

# Bob Chapman's vision is to treat your company as a family



The **CEO** of one of the **most important airlines** in the world **came up to Bob Chapman** after the talk he had just given.

*“Bob, I always **thought my job** was **to build the biggest airline company** in the world. And **until today, I had never considered** worrying about **the one hundred and thirty thousand people** in the company,”* he said.

Bob Chapman is the CEO of Barry-Wehmiller Companies and co-author of the bestseller **Everybody Matters: The Extraordinary Power of Caring for Your People Like Family**.

In an **interview with [CONNECTA](#)** during his visit as a guest speaker at Tec de Monterrey's 2024 National Board Meeting, Chapman talks about his vision for **transforming companies**.



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### Leading with respect and dignity

***“We have a society based on money, power, and the position you hold,”*** says Chapman.

*“For example,”* he adds, ***“we don’t have human prosperity in the United States, despite having the most prosperous economy in the world. This is what Thomas Friedman of the New York Times referred to as ‘a poverty of dignity.’”***

Dressed in a **blue suit, light semi-rimless glasses,** and **smiling broadly,** Chapman shares his vision with CONECTA.

***“What we have forgotten in our organizations is to look at the people we are privileged to lead and treat them with respect and dignity,”*** he says. He goes on to say that this came to him in three moments he refers to as “revelations.”

### Why can’t work be fun?

It was March, 1997, and Chapman picked up on feelings of **great excitement among his employees** coming to work that day as they talked about the famous *March Madness*: the **college basketball playoffs** in the United States.

***“They were having fun and the closer it got to 8:00 (the start of their working day), the more the fun drained from their bodies,”*** he remembers.

Chapman says he thought a lot about this and came to the conclusion that work should be fun too, which is when he **started playing games in his company.**

*“Why don’t we play a game?” he asked his team. “Whoever sells more items of our machinery each week wins. And if the team reaches a team goal, it wins 100 dollars.”*

*“I just wanted them to have fun. When do people show their talent the most? When they’re having fun,”* he adds and tells us how this raised spirits at the company, and sales too!

*“When do people show their talent the most? When they’re having fun.”*

### **More than bosses: inspiring leaders**

Chapman’s next “revelation” came to him one Sunday after leaving church.

Walking along the sidewalk with his wife, Chapman reflected on how his church leader inspired the community despite spending very little time with them, and contrasted this with his own potential.

*“He only sees us one hour a week. **We (businessmen) have people under our care forty hours a week.***

*“That led me to this: the **power of business for the good of the world**, not just to create economic value, but human values too.”*

*“**The power of business (should be used) not only to create economic value, but human values too.**”*



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## **We are all someone's beloved child**

Finally, Chapman tells us how the third "revelation" that **rounded out his business idea** involves living with an empathetic family. It came to him at a **wedding**.

*"As **my friend stood at the altar, he took his daughter's hand** and said, 'her mother and I give our daughter into wedlock with this young man.'*

*Having **walked two daughters** down the aisle myself, I thought, 'That's what they told him to say, but that's not what he meant.'*

*What he meant was, 'Listen, **her mother and I brought this beautiful young woman into the world**; we gave her as much love and care as we could... And **we hope that you keep on treating her with dignity and respect.**'"*

Chapman says that the idea that **"We are all someone's beloved child"** fomented empathy and dignified, human treatment of all people, beyond mere economic results.

*"I learned as much about leadership by attending parenting classes as I did at business school."*

**Practicing what he preaches: his company prior to the 2008 crisis**

**But what happens when business decisions don't see eye to eye with this family empathy?**

Chapman has been **consistent with his values**, as shown by what **his company did during the 2008 crisis**.

When asked about this by **Raj Sisodia**, co-author of Chapman's book, **global co-founder of the Conscious Capitalism movement**, and **FEMSA Distinguished Professor** on this subject at the Tec, Chapman explained what he did.

***“Be the leader you would like your children to have!”***

He replied that, under pressure from the economic crisis and faced with the **need to cut costs**, he thought about how a family would act, rather than a company guided only by insensitive profit.

***“It occurred to me that we would all make sacrifices in a family so that one member would no longer suffer. It's better that everyone should suffer a little than anyone should suffer a lot more,”*** he said.

Therefore, **he proposed to his company that instead of cutting back a certain percentage of the staff, everyone should take a one-month unpaid vacation.**

The response, he said, was overwhelming and **many even volunteered to take more unpaid leave** than others for **whom it was more difficult to do so.**

That, he said, helped the **culture of compassion and openness grow in his company.**

Finally, Chapman summed up his vision: **people simply want to know who they are and that what they do matters.**

***“Be the leader you would like your children to have!”*** he concluded.



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## **The Tec Board Meeting**

The Annual Board Meeting brings together the members of the different boards of Tec campuses and institutions.

Board members learn about the state and vision of the institutions that make up the Tec, in addition to attending important lectures given by guest specialists.

On this occasion, in addition to Bob Chapman, artificial intelligence specialist Sebastian Thrun gave a talk to students from the Tec's Monterrey campus.

David Garza, Rector and Executive President of Tec de Monterrey, emphasized that the Tec is constantly evolving and will seek to continue building transcendental legacies as it enters its ninth decade of life.

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