

Preface

Memory is less a neutral accident of the mind than a conscious work of interpretation, marked as much by deletion as by selection. How a community remembers the past is the single, most important element in determining its future.

—James Carroll, *Constantine's Sword*

I had several motivations for writing this book. I wanted to relate some of the stories of people I have known at Procter & Gamble—and more recently, at Yale University and the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center—who have achieved success despite great challenges. I also wanted to thank those who have helped me become who I am today—all those who were patient, encouraging, and willing to generously give of themselves to make me a more effective leader and, I hope, a better individual. In addition, this book is important to me personally because it represents a relatively complete statement of the values I believe in most, and that may serve as a guide to others' decisions and actions, whether inside or outside a company's walls. Above all else, I have tried to identify those lessons that I believe will be most helpful to you as you pursue purpose and growth within your own organizations, as well as fulfillment in your personal lives.

My intention is to share certain principles and insights based on *what really matters*—on what, over the course of a career of more than forty years, I have come to believe is essential to the development of enduring brands, to the meaningful growth of organizations of all kinds, and to individual careers. This book isn't meant to be studied academically or read passively. Instead, I want to make a difference in your understanding of what leads to success, both personally and professionally. Most important, I want to underscore the responsibility each of us has to

x Preface

help shape the success and character of the institutions to which we belong. Under the right conditions and the proper leadership, I have witnessed countless acts of heroism and sacrifice that have profoundly affected the success of companies and the quality of life of customers, employees, and communities. These acts were seldom the result of grand financial gambits of the kind you read about in the paper, but rather were carried out by ordinary people with vision, courage, and resolve working individually and together.

This book is organized into three sections:

How companies succeed. Using my own experiences at P&G as inspiration, I explain the foundation of P&G's success: serving consumers by creating and sustaining leadership brands. I identify key lessons in brand building, both good and bad, and establish how important it is to both *let the consumer decide* and *go for the big win*.

How companies can stay in the lead. Here I describe the values, practices, and relationships with people that have enabled Procter & Gamble to be not only a strong company, but also a vibrant *institution* and *community*. I explain why I believe being a community is an organization's greatest competitive advantage, and I discuss some of the challenges of retaining this advantage. This section also brings to life the fundamental truth that by doing what's right in supporting our communities we are rewarded in many ways.

How we live our lives. Here I explore the value of *passionate ownership* that the people of great institutions bring to their organizations and the importance of building and taking advantage of *diversity*. I also describe the life goals I have pursued and the values I have tried to embrace as a way of keeping true to these goals. In no way am I claiming perfect virtue or infallibility. The discussion will make that clear. But I do hope my experiences will give some substance to words that many companies talk about but strain to define—such as service and integrity. Finally, I share my conviction that when all is said and done, life at P&G and elsewhere, and the successes we achieve, are *family affairs*.

While these sections are presented independently, they are interconnected. It has become clear to me, for example, that the opportunity to

serve consumers—not abstractly, but personally and individually—can drive a deeply felt conviction worthy of a lasting career and a lifetime of best efforts. P&G encouraged a level of intimacy with and responsibility to consumers that allowed employees to see that what they were doing was meaningful to others.

I have also come to understand that a commitment to helping one's community can not only build the reputation of brands, but also help attract and retain the very kind of men and women most able to make a vibrant corporate community, capable of sustaining leadership over time. In this spirit, too, a genuine appreciation of diversity both helps to attract a bastion of talent that is otherwise unavailable and supports companies' global expansion. In the case of P&G, it enabled us to better meet the needs of billions of extraordinarily diverse consumers.

While individual actions and decisions are informed and inspired by the values of ethical, reputable organizations, it is also true that the decisions and actions of individuals, especially at testing moments, give shape to an organization's values. P&G's values, for instance, are partly a product of defining moments when temptations to abdicate these values in favor of expedience or personal gain were avoided. In this way, what could easily have been paperbound truisms became active guides for living.

By reading this book I hope you will learn, as I have, that a deep and sincere interest not only in the men and women working in your organization, but also in their families, makes a special contribution to the building of community and to feelings of loyalty and ownership among employees. Try as any company might, there are no simple and clean divisions between personal and work lives, and it is impossible for people to pretend they live in two entirely separate worlds. Because we always wanted whole people working at P&G, we extended our social range beyond employees to family members, and welcomed those who wished to participate in this larger community.

If there's one overarching theme of this book, it is this: *Growth and leadership involve constant change and innovation in everything we do.* We should embrace change proactively as a natural process of renewal. We should pursue innovation enthusiastically, recognizing it as the lifeblood of progress and competitive advantage. And we should pursue both innovation and change even as we work to better fulfill our most cherished values.

xii Preface

In this book, I am very candid in identifying what has worked and what has not; what went well and what went badly—both for me personally, and for the institutions with which I have worked. The values and strategies I describe here—founded on more than forty years of experience at Procter & Gamble, Yale University, and the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center—have served me and countless others well in business and in life more generally. I hope that they will be of service to you.