



**CONSCIOUS  
CAPITALISM®**

# Conversation with the co-CEOs

April 25, 2016

*Conscious Capitalism recently hired Alexander McCobin to serve as co-CEO along with Doug Rauch. It has been nearly a month since Alexander began, and the two co-CEOs sat down to have a conversation about the future of the organization with this new partnership.*

**Doug Rauch:** I've had the honor of serving as CEO of Conscious Capitalism for 5 years now. During that time, Conscious Capitalism has experienced some wonderful growth and is now positioned to take advantage of facing a number of significant opportunities. And of course, to do so it must deal with a few challenges. One of the biggest challenges we currently face as an organization is capacity: we need to deepen our leadership team to take advantage of all the opportunities available to Conscious Capitalism.

Last summer, Doug Levy, our board chair, and I suggested to the board that we expand Conscious Capitalism's top leadership from a single CEO to two co-CEOs. This would both add critical capacity and emphasize the collaborative nature of Conscious Capitalism. What began with a search last summer has resulted in you joining the team on April 1st, and what I believe is the start of a new phase for Conscious Capitalism. So, Alexander, welcome as co-CEO of Conscious Capitalism.

**Alexander McCobin:** Thank you, Doug. I was humbled and honored when I received the invitation to join the Conscious Capitalism team. More importantly, I understood the importance of the responsibility being entrusted to me. Conscious Capitalism's mission is great. Articulating the power of business as the greatest force for good to both business and society at large has the potential to change the world. My intention is to empower and enlarge the Conscious Capitalism community to spread this message and in so doing help elevate humanity to unprecedented heights. I am excited to work alongside you as co-CEO, the rest of Conscious Capitalism's staff, Board, and community.

**Doug Rauch:** Prior to becoming CEO of Conscious Capitalism, I had been a founding member on the Conscious Capitalism Board and had “graduated” from my long-time role as President of Trader Joe’s Company. Others may not know as much about your background, though, Alexander, so can you tell them a bit about yourself?

**Alexander McCobin:** I grew up and went to school in Pennsylvania. After college I pursued graduate studies in philosophy, focusing on business ethics. I realize now that my original dissertation proposal was a form of proto-Conscious Capitalism. At the same time, I was building up a nonprofit organization that I had started during college, which really dominated my life for almost a decade called Students For Liberty. What began as a 12 person roundtable discussion in 2007 grew over the years into an international movement of over 2,800 student groups in over 100 countries educating young people about the principles of a free society, training tens of thousands of leaders, distributing millions of educational resources, and organizing hundreds of conferences.

**Doug Rauch:** Students For Liberty is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization like Conscious Capitalism, but it has a more political aura than Conscious Capitalism does. You also have been an outspoken proponent of libertarianism. Given that background, some may wonder why you were interested in joining Conscious Capitalism and what your goals are as co-CEO.

**Alexander McCobin:** Conscious Capitalism and Students For Liberty are very different organizations, with different missions. I did not accept the co-CEO position at Conscious Capitalism to replicate Students For Liberty. I accepted the position because I believe in this organization’s unique mission and I want to help this movement have the greatest impact possible. From the start of the day, I am a capitalist. I am a strong proponent of the system that has saved billions of people from extreme poverty, extended life expectancy, and increased the quality of life over the past two hundred years. At the same time, I believe business can do better and have an even greater impact. If business leaders recognized the full extent of their potential and lived up to it, both in the way they operate and the way they present themselves to the world, everything that capitalism has accomplished to date would pale in comparison to what is accomplished next. Conscious Capitalism is accepting of individuals across the political spectrum. Whether someone is liberal, conservative, or libertarian, they are welcome at Conscious Capitalism. We are a big tent organization unified around a common mission to elevate humanity through the power of business. My purpose is to help Conscious Capitalism fulfill that mission to the greatest extent possible, and I want to strengthen our big tent as one means of doing so.

**Doug Rauch:** One of the things that is most exciting to me personally about you joining Conscious Capitalism is your success in growing a grassroots organization in a difficult environment into a movement with global reach. Conscious Capitalism began as an idea discussed in a group of about 100 individuals, but now has chapters, advocates, and practitioners across the globe, which has been remarkable, but we want to grow Conscious Capitalism’s depth and breadth even more. From your side, what were some of the key lessons you learned from your time at Students For Liberty that you think will be important at Conscious Capitalism?

**Alexander McCobin:** I should start by emphasizing that the difference between the two organizations applies as much to their logistics as their missions. Conscious Capitalism and Students For Liberty have different audiences, structures, and goals, which means the organizational practices of one may not work for the other. However, there were three things that led to SFL's success that I believe are important to any organization: people, values, and vision. Early on in SFL, we realized that the success of the organization, the student groups SFL supports, and the overall impact of SFL's work, depended upon how well we could recruit, train, and support the people running them. At the end of the day, people are the ones who make a difference. This is why SFL focuses heavily on leadership development. From there, we spent a lot of time inculcating SFL's values in our leaders, such as emphasizing the importance of respect, dialogue, and debate, to bring together a diverse group of individuals who may disagree with each other on important issues. What tied it all together was our vision for creating a freer future, which was specific enough to provide guidance for our programs, but allowed enough flexibility for leaders to experiment with new strategies and approaches.

**Doug Rauch:** A lot of people are probably wondering what kind of changes you would like to make to Conscious Capitalism. What would you say to them?

**Alexander McCobin:** I am coming in with the plan of helping you and the community grow Conscious Capitalism's impact, but I am not coming in with any specific plans for what to change. My first task as co-CEO is to conduct an organizational review to identify the current state of the organization, the good, the bad, the ugly, and the opportunities available for this movement to grow. So my answer to anyone interested in what I want to do would be to turn the question around and ask them: What would you like to see Conscious Capitalism do? I want to hear from as many people in the community as possible, and encourage anyone who is willing to share their thoughts to email me at [alexander.mccobin@consciouscapitalism.org](mailto:alexander.mccobin@consciouscapitalism.org).

**Doug Rauch:** I think that's a great way to start Alexander: listening, learning and serving. I'm excited to be working with you and the community as we grow this organization and movement.

**Alexander McCobin:** Thank you, Doug, I'm excited to work with you, as well.

