



AMR AL-DABBAGH

OMNIPRENEUR

# OMNIPRENEURSHIP

AN ORGANIZED APPROACH TO  
LIVING A LIFE *of* MEANING

FOREWORD BY PAUL POLMAN  
CEO, UNILEVER

## ACHIEVE YOUR GREATEST GOALS— IN EVERY AREA OF YOUR LIFE

We all yearn for a life of greater meaning—in business, with our families, and in our communities. Some of us even want to achieve world-changing outcomes like addressing global warming or reducing poverty. It's all about improving our lives and our world.

The problem is that many of us feel too distracted or spent to make a difference. We need a fresh approach that can keep us on track toward our greatest goals—regardless of the forces swirling around us. In this book, omnipreneur Amr Al-Dabbagh shares his personal leadership model.

An omnipreneur takes an entrepreneurial approach to every aspect of life—work, family, community, health, finances, spirituality, and more.

*Omnipreneurship* is built upon three interlocking principles—giving, earning, and sustaining—that help you aim high, maximize your impact, and live in a balanced state while pursuing your dreams. These principles are bolstered by ten “golden rules” and five values that provide the underlying engine for intelligent action in every endeavor.

An omnipreneur lives intentionally.

An omnipreneur works with integrity, passion, and a forward-thinking mindset in all actions. An omnipreneur is habitually collaborative, knowing that inclusiveness ensures the highest levels of success. An omnipreneur thrives in turbulent times and is able to take intelligent risks. An omnipreneur understands that life is a journey, and that a holistic approach is required to support meaningful action at every turn.

Join the journey. Incorporate Al-Dabbagh's practical wisdom, and start making your biggest aspirations a reality throughout all phases of your life—starting today.





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# OMNIPRENEURSHIP

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LIVING A LIFE OF MEANING

**AMR AL-DABBAGH**

**PUSTAKA PERDANA**



**1013479**

**FREE PRESS**

New York London Toronto Sydney New Delhi



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LEADERSHIP  
FOUNDATION  
YAYASAN  
KEPIMPINAN  
PERDANA



Free Press

An imprint of Simon & Schuster, Inc  
1230 Avenue of the Americas  
New York, NY 10020

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First Free Press hardcover edition April 2016

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Interior design by Joy O'Meara  
Graphic designer Oliver Munday

Manufactured in the United States of America

1 3 5 7 9 10 8 6 4 2

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data has been applied for

ISBN 978-1-5011-4626-8  
ISBN 978-1-5011-4627-5 (ebook)

658.092

*To those who are building a better world*



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# CONTENTS

Foreword by Paul Polman, CEO, Unilever xi

## Chapter One

### **INTRODUCTION 1**

The search for meaning; a definition of “omnipreneurship”; why entrepreneurship needs rethinking; why omnipreneurship works; an introduction to the three principles, five values, and ten “golden rules”; what you will learn in this book

## Chapter Two

### **THE THREE INTERLOCKING PRINCIPLES: GIVING, EARNING, AND SUSTAINING 15**

A trip to Africa; the genesis of the three principles; filling my father’s shoes; expanding the reach of giving; lessons in giving; how we sustain

## Chapter Three

### **I AIM, THEREFORE I AM 33**

Aiming high as a governpreneur; begin with the finish line; how I built a personal life plan; what’s hard about this?; the life plan in my family; the benefits of the life plan; taking “I aim, therefore I am” into business and philanthropy; three steps; overpromising and the story of Diana Nyad

## Chapter Four

### **DESIGN ORGANICALLY 57**

Lessons from the chicken farm; organically designing a business; avoiding intellectual imperialism; the zero-based review; how Frank Lloyd Wright had it right

## Chapter Five

**THE GREATEST AMONG YOU 67**

The story of a big turnaround; the attributes of the greatest among you; show me your colors; the importance of emotional intelligence; show me the money; how vision attracts greatness; how culture attracts greatness; share the power; how others affect us personally

## Chapter Six

**COLLABORATE TO ACCELERATE 87**

A story from Lee Kuan Yew; collaborating for Rwanda; who does what?; craft a shared language and agenda; cement the agreement; give the credit

## Chapter Seven

**HONEY AS MONEY 101**

Human suffering in Zimbabwe; the psychology of scarcity; different flavors of honey; how constraint unleashes creativity; an experiment in imagination; the story of Peace One Day; honey is golden

## Chapter Eight

**DELIGHT THE STAKEHOLDER 115**

Be a servant leader; King Juan Carlos, servant leader; trust and respect; to delight the stakeholder, make things easy; "what if . . ."

## Chapter Nine

**NO RISK, NO GAIN 129**

Risk and reward in a red-light district; why bad stuff happens; the importance of benchmarks and safety nets; the role of personal resilience; standing up to fear of failure; risk and the ten golden rules

## Chapter Ten

**EXCEPTIONAL EXECUTION 141**

Make it simple; the execution dashboard; executing to your life plan; execution is about culture; flexible control; happy competitiveness; your execution dashboard

## Chapter Eleven

**SHARE YOUR STORY 155**

The art of attentive listening; listening “head to head”;  
inspiring the team; telling your story to the world;  
storytelling platforms; the power of live events

## Chapter Twelve

**IMAGINE THE NEXT BIG THING 169**

Three questions and five criteria; how Petromin Express  
became the next big thing; building the next big thing in Saudi;  
if we build it, they will come; how Educate Girls challenges  
the status quo; the power of “what if?”; raising the bar

Finale: A Life of Meaning 181

Acknowledgments 185

Notes 187

Index 199

About the Author 209





## FOREWORD

There is no doubt that we live today in a world beset by numerous challenges, many of them interrelated: from poverty, inequality, and food insecurity to climate change, water shortages, and the insidious destruction of our natural resources.

Navigating these issues has itself become a major challenge. Indeed, in trying to characterize the world in which we currently live, I have often used a term favored by military strategists—*VUCA* (Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, and Ambiguous). It is an acronym that encapsulates well the different forces at work—and all this in a world where the pace of change, and the degree of interdependence, have never been greater.

Not surprisingly, many people are left reeling by events, fearful that they are in the grip of forces they can't understand and are powerless to control. Their anxiety is heightened by the disappearance of old certainties and by an erosion of trust in the very institutions on which they used to rely. For many, even work has become what a 2013 report by Gallup described as a “dispiriting experience”; a mere 13 percent of 30,000 respondents across 142 countries feel engaged on the job.

In this environment, people increasingly look for greater meaning in their lives. They seek a deeper sense of purpose. And they cry out for authentic leaders who embody the values they hold dear and who combine the ability to articulate a compelling vision with the capabilities needed to put it into effect.

Such leaders, alas, are in short supply. My Unilever colleagues will testify that I am fond of saying the world is currently short on two things—trees and leaders!

There is no bigger proponent of the kind of values-based leadership that is needed today than my good friend Amr Al-Dabbagh, a man with whom I have had the privilege to discuss and debate these issues on many occasions. I have seen the authentic way in which he leads as a businessman, as a philanthropist, and as a steward of his extended family. He is a true global citizen, a genuine humanitarian inspired by the desire to be a force for good in the many arenas in which he operates.

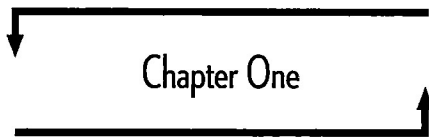
In this latest work, *Omnipreneurship*, he draws on his wide experience to present a practical model for addressing even the most complex, seemingly intractable challenges. Part of the focus—rightly, in my view—is on how to apply a more inclusive, collaborative, and accountable lens to the way in which we look at the world. Simply put, the challenges we face today are too great for any one organization—or sector—to solve alone. It is only by working together in new forms of partnership, based on trust and transparency, that we can hope to bring about the kind of scale that is needed for truly transformational change.

However, as this book reminds us, it all starts with the individual, with inspiring and empowering people to go beyond the limits of their ambitions, to strive for something higher and more purposeful. To that end, the concept of applying “preneurship” to every aspect of our lives (that is, omnipreneurship), based on a clearly defined methodology and set of principles, is a powerful and intriguing one.

This book offers a values-based and principled approach that will resonate with those driven by a desire to give, and not just to take, from the society and environment in which we all live. The author is offering, by way of experience and application, a process that has yielded results in many of his spheres of influence. And he invites us all to share that which has fueled his own success. It is an invitation I wholeheartedly encourage you to accept.

—Paul Polman  
CEO, Unilever





Chapter One

## INTRODUCTION

The search for meaning; a definition of “omnipreneurship”; why entrepreneurship needs rethinking; why omnipreneurship works; an introduction to the three principles, five values, and ten “golden rules”; what you will learn in this book

*To laugh often and much; to win the respect of intelligent people and the affection of children; to earn the appreciation of honest critics and endure the betrayal of false friends; to appreciate beauty, to find the best in others; to leave the world a bit better, whether by a healthy child, a garden patch or a redeemed social condition; to know even one life has breathed easier because you have lived. This is to have succeeded.*

—RALPH WALDO EMERSON

We all have a burning desire to find meaning in our lives. We seek to know why we’re here and what our higher purpose is. But that search can be derailed by the pressures to snare the best job, get that promotion, be seen as a success—and thwarted by a modern world that is often confusing, frustrating, even frightening. Where do we turn for meaning when all that “noise” drowns out what is

truly important? How can we pursue that quest when we feel conflicted about our goals and powerless to effect change?

It's no wonder that meaning is so hard to find. We live in an era in which it is too easy to become emotionally adrift and morally compromised—a time when it's easy to become cynical and disengaged because every day, ignorance, greed, and lust for power compete with creativity, intelligence, and goodness. We want to be effective at what we do, yet we feel overwhelmed by a world we can't control. The result? We work and live out of balance with our true goals and values.

I think another reason we feel so fragmented is that we tend to think of our personal lives as a set of distinct, separate chapters. We measure our lives in chronological “seasons”—childhood, adolescence, young adulthood, middle and old age—thinking that we are supposed to accomplish different things at different phases. And we divide our activities among work, community service, citizenry, and family, as if each had nothing to do with the others. This fractured approach to life keeps us from making our biggest impact every day in our short, precious lives.

Today, to achieve our biggest dreams and get where we want to go, we need a structure. We need an ethical, behavioral, and managerial backbone that is easy to remember, a solid support to keep us strong and help us attain our goals. If we want to change the world, we need an approach that integrates all that we care about.

We need omnipreneurship.

## WHAT IS OMNIPRENEURSHIP?

Developed over the past thirty years, omnipreneurship is an approach to building a meaningful life. It comprises three principles, five values, and ten “golden rules”<sup>1</sup> that apply equally to every realm of activity, whether you are operating in business, the public sector, the nonprofit world, your family, or your own personal world. With omnipreneurship, you can achieve meaning across all the arenas of your life.

Why do I call this approach “omnipreneurship”? Though I passionately believe in the fundamentals of entrepreneurship—starting something, gathering the resources to make it grow, and being responsible for its success—I think the term *entrepreneurship* has been hijacked. It’s been devalued by an ever-narrowing definition that focuses on starting an innovative business and quickly harvesting personal profit. It’s become much too narrow a concept to meet the needs and challenges of the world today.

Omnipreneurship is a much larger, more encompassing concept.

Think of what we most admire in leaders who are paradigm-breakers—people like Steve Jobs, Elon Musk, Mark Zuckerberg, and Richard Branson. These are disruptive innovators who invert existing paradigms, delight whole new worlds of customers, and even open up new industries. And they have a set of admirable characteristics—pluck, competitiveness, a willingness to take risks, imagination, hunger, creativity, and, most important, vision. What if we released that spirit of entrepreneurship from its shackles and applied all those admirable characteristics in a much bigger way to everything we do? What if, instead of just having entrepreneurs concerned only with business, we had a world full of “governpreneurs” who applied their great entrepreneurial skills to public policy; “philanthroppreneurs” who did the same with charitable organizations; “familypreneurs” who looked for new ways to support their families; and even individual “preneurs” who applied a set of the best entrepreneurial characteristics to the ways they conduct themselves in their own lives and careers? The omnipreneur is someone who can master “preneurship” in all aspects of life, though not necessarily immediately or simultaneously.

Omnipreneurship extends “preneurship” in several new directions at once. I believe that the strategies and skills needed to accelerate success and live a life of meaning should belong to everyone—not just people in business, but also workers in nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), philanthropists, public servants, people of faith, and family members.

In short, omnipreneurship is an entrepreneurial approach for

every aspect of life. And personally, I'm trying to become the best omnipreneur I can be.

## OMNIPRENEURSHIP: THE PROOF

This book presents a complete methodology that I've tried and tested in all my endeavors for three decades. The approach I describe began developing under the guidance of my father many years ago, but I've codified it only in the last five years. In the interim, I've tested the omnipreneurship approach over and over, and I've found that it applies to all walks of life. This book will provide you with plenty of examples of how it works, but here are a few quick brushstrokes:

*In Business:* My father started our family's company in 1962. His first business was an egg production farm. While I was in high school, I became increasingly interested in his work. He wanted me to go to a good college abroad, but I wanted to learn from him and become a successful businessman like him. So one day, I insisted on going with him to the office. It was then that my father decided it was time for me to become serious about the business, and I got a crash course. The company wasn't immediately profitable—in fact, things were tight, and we had to manage cash flow pretty closely. We nearly lost our shirts in a few businesses, as you will read in the pages that follow.

But today, by following the principles, values, and rules of omnipreneurship, Al-Dabbagh Group is successful. The holding company and its subsidiaries currently employ tens of thousands of employees in more than sixty countries around the world. We aim to be ranked among the top twenty wholly owned global family businesses by 2020.

*In Government:* The last place most people expect to see entrepreneurial principles at work is in government. Government is usually

the antithesis of entrepreneurship—hidebound, unimaginative, and bureaucratic. But if you open it up, bring in entrepreneurial principles, and run it in the same way that you might run the most disruptive start-up, you can achieve change in quantum leaps.

Consider what we accomplished in the Saudi Arabian General Investment Authority (SAGIA), where I served as the governor from 2004 to December 2011. At the time I came into the office, the country was not one of the top competitive investment climates in the world, at least compared to places like Singapore or the United States. (In 2005, it ranked sixty-seventh on the World Bank's global Ease of Doing Business scale.)

At SAGIA, we saw an opportunity to add value for companies that might want to set up business in the Middle East. We aimed high; we launched a plan we dubbed the “10x10” initiative, a program of economic reforms with the goal of making Saudi Arabia one of the top ten most competitive investment destinations by 2010 (we just missed that goal, coming in at number 11). We got to that spot by applying the principles, values, and rules of governpreneurship—from the manner in which we hired, developed, and managed talent, to figuring out new ways to delight stakeholders, to inventing ways to attract investors without having to pay them to come on board.

*In Philanthropy:* Our family business, as you will learn, is founded on the principle of giving. In 2001, Al-Dabbagh Group created Stars Foundation in order to transform the lives of disadvantaged children and their communities around the world. Stars focuses its activities on four main categories—health, education, protection, and WASH (water, sanitation, and hygiene), responding to the enormous need that still exists in the world today.<sup>2</sup>

To date, Stars Foundation has already helped improve the lives of millions of children in all corners of the globe, but we don't sit on our laurels. We originally set out to transform the lives of 20 million children and their communities by 2020 but, applying an omnipreneurial approach, we decided to massively scale that ambition by initiating new, independent, and complementary entities that

would focus on increasing our impact. So we created the annual “Philanthropreneurship Forum,” which brings together the best minds in the philanthropic and NGO worlds. We established a non-profit entity in the United States called Philanthropy U, and joined hands with the University of California, Berkeley’s Haas School of Business to introduce a nonprofit education initiative, Philanthropy University ([www.philanthropyu.org](http://www.philanthropyu.org)). Philanthropy University offers a free set of online courses designed to equip the world’s NGOs to make their maximum impact. While Philanthropy University is not a degree- or diploma-granting program and learners are not entitled to college or other academic credit, we offer the “intellectual philanthropy” of the best experts and practitioners in the nonprofit arena in the hope of expanding the reach and effectiveness of millions of NGOs around the world.

*In Family:* In his late sixties, my father began to suffer the effects of Parkinson’s disease, so he passed the reins of the company to me. As he grew older, one of my father’s chief concerns was keeping Al-Dabbagh Group going. Having built a large and successful company over the course of many years and brought wealth to our very large, extended family, he worried that things could fall apart over time. (He was right. In fact, the vast majority of family businesses never last beyond the third generation.<sup>3</sup>)

My father understood that the first generation’s focus on income generation can be lost in the second generation’s interest in lifestyle, and finally the third generation’s complete loss of the original generation’s ambitions. “The first generation makes the business,” he would quip. “The second generation milks the business, and the third generation auctions the business.”

The question for him was this: How could he ensure that future generations would be responsible stakeholders and uphold the principles of giving and earning on which the company was founded?

To make certain that our family would be among the small percentage to make it beyond the third generation, my father created what he called the “Family Protocol” to govern relations among the

second generation and beyond who were the future stakeholders of the giving and earning principles. The Family Protocol is a twenty-four-chapter book covering a comprehensive range of issues that deal with the grassroots causes of why family businesses move from making to milking to auctioning. We also set up a club of family members—a stand-alone organization, run like a little company, that makes sure the family follow the principles, values, and rules of omnipreneurship. The results? People in the club are not just engaged in the giving, earning, and sustaining principles of the family business, but are also doing amazing things in the world, from earning their degrees as doctors, to building businesses, to volunteering all over the world with NGOs supported by Stars Foundation.

*In My Personal Life:* When I was a teenager, I liked to draw pictures of my goals—a house I would like to live in, for example. I still have some of those drawings, and several of those dreams have become manifest. (I've always been very conscious of my ambitions, and I've found that visualizing what I want comes pretty easily.)

In 1994, when I was twenty-seven years old, I learned about living strategically in a more disciplined way, as I'll describe in chapter 3. For now, let me just say that I began organizing and fine-tuning goals for ten different areas of my own life in an omnipreneurial way. In my life plan, every criterion represents either giving, earning, or sustaining or, indeed, a combination of all three. The finest balance is struck when these three principles come together in each category. The power of the Life Plan I present in chapter 3 is its balance. Who wants to wake up one day to realize that they've neglected something as important as family, community, or health? Omnipreneurship is working for me.

In short, I have road-tested the omnipreneurial approach I present here in a wide variety of arenas. I have tested the principles, values, and rules of omnipreneurship with the greatest leaders around the world, including well-known people in governments and academic settings as well as CEOs and leaders of NGOs who work every day to alleviate the suffering of children. I know for a fact

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# *Praise for* **OMNIPRENEURSHIP**

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“The new truth is that to achieve your dreams, you must live your life in a bold and intentional way. Let Al-Dabbagh help you on your journey.”

—**Paulo Coelho, best-selling novelist**

“We all have tremendous potential to contribute to the greater good—yet modern times can easily thwart our best efforts. Al-Dabbagh shows how a new, integrated approach can help you achieve maximum impact.”

—**John Quelch, Professor, Harvard Business School, and author of *Greater Good***

“Al-Dabbagh is a true global visionary with a powerful methodology for finding personal fulfillment while doing good for humanity.”

—**Delos “Toby” Cosgrove, MD, CEO and President, Cleveland Clinic**

“Al-Dabbagh has a truly holistic view of a ‘good life,’ and has developed a powerful yet simple set of principles and rules to help us all be more deliberate in living one.”

—**Lynn Taliento, Partner, McKinsey & Company, Social Sector Practice**

“*Omnipreneurship* is a most imaginative idea to inspire, encourage, and enable each one of us to make a difference.”

—**F. W. de Klerk, Nobel Peace Prize winner and former President of South Africa**

“If all families, NGOs, and businesses—indeed, all of us—were to follow Al-Dabbagh’s approach to intentional, collaborative, balanced living, the world would be a safer, happier, and more productive place.”

—**David Rockefeller Jr., Chairman of the Board, Rockefeller Foundation**

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BUS071000 BUSINESS & ECONOMICS / Leadership  
Business/Leadership

0416

ISBN 978-1-5011-4626-8 \$24.95 U.S./\$28.99 Can.

52495



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