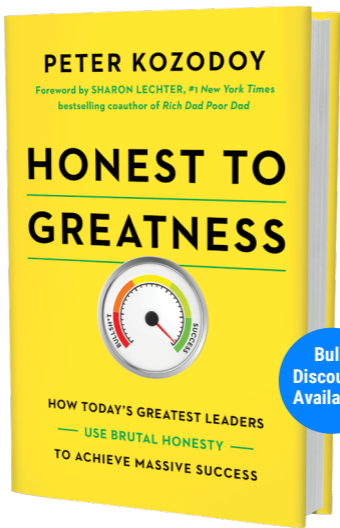


CORPORATE AND EVENT PACKAGES



"Honest to Greatness is a timely read for anyone who wants to engage with consumers in today's market. Peter Kozodoy sheds light on why some companies soar and others falter. It is as fascinating as it is informative!"

—BARBARA CORCORAN,

founder of The Corcoran Group and Shark on Shark Tank

PLACE YOUR ORDER:

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peter@honesttogreatness.com ✉ (617) 605-3051

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Do you ever get sick and tired of all the BS out there in the world?



Well, here's some good news: If you want to build an industry-dominating business in today's hyper-transparent world, then honesty is the #1 business strategy you'll need—and this book will prove it to you.

See, here's the thing: Consumers today are smarter than ever, with more information at their fingertips than they know what to do with. And with near-perfect information, we've begun to make dramatically different choices about what we buy, flattening leaders and organizations who have historically relied on deceit to achieve success.

In today's world, we see right through these tricks, roll our eyes at corporate scandals, and distrust...well, everyone. And in that environment, only the honest will survive.

In *Honest to Greatness*, serial Inc. 5000 entrepreneur Peter Kozodoy shows how today's greatest business leaders use honesty—not as a touchy-feely core value, but as a business strategy that produces game-changing, industry-dominating success.

Through case studies and interviews with leaders at Bridgewater Associates, Sprint, Quicken Loans, Domino's Pizza, The Ritz-Carlton, and more, Kozodoy shows how anyone in the workplace can use strategic honesty to:

- Rapidly explode your sales by deliberately telling people the “whole” truth
- Attract and inspire the best talent in any industry (who only really crave one thing)

ABOUT THE BOOK

- Create an unbeatable culture of innovation that easily dominates your competitors
- Earn your team's respect and loyalty by using a simple but brutally honest technique
- Unlock deep personal fulfillment by getting honest about your own self-limiting head trash

Filled with powerful lessons for current and future leaders, this timely book shows you how to use honesty at both the organizational and individual level to achieve true greatness in business and in life.

CONNECT WITH PETER

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PETER KOZODOY is an Inc. 5000 serial entrepreneur, TEDx speaker, and business coach who works with organizations and their leaders to help them overcome self-limiting bullsh*t and use honesty to achieve greatness. His articles on leadership and entrepreneurship have appeared in *Forbes*, *Inc.*, The Huffington Post, PR Daily, and more. He holds a BA in Economics from Brandeis University and an MBA from Columbia Business School, and lives outside New York City with his wife and their spoiled dog. To strike up an honest conversation, visit [peterkozodoy.com](#).



Reading guide:

- What was your biggest takeaway from reading *Honest to Greatness*?
- Was there a specific passage that left a strong impression, good or bad? Discuss the passage and its effect.
- *Honest to Greatness* made the case that everyone is inherently dishonest, on some level, and that dishonesty prevents us from success. Did the book make you more aware and knowledgeable about how honesty influences your success? How, if at all, did your opinion change after reading this book?
- Did the author cover the topic fairly and thoroughly, or did the book seem to insist that honesty could cure every issue, every time? How so?
- Which case studies did you find most surprising, intriguing, or applicable to your own business and life?
- How could you use the three levels in the Hourglass of Honesty to achieve your own biggest goals, both in your personal and in your professional life?
- As you read the chapters on leadership, how “honest” of a leader did you judge yourself to be? What changes will you make in your communication and/or leadership style now that you’ve read the book?
- What changes are you going to make in your life and business now that you have read this book? Do those changes inspire you, or frighten you? Why?

INTERVIEW AND READING GUIDE

- Was *Honest to Greatness* written in a way that was easily accessible? Were unfamiliar terms and concepts explained? Were there plenty of details to reinforce the subject matter and were they helpful?
- What was missing from *Honest to Greatness*? What unanswered questions did the book leave you with?
- Which people or organizations can you think of that should absolutely read this book and make changes based on the book's frameworks?
- If you got the chance to ask the author one question, what would it be?

Sample interview questions:

- Can honesty really solve any business crisis? How so?
- You say that most people are inherently “dishonest”? What do you mean by that?
- How do you define “honesty,” exactly?
- What can you do if you work in a “dishonest” organization overrun by politics?
- How can honesty improve your sales?
- How can honesty improve your marketing?
- How can someone use strategic honesty to become a better leader?
- How can you improve work meetings by being more “honest”?
- What does honesty have to do with attracting and retaining talent?

- How do you use honesty strategically, beyond simply making honesty a core value?
- When does honesty not work?
- How do we explain people who are dishonest, but still achieve success?
- What about fake-it-til-you-make-it?

BOOK EXCERPT

“HURRY UP!” RH HUSHED

over his shoulder to his cofounder, Marc, and their new CFO, Barry. “This is going to make us or break us. We can’t be late!” The three hurried out of the Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport and flagged down a cab, which would whisk them to the gleaming Renaissance Tower—a bastion of successful, national corporations in the year 2000. Marc sported a worn leather briefcase slung over his right shoulder, while a bright red box filled with palm-sized plastic squares balanced precariously on his left arm. He could feel his bicep giving way under the weight and his entire left side slipping into numbness as they hurried into the lobby. Marc slowed just long enough to gaze up at the faceted transparent glass ceiling above their heads, and RH wondered if they’d be in a much loftier place when they returned to this same lobby in just one short hour.

“Hopefully the heavens are with us,” Barry uttered under his breath, also caught, mesmerized, by the articulated dome overhead.

“No need to pray, guys,” RH shot back. “This is it. Today’s our day.”

Their nerves betrayed RH’s confidence; on the elevator ride up, Barry’s hands began to quiver ever so slightly, gathering energy as they finally reached the twenty-third floor. The elevator door snapped open, and with the collective inhale of a symphony of trumpet players about to carry their first note of the evening, the three pressed onward to the corner boardroom.

After what seemed like hours, John finally strode in

BOOK EXCERPT

like a corporate knight, with an executive assistant busily rattling off scheduling changes in his ear and a whole cadre of well-suited executives in tow. RH bolted to his feet to shake each one's hand and hunkered down for his presentation on why his firm would be the perfect acquisition target. He had rehearsed his blocking, his phrasing, his insistence on the worthiness of the firm's asking price: a not-too-shabby \$50 million. Surely, RH reasoned, their ask was a pittance for the national industry leader in whose glass-walled, oak-tabled boardroom they sat. But Barry, always with an eye to the numbers, knew that their ask was a fortune compared to their company's monthly net loss. Neither was it any secret that the entrepreneurial company had never made money—as these seasoned executives surely knew.

To those executives in their hard-won tower, the little start-up in question looked like a fairly indecent proposal. The start-up, bleeding cash and promising all the “innovation” in the world, posed no threat for John's industry juggernaut. There was time, John presumed, loads of time in which to think and act strategically. There were plenty of opportunities at hand that could carry his already successful corporation forward into the new millennium. That's precisely why John did not acquire the little start-up company that day; instead, John and his team of shrewd executives laughed poor RH, Marc, and Barry out of the room, out of Renaissance Tower, and right out of Dallas, Texas.

Retreating to their tiny start-up headquarters in California, the three might have quit right then and there. Fortunately for all of us, they didn't. Instead, they grew to become the fastest-growing media company in the world and put John's multibillion-dollar empire right out of business—because RH is Reed Hastings, the cofounder of Netflix, and John Antioco, the CEO of Blockbuster, had just made the biggest mistake of his life.

My dramatization of this account notwithstanding, it's so easy for us to judge the Blockbuster vs. Netflix story in hindsight. Of course Netflix would triumph! What a fool Antioco must have been for letting Netflix slip through his fingers! The disbelief we feel can only be

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addressed by assuming that Antioco was inept, his team was completely ineffective, and this entire situation was due to idiocy at the highest levels.

But is that entirely true? If that's the obvious conclusion we're to draw from this disheartening disaster, there's a burning question we must also answer if we're to believe the lesson: If Antioco was just a big ol' dummy, then how could he have possibly risen to become one of the most powerful CEOs in the media business?

It turns out that the answer to this question is the most telling of all, because, as we can all agree, it takes a tremendous amount of raw intelligence, analytical skills, and political acumen to become the chief executive officer of a multibillion-dollar company. So, if Blockbuster's downfall wasn't caused by idiocy, then what exactly caused it? And how can we learn from its demise for the benefit of our own business pursuits?

Here's what I propose: Antioco and his merry group of well-heeled executives didn't lose their multibillion-dollar market cap because they were inept. They lost their net worths and the hard-earned money of their investors because Antioco and his team were not honest with themselves about what was going on around them—the massive shift we consumers were making from physical DVDs to online streaming services.

It's extraordinary what a little dishonesty can do to your business. But for the sake of argument, let's say Antioco sat his team down in 2001—just after meeting with the up-and-coming Netflix—and said, “OK . . . let's make sure we aren't missing something big here. Maybe it's time we get honest about what's changing in our industry, what we've built here at Blockbuster, and what we need to change within ourselves to make sure we keep innovating.”

What might have happened then?

It turns out that all the MBAs, cash flow analyses, marketing tactics, and complex consulting strategies in the world can't save an organization that is fundamentally dishonest in the first place. As Blockbuster shows, it is not idiocy but a lack of honesty that causes the

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stagnation felt by many organizations that claim to desire innovation and growth. No matter what business you're in, what your goals are, or what obstacles confront you, honesty must come first . . . because without it, you won't even see your enemy staring at you from across the table in your own boardroom, high in the Renaissance Tower in Dallas, Texas.

WHAT IS HONESTY?

Usually when we label someone as dishonest, our first thought is they're not telling the truth. They're fudging the numbers, perhaps, or hiding something. But outright lying to people is just one intentional act—one facet of honesty. Individuals and companies are dishonest out of neglect, too, particularly when they lie to themselves.

Honesty is a broad concept. It could mean true, candid, direct, transparent, moral, or trustworthy. But as you'll see with the incredible companies we'll look at in this book, honest can also mean innovative, ethical, fair, open-minded, willing to be humble, able to admit wrongdoing, ready for change, and much, much more. As you read through these words and think about their meanings, you might assume something that I wrongfully assumed many years ago: Doesn't every leader naturally exemplify these traits?

When I first started preaching about the connection between honesty and business success, an interviewer asked me if I believe everyone is naturally honest. At that point, I answered, "Yes . . . for the most part." Now, years later, my answer is "Certainly not!" If anything, I've learned that honesty is a complex monster that rears its head every time you consider an action, make a decision, influence another, or even think. Like mindfulness, honesty is a practice you undertake as a lifelong pursuit of being, rather than an ad hoc criterion weighing on a certain decision.

Honest leaders are able to pivot on a dime, recruit the best talent in their industry, create innovative products and services, earn outsized profits, create raving-fan cultures, scale their revenues, and create

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drool-worthy market returns. By contrast, those who brush honesty aside as a nice-to-have soft skill or dandy core value are risking millions or billions of dollars, public disgrace, and even jail time, as we'll see in some high-profile cases of dishonesty. Yes, honesty is that important and that intrinsic to your success, especially in our newly transparent world, where everything you say and do can be plastered all over social media and the global news in a matter of seconds—and then live on for generations to come.

When it comes to choosing honesty, we simply won't have a choice much longer. The climate in which our society exists right now is very different from what has ever come before, which is why we need a new set of rules in our business playbook that are fundamental to a world in which there is nowhere to hide. In the defense of corporations everywhere, it was only a mere fifty years ago that the British philosopher Bertrand Russell believed that “life is nothing but a competition to be the criminal rather than the victim.”¹

Russell died in 1970, two decades before the internet took inexorable hold of our society and changed human behavior as we've known it since we started walking on two legs. I suspect that if Russell had seen the dot-com bubble or witnessed the rise of chat rooms, work-from-home jobs, or Glassdoor, he might have changed his stance and instead fashioned a worldview in which leaders, managers, employees, investors, suppliers, distributors, the public, the planet, and especially customers can—and must—win together in order to create lasting, successful, honest businesses. The businessperson who's bully and curator of the truth, who's selective about what the customer sees, is no longer a valid model or effective *modus operandi*.

Over the course of this book, we're going to take a look at what in the world has happened to our world—why we see dishonesty everywhere, why fake news rules our airwaves and social media, and why we must not give in to the temptation to deceive in the short term if we want to achieve success in the long term. We'll examine some obvious, scandalous cases of outright dishonesty to see whether or not dishonesty can still produce positive

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results in our modern society. Then we'll zoom out to put those cautionary tales into context by studying what has changed in the twenty-first century that is steadily forcing us to be honest and transparent, lest we end up fighting the likes of review sites, social media testimonials (good and bad), and the public relations wrath of angry customers.

Then we'll turn our attention to some of the most influential business leaders of our time to show how they have used honesty as a strategic tool for effective sales, marketing, finance, management, communication, innovation, and leadership, so you can discover how to spot opportunities to harness the power of honesty across your entire organization, whether you're in a leadership role or still rising through the ranks. We'll see how start-up entrepreneurs, small business owners, presidents of midsize companies, and the leaders of Sprint, Quicken Loans, Berkshire Hathaway, Domino's Pizza, Bridgewater Associates, Tropicana, and others use honesty and transparency to win. Spoiler alert: they don't sketch these touchy-feely values onto their conference room walls and smile at them before each meeting. Instead, they wield honesty, and all that it encompasses, as a strategic technique to thrive. In this way, honesty is a value that gets etched into the souls of their organizations.

Along the way, we'll consider honesty from multiple angles and with several different lenses to see if we can take that nebulous concept and usefully define it, both in terms of what it is and what it surely isn't. We'll also discuss ways to cultivate honesty within your teams, from the C-suite to the front lines, and we'll even discover how to gently introduce honesty into the culture of your organization. Along the way, I'll provide you with critical frameworks that you can use to enhance your leadership skills, create a culture of innovation, and achieve industry-dominating success.

The techniques in this book transcend business size, industry, and purpose. Honesty, unsurprisingly, works universally; it creates opportunities to ask better questions, get more insightful answers, and overcome the roadblocks we face as leaders who lie—sometimes

BOOK EXCERPT

to others, but most often, egregiously, to ourselves.

Whether you're starting a new business and looking for the next big wave, growing a company and needing a rocket-fuel additive, or transforming your organization into its next phase of success, the frameworks in this book will help you get honest on three main levels—the same three levels that Blockbuster failed to identify.

First, you'll learn to get honest about what's going on in your community—including what's changing in your industry and what's happening in our evolving world.

Second, you'll learn to get honest about how you view the others around you, whether those others are your team, your customers, your prospects, or something else entirely.

Third, you'll learn how to get honest with and about yourself, so that you can easily recognize whether you're saying no to just another cold call or turning down the next Netflix-sized opportunity.

After more than a decade of working on behalf of leaders from local car dealers to Warren Buffett, I've discovered that honesty truly is the best policy—for your principles and your profits. Now, I want to inspire you to use honesty to achieve greatness.

Let's begin.

¹ “Bertrand Russell Quotes.” BrainyQuote.com, accessed February 2, 2020, https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/bertrand_russell_384629.

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