

The man who believed that work can create happiness



On the evening of **May 20, 2006**, Simon Cohen was in **Hong Kong** on business when he felt a **strange pain in his chest**, starting a **struggle** he had never experienced before.

As he attempted to regain control, **the pain escalated** until he **fell unconscious to the floor**. Just before that, a **thought** entered his mind that would set the course of his life.

"I thought about my parents, daughters, and friends. At the end of the day, I didn't think about containers, or money, or anything like that," recalls Cohen.

When Simón opened his eyes, he was in an **ambulance** with his wife, trying to put up with that **unexpected** and **strange counselor** who had come uninvited into his life.

That **May 20**, Simón initiated a **change** that would lead his **company** to be **recognized** as **one of the best to work for** under a methodology that he himself developed and to publish a book that caught the attention of the **writer Deepak Chopra**.



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“I feel bad”: the chest pain that changed his life

Simón ran [Henco Global](#), a company he **founded** in **1998** after working at his dad’s textile company.

One of his **main goals** was for his **logistics company** to be **successful** and to earn the highest possible profits for his family, which years later took him and his wife on a **business trip** to **Hong Kong** in **China**.

Simón remembers that during the week he **couldn’t sleep** well due to jet lag on top of the **pressure** and **stress** of closing the deals that he had traveled to the **antipodes**, the other side of the world, to make.

*“When **Friday** came, I was exhausted, **felt bad** and had **trouble breathing**. I had a cramp from my tail bone to my neck,” he says.*

The last engagement of his **Friday night** was dinner with a group of Japanese people whom Simón rose from his chair to greet when they arrived.

*“**I feel bad**,”* were the words that came out of his mouth. About **10 seconds later**, he felt what he describes as a **blow** to the **chest** that left him **unconscious** until he woke up in an **ambulance**.

A week **without sleep**, of business meetings, and **constant fatigue** for trying to be the **best logistics company** had sent him to the hospital on the other side of the world, away from his native Mexico.

*“They told me it was **Wolff-Parkinson-White syndrome**, a **double electrical impulse** from the **heart**,” he says.*



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In the darkness of the night, the starlight “illuminated” him

Medicines and **treatments** became Simón’s “companions” for a year, until one day he decided to **run away** from everything and go to the **beach** with his **wife** and **three young daughters**.

*“I **stopped taking the medicines** and we headed to the beach. One day, the power went out and my daughters, wife and I **went out to see the stars**.”*

*“We were lying on a towel, looking up at the sky and searching for shapes in the stars. When I **hugged them**, I burst into **tears** and thought, ‘What an idiot, I’m focusing on the **wrong goal**,” says Cohen.*

There and then he made the **decision** to be the **happiest person in the world** and seek that goal not only for himself but for those around him, his **family, employees, and friends**.

*“**Life is too short to be happy only on weekends**,” says Cohen, smiling at the memory of the scene.*

*“**Life is too short to be happy only on weekends.**”*



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The goal of being a happy company

The trip to the beach came to an end, bringing back a Simon who was eager to **change** the **goals** of **Henco Global**.

His trip inspired him to develop the **High Performance, Happy People methodology** in which **working hard** in an **environment** that promotes **happiness** has a positive impact on **job success**.

*"The idea was that **I wanted to be happy**. I needed to be **surrounded** by **happy people**, so the only thing I asked my people was that it had to be the **best place to work**."*

*"We created a great **place** where I give you **time to sleep well, eat well, and do exercise**. We have to **work hard** and that **helps us to be happy**," he says.*

His **methodology** is also based on ideas such as **leaders** being at the **service** of their **employees** and aiming to make them happy with their work.



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His Happiness Methodology: a Harvard Case Study

Cohen also mentions that **wellbeing** and **high performance** are connected, have an impact on each other, and should be promoted in the same way.

*“When I told that to my employees, many agreed with the idea. **Some got off the boat, but others got on and rowed harder,**” he says.*

This change led **Henco Global** to grow exponentially, **becoming 10 times larger** and also being recognized as one of the **20 best companies** to work for in Mexico.

In addition, [Harvard University](#) dedicated a **case study** to the company, telling the story of Henco Global.

“They don’t mention us as the world’s largest company or the richest. That’s a consequence that hopefully one day will come.

*“We were **rewarded** for being **good, noble, humble** people and for treating clients, suppliers, and competitors with dignity. **That’s what gives me the most pride,**” he says.*

The unforgettable trip in the orange “Beetle”

Coming from a middle-class home, Simón and his **parents** and **siblings** experienced several **financial crises**, such as the one in **1994**, the so-called “**December Mistake,**” which caused strong currency devaluation, bankruptcies, and unemployment in Mexico.

However, his father always supported them and helped them to succeed, says Simón.

When he was **5 years old**, his **parents** took **Simón** and his older brother **José** on a journey in an **orange Volkswagen 1600**.

The “**Beetle**,” with its unmistakable noise from a 44-horsepower engine, and one of the most popular automobiles at the time, left **Mexico City** seeking better fortune in **Monterrey**.



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Early-morning swimming and his Olympic dream

Simón, José, and their other brother **Daniel**, who was born after their arrival in Monterrey, studied at [Tecnológico de Monterrey](#).

Simón studied **International Business** and joined the **school swimming team** on his doctor's recommendation, after suffering from **allergies** and **asthma**.

Cohen would go to campus at **5 a.m. every day** to train, change for his 7 a.m. classes, and return to training at 1 p.m. between classes.

His goal was to **qualify** for the **Olympics**, but when he was told that **he wouldn't be able to**, he decided to dedicate his time to his **father's company**.

Being “focused” led him to success... and to the brink of death

Simón started **working** in for his dad, who asked him to take care of **exports**.

*“The **services** were **terrible**, it was done all by hand and it was very **difficult** to handle **global logistics**,” he recalls.*

Seeking to **solve** this **problem** after a **call** from a **German supplier** looking for a contact in Monterrey, Simón decided that it was **time** to **start** his own company.

*“During the call (the supplier) says to me ‘Do you know anyone who’s good at **networking**?’ And I say, ‘Yes, I am.’ **I didn’t know how to start**. I was a 22-year-old boy.*

*“That’s where the magic of the **Tec** comes in because I didn’t know who my friends were related to. I asked for their help, and it turned out that one of their dads was the CEO of **Vitro**, another was a manager at **CEMEX**, another in **Soriana**. We created an incredible list of contacts,” he says.*

Simón Cohen would dedicate his life to growing his company, **transporting containers** to several **countries** and **continents**, but at a high price, which was unknown to him until that night in May 2006.

*“I wanted to do well. I **forgot the basics** of life. Eat well, sleep well, exercise, and spend time with your family,” Simón recalls.*



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He tells his story in his book, PLENO

In addition to **joining** the **board** of **Tecmilenio**, one of **Tec de Monterrey's** institutions, Simón became a lecturer and published his book **PLENO** (Fulfilment).

He found this name for his manuscript when he remembered the feeling that filled him that night when he gazed at the stars with his family.

*"It's a really cool, simple **story**, that includes experiences and anecdotes, which you can read in **4 or 5 hours**," says Cohen.*

"Give me a number between 30 and 200," he asks during the interview and after hearing the number 46 he opens the book on that page.

"Life gives us a limited amount of energy each morning and we have the right to choose how and where we use it, to fight and be destructive or to reconcile ourselves and be creative," he reads.

<https://www.facebook.com/simon.cohen.50702/posts/4063107910388804> **His interview with Deepak Chopra**

Simón was also recently invited to talk to prominent writer **Deepak Chopra** for the launch of his book in English.

"If you want to know the secrets of a joyful energetic body, a loving and compassionate heart, a thoughtful creative mind, and the lightness of being, this book is an excellent guide," said Chopra.

Cohen mentioned that the **proceeds** from the book **will be used** to **help** someone of his family's choosing.

For example, previously they helped a **boy** who required a **bone marrow transplant** and needed **150,000 Euros (3.5 million pesos)** for the operation.

*"Everything is going to a **good cause**. We're talking about children with cancer or children who need surgery," he said.*

In addition to the **phrases** included on each of the pages, Cohen presents **philosophical topics** and talks about how he came to develop his **methodology** and the **challenges** he has faced.

The book is available on **Amazon** in physical format and also as an eBook for **Kindle**.

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Cohen doesn't hesitate to say that his life took a turn that **May** when his heart forced him to **rediscover himself**.

*"I don't want to be the **man who sells the most containers** in the world, nor do I want to be the richest man on the planet.*

*"I want **our culture to go beyond that**, to make **more people happy**. We want there to be more **stable and peaceful** people in this world," he concludes.*

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