepreneurs with whom we have partnered over the years are constantly walking the fine line between the two directly competing desires for: (a) thoroughly planning and organizing every detail of their entire operation before they “open for business”, versus (b) moderately planning/organizing their business and diving headlong into the market.

We favor the latter approach. It quite often turns out that the world external to your own business is much more forgiving of your “errors” (at least what you yourself might label as errors) than you are. If you do indeed have a viable business/product concept, the market can be approached in such a way that it will embrace your business – even if it is less than perfect. Actually the marketplace will assume you are smart enough to take its critical but well-meaning feedback and improve your market offering as a result of its input. Believe it or not, this is rapidly becoming the mindset of the intelligent customer in the 21st Century entrepreneurial landscape.

How does the MVP concept relate to purpose-driven business ecosystems? Chapter 8 provides an answer to that question. First a bit more background might be helpful.

It is important to note the Purpose-Driven Business Ecosystem model presented in this book is intentionally designed for rapid adoption to your own business. There is little doubt that an effective and productive purpose-driven business ecosystem can potentially represent a substantial responsibility to the entrepreneurial team. But that does not necessarily mean there is a need to thoroughly and meticulously plan your transition from your current business ecosystem, to your more productive purpose-driven business ecosystem.

The strategy-to-execution method that we present in this book has been purposely designed to accommodate the six classic challenges of contemporary entrepreneurs.

Our proposed model represents a highly effective dual-purpose tool for your entrepreneurial endeavor. On the one side we have developed this tool to take into account all of the potential entrepreneurial limitations that we discussed in Section 2.4 – i.e., the possibility of limited experience, limited competency, limited bandwidth, limited resources, limited time, and/or limited cash. Our method addresses the very real commercial requirement that you must get positive results with your purpose-driven business ecosystem, especially in consideration for all of these inherent entrepreneurial challenges.

On the other side of our dual-purpose tool is the potential value related to these very same challenges. If you do indeed advance your business ecosystem along the lines we are recommending, then you will create opportunities to actually reduce the negative impact of many, if not all of these classic entrepreneurial challenges. Your newly developing purpose-driven business ecosystem can be a direct source for removing literally all of these limitations as barriers to your entrepreneurial success. In fact,

minimizing these entrepreneurial challenges is the root value proposition for transitioning your current business ecosystem into your newly adopted purpose-driven model.

Chapter 8 is therefore devoted to helping you determine the best possible approach to planning and executing the implementation of your own Purpose Driven Business Ecosystem.

***Our team has previously been involved in a variety of game changing innovations – some having global commercial impact. We have learned that when introducing relatively new concepts, methods, and/or tools, it is a good idea to associate the new innovative material – with a more familiar topic. This is especially important for key components of the innovation that are critical to successful implementation of the new concepts into real life practice.***

## **SEX and launching your Purpose-Driven Business Ecosystem**

Launching a Purpose-Driven Business Ecosystem is certainly NOT an overly difficult task for any intelligent entrepreneur. We have designed the following process that will capitalize on your inherent intelligence and experience, to take on this task of launching your new business ecosystem development project.

The definition of the phrase ‘business partner’ has an interesting array of nuanced definitions.. One of the most fascinating we have found is referred to as “Business Mating” coined by Kask and Linton in 2013. A business partner or alliance can be crucial for businesses. However, businesses cannot choose business partners in any way they want. In many instances, the potential partner might not be interested in forming a business relationship, also known as business mating. It is important that both sides of the agreement complement each other, but also that there are some common grounds. For example in management style, mindset, and also technology... Kask and Linton investigate under what conditions business mating (formation) takes place for start-up firms seeking business partners.

The team responsible for authoring this book was indeed inspired by this definition... business mating. But perhaps for a different reason than you might initially imagine.

Truthfully, none of us had ever heard the phrase business mating used to describe any aspect of business partnering. There is a little bit more back story that may be helpful here.

Our team has previously been involved in a variety of game changing innovations – some having global commercial impact. We have learned that when introducing relatively new concepts, methods, and/or tools, it is a good idea to associate the new innovative material – with a more familiar topic. This is especially important for key components of the innovation that are critical to successful implementation of the new concepts into real life practice.

The launching and management of a purpose-driven business ecosystem can be viewed as one of those types of innovations. In that light we wanted to select a familiar topic to our readers that will help them vividly remember the methodological approach we are introducing. So... [and we never in our wildest imagination expected to use the following phrase],we chose the word “sex” as our relational metaphor to help you

keep track of the process of launching your purpose-driven business ecosystems with new individual ecopartners.

But before anyone gets the wrong idea, let us explain a bit more of how we will apply this acronym – and do so in a socially acceptable manner ;-)

As we described earlier, there is a straightforward 4-step process for initiating the redesign of your existing business ecosystem – as a prelude to launching your new Purpose-Driven Business Ecosystem.

***Business partners are what you have in your business ecosystem, and business ecopartners are what you aim to produce in your new purpose-driven business ecosystem.***

Regardless of the relative size of your existing business ecosystem you will most probably “launch” your new purpose-driven business ecosystem – one new ecopartner at a time. To be absolutely clear on our meaning, recall that we made a subtle but important distinction between business partners and business ecopartners. In short, business partners are what you have in your business ecosystem, and business ecopartners are what you aim to produce in your new purpose-driven business ecosystem.

Suppose your existing business ecosystem already possesses a significant number of business partners, and your plan to upgrade to a purpose-driven business ecosystem involves the transition of all [or most] of these current business partners into ecopartner relationships. Using our highly recommended process, you must nonetheless still direct this transition – one new ecopartner at a time.

For the sake of simplicity we begin by describing the addition of a single new ecosystem partner. From a best practices/procedural perspective there is a 3-stage process for the addition of each new ecopartner to your company’s purpose-driven business ecosystem. This process is vitally important for both types of ecopartners, including (a) the integration of your existing business partners into your new business ecosystem model, as well as (b) the addition of entirely new ecopartners with whom you have not previously done business.

We have labeled the 3 Stages of incorporating a single, individual new ecopartner into your purpose-driven business ecosystem as follows:

**Stage 1: Structure** – Establish the terms and conditions of your new ecopartner relationship

**Stage 2: Engage** – Commence project-focused activity with your new ecopartner

**Stage 3: Xtend** – Grow and expand your relationship with your new ecopartner

We call it, having SEX [Structuring, Engaging, Xtending] with your new business ecopartner. In fact it is a cardinal rule that you should have SEX with each and every valuable member of your own business ecosystem. And you will very soon discover that a highly productive purpose-driven business ecosystem is commensurate with a healthy SEX life.

We have labeled these three components of adding new ecopartners to your purpose-driven business ecosystem as “Stages” to emphasize the importance of sequentially addressing each component in the order we have established. This should become more self-evident as you review our next three subsections on each of these stages.

However it is equally important to recognize that once you have fully integrated a new ecopartner into your purpose-driven business ecosystem, you will include some elements of each of the activities associated with these three stages in your ongoing ecosystem operation <This is covered in more detail in the book>

The following three subsections will respectively address each of these three stages, in order of execution during the launch of your purpose-driven business ecosystem.

Since this is not an overly complicated process we do not need to elaborate on the sequential procedure. We will offer just a few general thoughts that will help you integrate this important component of your launch procedure, into a framework that makes the best sense for your business or organizational needs.

## Managing Your Purpose-Driven Business Ecosystem

***“It doesn’t matter much where your company sits in its industry ecosystem, nor how vertically or horizontally integrated it is – what matters is its relative ‘share of customer value’ in the final product or solution, and its cost of producing that value.”***

***Dr Gary Hamel***

Dr. Gary Hamel is one of our business heroes. The Wall Street Journal recently ranked Dr. Hamel as the world’s “#1 most influential business thinker” and Fortune magazine has called him “the world’s leading expert on business strategy.” Of his four ground-breaking books, *The Future of Management* was selected by Amazon.com as the Best Business Book of 2007. To further demonstrate the universal respect for this man, we should additionally mention Dr. Hamel is the most reprinted author in the history of the highly prestigious Harvard Business Review.

When Dr. Hamel speaks, we should probably listen to what he has to say. Here is a particularly important favorite quote of ours:

“It doesn’t matter much where your company sits in its industry ecosystem, nor how vertically or horizontally integrated it is – what matters is its relative ‘share of customer value’ in the final product or solution, and its cost of producing that value.”

At first glance Dr. Hamel’s quote might appear relevant mostly to large companies. But as we have pointed out previously in this book, many principles that apply to large enterprises [a.k.a. the “big giants”], are nonetheless still highly relevant to start-ups and early-stage businesses. Dr. Hamel’s sage advice not only applies to the biggest most elite companies, but also to “little guys” – start-up enterprises such as yours.

The context he is referring to in discussing “your company’s position” in its “industry ecosystem” is referring to ecosystems generated and managed



by those very large companies. Keep in mind those very large companies to which he is alluding have been around for many years and they have invested literally billions of dollars and countless man-hours into developing those ecosystems.

But Dr. Hamel's central point is none the less valid – we all must place a higher level of importance on what he calls “share of customer value”.

***By following Dr. Hamel's advice, and placing customer value at the apex of your strategy, you can literally shape and mold your purpose-proven business ecosystem to best serve the highest possible levels of customer value.***

As an entrepreneur you originally created your business with full expectation of producing your own company's share of customer value. By logical extension of what we have been discussing herein, your business ecosystem exists specifically for contributing (directly or indirectly) to producing your own company's share of customer value.

In applying this to our core concepts for Purpose-Driven Business Ecosystems, your entrepreneurial enterprise is actually at an advantage over the large elite companies. Even if you are in the early stages of your entrepreneurial life-cycle, you potentially represent a new unique force in the markets you have chosen to address with your entrepreneurial efforts.

For example, if you are indeed in the early stages of creating your business – its brand, its customer base, and its position in your chosen markets – you are similarly in the earliest stages of creating your own business ecosystem.

By following Dr. Hamel's advice, and placing customer value at the apex of your strategy, you can literally shape and mold your purpose-proven business ecosystem to best serve the highest possible levels of customer value.

This positioning is exactly what we are encouraging you to hold as one of, if not your top priorities in establishing the strategic foundation of your new business. For example, in Section 6.2 Outside-in Business Design, it is indeed one of our 9 Core Tenets of building a purpose-driven business ecosystem which fully embraces this important premise.

It is potentially a debilitating position to hold in the market that the tight little box of potential value that describes your product or services – is the only thing you need to focus upon. Quite often early-stage entrepreneurial organizations are so highly focused on the operational and technological components of their product, that they lose focus on what that product is for in the first place. It is of course, for the customer.

This is not necessarily a game of logic, it is more of a game of emotion. When your customer purchases your product, surely you want that customer to be thoroughly delighted with the value gained by that customer from your product.

But here is a key point: Any additional value, i.e., above and beyond the value specifically related to your product, that the customer might perceive in her/his relationship with you provides much more than an incremental additive to their perceived value of your company. Any additional value the customer perceives – as the popular commercial reminds us – is priceless! Perhaps you already see where we are going with this line of reasoning. By



developing portions of your business ecosystem in such a way that your customer gains additional value, the resulting customer satisfaction and loyalty are driven upwards.

Simply put, your business should ALWAYS be seeking new ways to increase the value of your company to your customer. Your company does indeed include your product, but your product alone is not the only source of value that you may be able to deliver to your customer.

In managing your purpose-driven business ecosystem, you are exerting optimal control and influence over the ongoing delivery of value to your customer.

<This section is covered in much greater detail in the book.>

### **The 7 attributes of successful Business Ecopartnering**

We have a highly effective, innovative method for building “teamwork between teams” - SuperTeams. This method is ideal for establishing productive relationship between two or more entrepreneurial teams from different companies.

The SuperTeams we have helped develop over the years have produced some spectacular improvements in productivity in the context of pre-/ post- comparisons. We could probably write another entire book on the topic of SuperTeams. In fact a San Francisco-based publisher has approached us on this very project, i.e., to write a book about designing and developing SuperTeams for the global enterprise market. Although we still may get around to writing that other book, we strongly believed in the book you are now reading should be a greater priority. We do indeed love our entrepreneurial friends :-)

But the lessons we have learned and best practices we have defined specifically relating to what we have called SuperTeams, are indeed extraordinarily relevant to developing effective ecopartnering relationships. In fact the concepts and methods required for developing successful ecopartnering relationships are nearly identical to those we developed for SuperTeams.

With this in mind we have devoted this Section [9.3] to translating our SuperTeam model into successful applications for ecopartnering and purpose-driven business ecosystems.

After 14+ years of working on bringing together cross-functional or cross-disciplinary teams, we have learned that the development of effective SuperTeams is both a science and an art. SuperTeam functioning possess all of the ingredients of classic project management, combined with the additional intrigue and ethos of human behavior.

Of course all of business is comprised of people intermingling with technologies and organizational structure – which in itself provides daily challenges that aren’t always taught in schools or reflected in textbooks and

Internet articles.

But when the additional element of teamwork-between-teams is added to the normal mix of people + processes + technology... the aura of unpredictability and wonder often seems to grow exponentially. For this the very reason we decided to include a discussion on the attributes of a successful business ecosystem.

Of course your overall purpose-driven business ecosystem is basically comprised of the various relationships you and your business maintain with your ecopartners. Focusing on the individual ecopartner relationships you maintain, especially those that are most important to the overall success of your business, will help you better understand the bigger picture of how you might manage all of your ecopartners in the context of your purpose-driven business ecosystem.

### ***The 7 Attributes of Successful Business Ecopartnering***



The following definitions are expressed specifically in the context of two teams working together as ecopartners. This model is readily extendable to three or more teams working as a single SuperTeam. Although the operational logistics are a little bit more complex, the seven attributes listed below remain equally important, regardless of the number of teams comprising the SuperTeam.

Ecosystem relationships that are not only successful for the business but also are enjoyable to work in, display seven attributes in common. These attributes are:

- 1) Common Goals
- 2) Shared Risk
- 3) Mutual Trust
- 4) Bi-directional Motivation
- 5) 2-Way Communications
- 6) Reciprocal Accountability
- 7) Ecopartner Agreement

We will devote the following seven subsections to the Seven Attributes of Successful Ecopartnering. In each section we will more specifically define what is meant by each of the

seven individual attributes, and add specific comments from our experience in potential pitfalls and lessons learned in building SuperTeams and business ecosystems.

<This section is covered in much greater detail in the book.>

## Relevant case studies

Examples of successful Business Ecosystems are literally all around us. This will prove quite helpful to you the concerned entrepreneur as you gain increasing interest in the ultimate value that your ecosystem can deliver to the success of your business.

Soon your own perception will be trained simply by attentive observation to the business world around you. It is much easier to model your own ideal business ecosystem on the myriad of examples around you – including both good and bad examples.

Whilst the scope and nature of Purpose-Driven Business Ecosystems is relatively new, there are many aspects of the concept which have been in practice in one form or another for some time. The seven examples of business ecosystems described in this section were selected in large part, because the particular business ecosystem components were joined specifically to produce a desired result. Thus by our definition these are all examples, not merely of “business ecosystems” – but are true representations of Purpose-Driven Business Ecosystems.

It is perhaps important to mention that the authoring team responsible for the development of this book were personal participants in all of the following examples.

All of these include external small businesses at the core of developing and executing business ecosystems to meet customer needs.

<This section is covered in much greater detail in the book.>

## Final note from the author

I certainly hope you enjoyed these excerpts. I additionally hope that the content has been sufficiently illuminating to pique your interest in the notion of Purpose Driven Business Ecosystems.

The topics introduced here are explored at length in the book, **They Will Be Giants** along with a series of pragmatic and powerful steps you can follow to ensure your business achieves optimal results. This is all based on real-life experience garnered over decades by industry professionals – it is not a hypothetical strategy or a purely academic exercise. Purpose-Driven Business Ecosystems do indeed work quite well and we show how they can work for you.

We are running a series of workshops to coincide with the book launch and will be presenting at a number of entrepreneurial events around the world in the coming months. We would love the chance to meet you at any of these events and discuss these topics further!

Blessings and cheers,  
Kim



## About the Author

Robert 'Kim' Wilson is an expert mentor and thought-leader on the contribution of human cognition to highly successful business. From the CXO suite down to the moment of excellent customer experience -- and all business process and culture in between -- human thinking, motivation, and behavior are the working components that drive the organization. Kim understands how this works in the contemporary global organization, or a small entrepreneurial business. His success is built on getting the most from the hearts and minds of people in business across the globe.

Kim is the author and/or co-inventor of 28 different game-changing innovations in professional services in Business Development, Leadership, Learning, Collaboration, Business Intelligence, International Relations, and Customer Experience Excellence.

He is a lifelong student of how the collective mind of large business actually learns and applies its knowledge and skills. He has taken this knowledge and experience and successfully applied it to entrepreneurial businesses across the globe. No matter how large or small the organization, business results ultimately come down to ... how each and every individual person or ecopartner (the business contributor) learns and acts.

Kim is a Master Architect of large scale business solutions where corporate learning is a critical ingredient to success. All major change in business involves major amounts of learning (unlearning, re-learning, new learning) on many levels, and usually on a large variety of topics.

His track record spans three+ decades of outstanding success in critical business development for any size enterprise with major internal or marketplace challenges.

## Reviews

### ★★★★★ What a Find!

By [DianeWeissmuller](#) on July 13, 2016

Format: Paperback

An excellent business tool. I wish I'd had it as a guide 20 years ago. A business school's curriculum must have. Kim's ideas are not relative to just the tech industry. He is a brilliant writer and profound innovator.

### ★★★★★ Entrepreneurs of the World: This will help you build more sustainable and successful businesses

By [Eilif Trondsen](#) on May 12, 2016

Format: Paperback

This publication of this book could not have been more timely, as I am just starting a project that will build a Nordic EdTech Network—see[...] if you are interested—and, in essence taking a first step towards building a Nordic EdTech ecosystem. In the project description we use the term ecosystem but, I admit, without recognizing and understanding the full meaning of the term in the way that Kim Wilson describes the scope and potential implications of purpose-driven business ecosystems in this wonderful book. After reading it I have a totally new and higher level of understanding of the full potential of ecosystems, especially for entrepreneurs trying to build a business. I also see how such a deeper understanding of the term, and how it can be leveraged, can help entrepreneurs build sustainable and profitable companies more quickly and more successfully by consciously taking advantage of all the resources that a purpose-driven ecosystem can bring to bear. In the process, the entrepreneur and his/her leadership team gains a much deeper and more complete “outside-in” perspective on their business and how to best grow their business.

### ★★★★★ Strengthening our ecosystems in business!

By [Rafael Pinto](#) on May 29, 2016

Format: Paperback

As an aspiring entrepreneur myself, I have found the book "They will be Giants, 21st Century Entrepreneurs and the Purpose-Driven Business Ecosystem," to be one of the most practical and important resources I have ever come across. The idea presented in the book, that I can design, implement and manage my own ecosystem of strategic partners that can help produce better results to my own business, and theirs, is very reassuring.

### ★★★★★ A must-have for new (and not so new) entrepreneurs!

By [Amazon Customer](#) on June 20, 2016

Format: Paperback

I met Robert Kim Wilson last year, in 2015, when he was in Brazil and participated in meetings with entrepreneurs and entrepreneur support professionals, which were organized by the Institute IBMEC. I asked Kim for the authorization to translate into Portuguese the summary of his pending book [Giants], scheduled for release in early 2016 in the United States. The title of his book, 'They Will Be Giants' is already a tribute to all the entrepreneurs who believe in their own abilities to create innovations to improve the welfare of humanity.

Kim, in a pragmatic way, and based on the experience of someone who has already lived many situations in life, seeks to teach young entrepreneurs how to substantially increase their productivity, while minimizing their risks when facing the challenges of innovation. Giants can be a significant contributor to the recovery that Brazil needs at this critical time in our country's return to economic ascension.

I sincerely hope Giants reaches its goal of global distribution.

Thomás Tosta de Sá  
President  
Instituto IBMEC  
Rio de Janeiro, Brazil



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