



MONEY MATTERS

Making a Life

Redefining Success and Rediscovering Joy

By JOHN IVANKO & LISA KIVIRIST

Adapted from the book *ECOpreneuring: Putting Purpose and the Planet Before Profits* (New Society Publishers)

Life offers more than a paycheck, corner office and promotional title. In fact, many of us are working ourselves to death. For many people, their identity is so closely associated with their job that when they stop working, they end up passing away not long afterwards, lacking hobbies, social connections or life purpose. A shift in perspective is underway, from desiring a standard of living defined by possessions and financial wealth to a quality of life defined by experiences and genuine well-being.

The New Quality of Life

When redesigning and reorienting our home life, my family started experi-

menting with our own ecologically modeled Diversified Quality of Life Index, measured by various factors including the health of relationships, enjoyment of work, level of satisfaction with life and opportunity for continued development and community involvement. Community involvement can be immediately local and place-based, or it can be virtual (on the Internet) or temporal (at a Green Festival or renewable energy fair). Our currency is composed of joy, happiness, friendship, satisfying self-reliance, peace. Generating cash flow, while necessary, usually accounts for less than five or six hours of work per day on average, leaving plenty of time for non-financial aspects of our Earth Mission and pursuit of happiness. As it turns out, much of our income-producing work does not command high com-

ensation. And we're not afraid to walk away from obligatory or harmful relationships any more than we are to divorce ourselves from our once dependency on the conventional food system.

The Gross National Product (GNP) is the total value of the free market economy's output of goods and services, measured in money. We'd argue that it's measuring a false sense of prosperity. In fact, such atrocities as the September 11 terrorist acts, the Exxon Valdez disaster, violent crimes, divorces, the wars on drugs or terror, and the expanding prison network all contribute to the GNP. Not accounted for within GNP is the loss of natural capital: soil, forests, water and wildlife. Nor are the ecological services rendered by the biological processes of nature: the cleansing of water, wetlands buffering coastal areas from storms, sequestering carbon dioxide taken in by trees—all of which foster climate stability.

As if GNP is not enough, add to it the Consumer Confidence Index, an index



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developed to measure “consumers’ expectations” toward employment and other conditions that, statistically speaking, influence their willingness to keep spending. The Consumer Confidence Index and GNP measure the wrong things. Our health, our happiness, our deep connection to the natural world and our local community are far more important than helping support the continued—and unsustainable—increase in spending. Our family’s business life dovetails and intersects with the Multiple Economies of Ecopreneurship in which we thrive, bartering for a granite countertop installation, writing an article in exchange for an advertisement for our book and donating a set of multicultural children’s books to help raise funds for the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation.

Spend Less, Live More

It turns out that our questioning of the GNP is similar to what the nonprofit organization Redefining Progress has



been proposing with their Genuine Progress Indicator (GPI), which values things like volunteerism and accounts for loss of natural capital and for the loss of leisure suffered by people working excess hours. According to their scientific methodology, while the GNP has continued to rise, their Genuine Progress Indicator has steadily fallen since the 1970s. Economist Mark Anielski, author of *The Economics of Happiness* (New Society Publishers), developed Genuine

Wealth, a practical economic model that helps redefine progress based on five capitals: human, social, natural, built and financial.

Our family’s life changes have helped us focus on what’s important, meaningful and authentic—and probably interpreted negatively by those calculating the Consumer Confidence Index. We’re not advocating millions of Americans to take a vow of poverty. Rather, we’re inviting everyone to join

millions of Americans who are living below their means, downshifting their consumption, sharing instead of hoarding and simplifying instead of spending more at the mall. Spend less, live more.

CONTACT: Redefining Progress, (510)444-3041, www.rprogress.org. 

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