

Optimising the search for purpose in personal and business development



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In these post-pandemic times, finding the meaning of our life will help us direct personal, financial, and national reconstruction

Viktor Frankl aptly states in his book 'Man's search for meaning' that there are three kinds of people. There are those who lean into escapism, others who invest large amounts of time and resources into an endless search for meaning, and finally, those who understand that we are not to seek the meaning of our existence but are asked by this life of ours what meaning we choose to give it.

This latter group of people understand human freedom, human fulfilment, and

the social nature of human beings. Reflections on these topics can help persons and businesses thrive in these post pandemic times of heightened vulnerability.

Can one not say that an article such as this is simply contributing to the endless talk about the search for meaning rather than creating it? Is it not up to each person to find his or her path? Should not each business develop its own value through production rather than reflect abstractly on meaning or purpose?

I think that there is wisdom in pausing figuratively as we come nearer to the end of the pandemic. We have all endured crises either on a national or personal level so that before we launch into the new normal, there is a need to re-evaluate our purpose in life. Such evaluation must then affect the life of our businesses.

Viktor Frankl, an Austrian psychiatrist, whose quote we started with, lived a personal and national crisis much worse than most crises. Frankl lived through the concentration camp in Auschwitz where he was taken simply because he was a Jew.

He witnessed the killing of his wife, child, father, mother, and brother in concentration camps. Despite this, or because of this, he became convinced of the power of finding meaning for rebuilding. In these post-pandemic times, finding the meaning of our life will help us direct personal, financial, and national reconstruction.

Viktor Frankl saw how a lack of meaning made people desensitised and apathetic. Apathy is a dangerous mind-set because it refuses to work with hope. Frankl's message was essentially the need to find purpose from within oneself and keep moving.

Businesses can be rebuilt, nations can be transformed, and persons can grow if there is the will to find meaning in the situation's life unfolds. The opposite of apathy is love. Love transcends space, time, and even death and is a great motivator. Love moves us to work and to suffer for the person or thing loved.

Do I love my life, my business, my country in a balanced way? Do I see my

business as a special call to serve and to rebuild a small part of my society? Frankl believes that each of us has a unique speciality or vocation, and our reason for existence can be realised when we work towards that purpose. This is the concept the Japanese refer to as 'Ikigai'.

It inspires one to get up every morning and face life again. All in all, no matter what path is chosen, it all comes down to our choices. To what we choose to become and how we get there. This brings us to the concept of human freedom.

Freedom is a notion that is often debated and it's meaning even questioned. Many ask, are we truly free since they assume that our decisions are a product of external influences or societal conditioning. If we do not have this true freedom, would it not imply that our purpose in life is set in stone? That we are subject to fate?

To answer these questions, we must understand human freedom. Freedom is a wonderful human capacity made possible through the will and reasoning faculty so that we can arrive at deep knowledge and understand the consequences of choices.

A choice is free if it is not determined by the events that precede it even though we are influenced by what we experience. Human beings can choose reasonably even when there are impulses, emotions, and other motivations pulling strongly to the opposite.

Finally, with freedom comes responsibility and we are each responsible for finding our purpose. Each choice we make, over time, shapes our character and our destiny. We cannot blame fate or deities for the paths we follow or the purpose we pursue.

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It is easier to blame something or someone when things do not work out, but we underestimate the human ability to know and will. In rebuilding our businesses

now, we need to hold on to hope.

Frankl believes that it is our spiritual freedom that gives our lives meaning and purpose. The ability to control our inner world is what kept some prisoners at the concentration camps sane and is what will keep us focused as we move into a post-pandemic future and the new normal.

Do not believe those who tell you that having a purpose is pointless, or those who sell escapism and hedonism, rather than introspection and responsibility. Do not believe those who tell you that our fates are written in stone, who say that we have no real control over our lives and that we must succumb to whatever hardships, are thrown at us.

Do not believe those who say that the journey towards becoming our 'higher selves' must be taken alone or those who say that we will achieve most success if we liberate ourselves from all sorts of community. Believe those who say that true purpose is found in serving others, which we are then called to do in our unique ways.

Believe those who remind you that in the end, you are responsible for your destiny. Take the time to do the work and strengthen your inner self, build that spiritual fortress, and watch your purpose slowly bloom around you.

Finding true meaning is not a rare flower to be sought after. It is a garden to be cultivated. We must get ready to do the work required to rebuild businesses, our nation, and ourselves with our gaze fixed on a brighter future.

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