

The Rebellious CEO: 12 Leaders Who Did It Right

Ralph Nader

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Ralph Nader's *The Rebellious CEO* profiles twelve executives for whom the greater good outweighed quick profits. These smart, flexible, independent thinkers instigated positive change and used their successes to leverage money and attention to good causes, in their own organizations and beyond.

These rebellious big bosses are introduced in dramatic contrast to typical practices (a one-time organizational chart from General Motors is referenced, with twenty-some levels of managers managing each other, that seems baroque in comparison). In their work, they took hands-on, anti-nonsense approaches; they were well-informed, independent thinkers who challenged the status quo in diverse fields, including food, travel, and investments.

Consumer advocacy is a recurring theme: Southwest's telephone helplines are actually helpful; Patagonia clothing lasts; and employees are trusted with enough freedom to satisfy customers. Ecological responsibility is equally important: Anita Roddick at the Body Shop encouraged reusing containers and championed products made of renewable resources; Interface flooring leader Ray C. Anderson studied biomimicry, making a manufacturing plant more like an actual plant, achieving the company's zero negative environmental impact goals while also turning a profit.

Many of these daring dozen are deceased, but their voices, and voices of the thinkers who influenced them, are made prominent thanks to passages from their writings and Nader's own memories of them. Indeed, Nader recollects how he came to know these folks during his own career (and consumer law is a recurring topic), as with a snappy anecdote about pro-union foods impresario Jeno Paulucci meeting with Teamsters boss Jimmy Hoffa.

The Rebellious CEO celebrates twelve gutsy, ethical executives in memorable essays to challenge and inspire contemporary business leaders.

MEREDITH GRAHL COUNTS (November / December 2023)

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