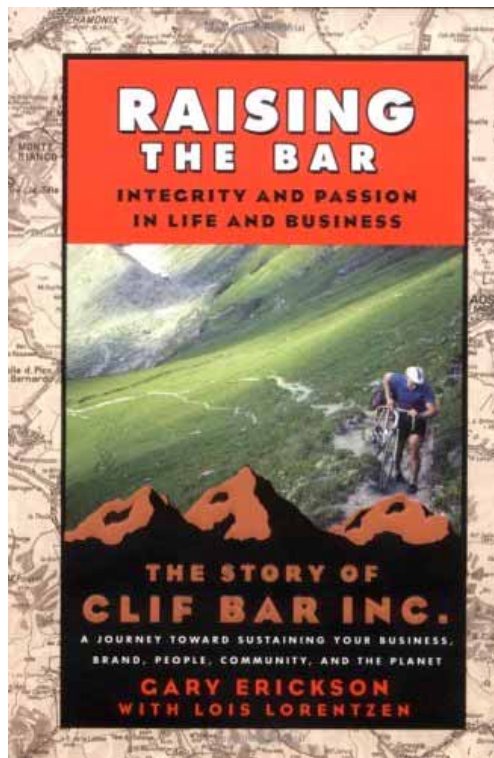


Book Review: “Raising the Bar” Integrity and Passion in Life and Business: The Story of Clif Bar & Co.

By Sebastien Henry, Executive Coach & Trainer
Emotional Intelligence Expert for Progress-U Ltd.



You may wonder what this book by Gary Erickson has to do with Emotional Intelligence and leadership. Actually, it contains very interesting insights in relation to this topic.

One of the fundamental aspects of developing our Emotional Intelligence as leaders is learning to listen to our emotions when making decisions.

Have you ever experienced a situation when you were about to make a decision that made a lot of sense business-wise, but somehow did not feel right? In spite of a strong case for that decision, you felt some unusually strong emotion: fear, frustration, or sadness, for instance.

What did you finally decide?

The author of this very interesting book had weeks of inner struggle before taking a clear stance.

The author is the founder of Clif Bar & Co., a company manufacturing and selling energy bars. Due to an innovative approach to the market (the use of only natural ingredients, for instance), the company grew extremely fast, from USD 700K to USD 60M in 6 to 7 years.

As Clif kept growing, the owner heard continuous warnings that the company was now going to get under attack from two massive rivals, Kraft and Nestle. And his partner wanted to exit. Selling the company was becoming an attractive option. A very attractive option, actually. The dream of many entrepreneurs was about to come true for him: somebody offered to buy Clif for USD 120M.

The two founders prepared the company for the sale, working through all the steps with bankers and lawyers. The deal was ready for signature.

But something extraordinary happened.

The owner had a string of very challenging weeks, with the stress of the preparation for the sale adding to the sadness of having to part with the company. But the process was on track, and after all, it was such an attractive offer. USD 120M would mean USD 60M for each of the partners. In a few weeks, then days, he would walk out with USD 60M in his pocket.

But, on the day he had to sign the deed of sale, he felt overwhelmed with sadness, and started feeling a lot of pain in his body, almost suffocating. He isolated himself on the parking lot of his company. Everyone was waiting for him inside to sign the deal.

Then he made a final decision. He would not sell. He went back to their office, and announced that he was not selling. This dramatic decision meant that instead of walking out with USD 60M in his pocket, he would be soon USD 60M in debt, as his infuriated partner would ask him to buy her out.

The author's account of the whole process is fascinating. Here is one of the most striking examples I have found of a business leader giving priority to his emotions over a strong business case. In that particular case, he decided to listen fully to his sadness, and made a decision (not selling) that led him to instant relief...and later on, great joy.

The rest of the book is the story of Clif after that major decision. Clif kept growing fast and remained independent. The author, after buying out his partner a few years later, became the sole owner. Of course, it was not an easy ride, as you can imagine. But it is worth noting that he never had any regret about his decision.

What about you? In case you are presently considering a major decision, what emotions can you identify in yourself when looking at the different options? What decision would you make if you chose to fully listen to your emotions?

Yes, it is not that easy to identify one's emotions, especially when they are mixed. Writing a journal, even for 10 minutes a day, is a good way to bring more clarity.

Reading this book will provide you with further insights, so I highly recommend it.

As a bonus, another very interesting aspect is the business approach of the owner, that he calls "triple bottom line": people, profit, environment. This means that for him, his people and the environment carry the same weight as how much profit is made.

I hope that you find in this book as much inspiration as I did!

Warmly

Sebastien



Sebastien Henry is **Progress-U's expert for Emotional Intelligence (EQ) and stress management**. He works with executives who want to:

- avoid feeling exhausted and uprooted as their career takes them to the top;
- become more inspiring leaders by developing their Emotional Intelligence (EQ) at work; and, as a consequence
- be able to motivate their people more and retain the best.

Having worked in an Asia-Pacific regional position at a multinational company, Sebastien has experimented extensively on how to develop Emotional Intelligence in his daily work life. He is currently writing a book on this topic. His articles on Emotional Intelligence in Leadership have been published in Human Resources and South China Morning Post.

He firmly believes in action, and the tools he uses and shares are derived from several areas of his life: his business experience as a corporate executive, of course, but also his intensive practice of mountaineering and rock climbing (7a on-sight and more than 50 alpine routes), his commitment to teach and coach prisoners, and his daily meditations for more than six years.

Positions of his clients as a one-to-one coach are: Asia/Pacific General Manager, Country General Manager, Department Head, etc.

Languages: Spoken and written Mandarin, Japanese, English, French (native language)

Credentials:

- MBA, BA in Psychology, BA in Philosophy
- Certified NLP Practitioner and Master Practitioner
- Certified NLP Trainer (NLP, USA)
- Certified Coach (ICC)
- More than 40 days of training with the Gestalt approach at the Paris School of Gestalt
- Certified Trainer of the "EQ Impact Learning" program (Talentsmart, USA)

Services offered: 1:1 Executive Coaching, Group Seminars and Workshops, Key Note Speeches