

## Questions for the Media

**Q: What's the significance of the title *The Un-Game*? How does the book deliver on the promise of the sub-title? Sub-title: *Four-Play to Business as Unusual*. How do you define "business as unusual"? And is there a reason for italicizing the "un" in a word like unusual?**

A: The Un-Game is the purposeful, fun process of uncovering beliefs, opinions and conclusions that run our life without our permission. We want to see those so that we have a conscious choice about what we do or not do with them. That's power. When we see what we haven't seen before, we can produce extraordinary results. Extraordinary is what I mean by "business as unusual.". We can produce extraordinary results when we see the same old thing with brand new eyes. The reason for the italicized "un" in words otherwise not italicized is that it is a physical reminder that uncovering previously hidden beliefs can be unsettling even when it's fun. It's unusual.

**Q: The 2011 release of the book *A Force of Nature* ( Edward Humes) features Wal-Mart reinventing, not just "green-washing" how they're doing business. They say business as usual is unsustainable which has huge implications for the entire global world of business. Your book talks about business as unusual. Can you draw a parallel between your book and what caused Wal-Mart to decide to turn itself from corporate villain into a hero of corporate responsibility?**

A: Yes. Wal-Mart CEO until 2009, H. Lee Scott, has had a lot of public grief over proven business practices that lost them 8% of their global customer base, and he started out five years earlier with the question "What could Wal-Mart do to limit its exposure to criticism that affected the bottom line?" It was through meeting with an unlikely consultant who in very short order surfaced Scott's present thinking that would never get him where he wanted to take the Goliath Wal-Mart. It compelled Scott to change course. The way this relates to *The Un-Game* is that the process for becoming a competent un-game player does precisely that. It surfaces the thinking that's so invisible that it could be said "It thinks you!" In other words, it shows you the limits of your own thinking that cannot solve the problems you want to solve because a new level of thinking is required to solve them. It's what Einstein said, namely that nobody can solve a problem with the same level of thinking that created the problem in the first place. Scott's new thinking is what had him and his successor collaborate with people they'd always dismissed in the past, namely environmentalists. Wal-Mart is serious about greening the world of business. It's nothing short of an amazing shift to "business as unusual" that started with challenging conventional assumptions—in other words, by playing *The Un-Game*.

**Q: You maintain that conventional management wisdom and practices no longer work. Can you give an example of a practice that's still in use despite being obsolete? What should take its place? Are any corporations known for the new practices? Which one(s)? Do managers in The Un-Game demonstrate the new wisdom and practices? Who among well-known management experts would agree with your assertions about this?**

A: Conventional managers act as if they should control and correct their employees. That doesn't work well. Instead, the manager should be a catalyst. The two mind-sets produce completely different outcomes behaviorally. It demands a far higher skill level to be a catalyst. Catalyst know how to motivate and develop their people. They know how to inspire collaboration and transparency, all values that promote great relationships and great business outcomes. Businesses like Patagonia, Seventh Generation are businesses that have known this for a long time and have built their success partially because of this. Tom Peters, Peter Block, Peter Senge, Kenny Blanchard would all agree with the assertions I make in this example. The Un-Game characters embody these "catalyst" qualities. It will be apparent to the reader through their actions and through the atmosphere that surrounds them.

**Q: In The Un-Game you feature a four-step process you call four-play that helps managers become great managers. What are the four steps and why do they produce great managers?**

A: I could tell you the four steps, but it's better to discover them in reading the book. If I tell you, it may have a "so what?" feel. That's because you can get the steps and the principles in the book at a conceptual level—which I consider the booby prize—or you can get them through the coaching in the book, which is the real prize. It's the real prize because you get them at a deeper level which is more like "Wow," rather than "So what?!" Think of it this way: When someone tells you something, it's not as useful to you as when you learn it through experience. That said, the four step process does not help any manager become a great manager. It may help any manager to be a better manager, but it will only help talented managers become great managers. You see, talent can't be taught. Skills and knowledge can be taught, but talent can't, and only talented managers can become great managers.

**Q: You say there are many ways to play The Un-Game. Why did you choose this four- step process and not another? Can you give an example of another powerful process that managers and leaders should be aware of for playing The Un-Game?**

A: I chose this model because I saw its power in its simplicity, immediate impact, and the sustainable results it can produce for people. It certainly changed me first. They say you can't coach what you yourself haven't experienced. I find that to be true. But there are other ways in which experts can help people surface the thinking that holds them hostage, that is, that they're not aware of. One model I absolutely love because it's also simple and elegant—although forty years of combined experience have gone into making it so simple—is Robert Kegan and Lisa Lahey's "Immunity to Change" work and book by the same name. They teach at Harvard Graduate School of Education and are experts in adult learning. I'm licensed to take people through Bob and Lisa's process, but I don't feature it specifically in The Un-Game. I wouldn't mind writing about it next. It's great work.

**Q: What benefits accrue to people who know how to play The Un-Game? What are pre-requisites, if any, for becoming a great player? If there were only one major benefit you'd promise readers of The Un-Game, what would it be?**

A: Ultimately skilled un-game players will experience a greater sense of freedom and power to design personal and professional "games" worth playing and goals worth playing for. They'll have greater focus, and they'll connect their activities to that which has a lot of meaning and value for them. They'll probably have more fun. Their new skill-sets will help them produce uncommon results with clarity, focus, and ease. Their relationships will be better. They'll enjoy life more and struggle less. They'll be more creative. They'll be able to get less upset because they'll see so many more options for how they could be and what they could do. There's lots more. The biggest prerequisite for becoming a great un-game player is to be willing and to go into the learning to become such a player with the attitude "I don't already know everything." Genuine curiosity helps a lot. The one major benefit I can promise people who will only read The Un-Game (not while multi-tasking, please!) is that they'll walk away hopeful that maybe the changes that they've wanted to make but somehow couldn't, or at least couldn't make stick, might not be so elusive after all. Hope is a great benefit. It can move people into action to do more on behalf of their once buried goals.

**Q: There is a lot of unrest, uncertainty, and complexity in the world at this time. You say that modern managers and leaders need the skill-sets that are up to dealing with uncertainty and complexity. What are the attributes they need and how would getting coached in learning and applying un-game principles help them “up” their game? What are some examples of what people would learn and how might they apply what they learn to beefing up their bottom line?**

A: To deal with uncertainty and complexity people need resilience and flexibility. The knee-jerk reaction to uncertainty is to exercise more control, but thinking we have control is an illusion. It's to disregard what I call the “facticity” of life, namely that things in the real world are always unpredictable and impermanent. Not accepting that is like arguing with gravity. But most people do it all the time. Coaching helps people have better strategies for dealing with the limits of the real world. Being able to do that automatically “ups” people's game. Being open and receptive to what they might learn that is of value in their day- to- day reality are great attributes to bring to learning to play The Un-Game. However, even if people don't bring those to the table, coaching actually helps them bring those attributes forward in themselves. It's hard to say what people will actually learn because they come to coaching with different needs and wants. So what they learn is very individual. However, if someone came to coaching in un-game principles and wanted to learn to be a better delegator, she would learn to be that. If someone wanted to be able to develop his people's team-work, he would learn to build a better functioning team. It's easy to see how being able to delegate and having a more effective team would impact on the bottom line.

**Q: You make a case for a large fictional company reinventing how it does business. Were you thinking about Wal-Mart when you wrote about your fictional company who does “business as unusual?” How is “business as unusual” related to the triple bottom line (people, planet, profits) and your conversation in the book about the green economy? What's happening to conventional “wisdom” that a business can't be profitable and environmentally responsible at the same time? Converting to the triple bottom line would certainly be “business as unusual,” wouldn't it? Wal-Mart, whose long-standing bedrock principle is “Low price always” surely can't be supporting the triple bottom line which goes against the prevailing conventional wisdom and their practices over the last 20 years.**

A: No, I wasn't thinking about Wal-Mart because when I wrote The Un-Game I still doubted they were serious about reinventing themselves. The triple bottom line is definitely not business as usual. No large company has the blueprint for making all their business decisions based on not harming people, not harming the planet, and not harming profits. That would be “business as unusual.” When people

seriously talk about the green economy, they automatically think about at least the double bottom line (planet and profits). That's actually what Wal-Mart is seriously looking at although it's impossible once on this track to not consider social justice issues for people—the third leg of the triple bottom line stool (people, planet, profits). And the reason that Wal-Mart is seriously looking for the first time ever at protecting the planet is very simple. It's a sound business decision. They have found that if they align their business principles with the principles of eliminating waste, operating cleanly and efficiently, conserving rather than blindly consuming, they will win! It's still a radical notion in the US, but our European counterparts have been looking longer through a lens of sustainability. A very specific example is that Germany is demanding “clean” laptops and getting them for the same price that the US was paying for the “toxic” ones we thought we had to get to keep the regulators happy and the price down. So yes, Wal-Mart has debunked the prevailing conventional wisdom. Watch for them to change the world as we know it!! Unbelievable as it seems, Wal-Mart is now the world's largest purchaser of organic cotton. They will soon have zero waste in packaging. That's just the beginning. Wal-Mart will redefine the global retail industry. It's a paradigm shift of gargantuan proportions, despite the fact that it is highly questionable whether Wal-Mart's ever-growing big box store model could ever be placed in the environmentally sustainable column.

**Q: Your book seems critical of corporate training programs. Are you? In what way? What's right about corporate training programs? How would un-game principles make corporate training programs more effective? What would be different if you designed a model for the development of human capital in corporate settings?**

A: It may seem that I'm critical, but I'm not. Corporate training programs are very good for the most part when their purpose is to increase knowledge and develop technical skills for technical challenges. Those training programs do well because that kind of skill development does well with the traditional model of learning that we've all experienced. Where corporate training programs don't do well is in designing adaptive training programs to meet adaptive challenges. There are no good models for it because for the most part people don't even make the distinction between a technical and an adaptive challenge. An adaptive challenge requires a change in behavior on the part of the learner. Few institutions know how to design programs that do this. They attempt a technical solution for an adaptive challenge, and that's a mismatch. Results are nothing to write home about, but corporations keep throwing money at it because they see no alternative. Un-game principles would make some of the fog surrounding this visible. Once visible people have enormous creativity, perseverance, motivation, and capability to transform the now less than optimal situation. They would learn and apply the principles of creating a learning environment in which people can transform their behaviors and meet an adaptive challenge with an appropriate adaptive answer. When I design a model for the development of human capital, I use the distinction between technical and adaptive training as a beacon to guide the development process.

**Q: You speak to managers and leaders in The Un-Game. But the principles you develop seem universally applicable. Could you imagine writing an Un-Game for Parents, Un-Game for Teachers, Engineers, Financial Managers? In other words, can The Un-Game be like Jack Canfield's Chicken Soup for the Soul series? Why is The Un-Game so important to you?**

A: The Un-Game principles are universally applicable. They are based on time-tested principles and truths. That's probably why I took on the writing of this book. I'm originally from Germany and have a very practical nature. If something isn't practical, I'm not interested. I love it when beauty and practicality are combined. Un-game principles combine beauty and practicality. They are applicable to everything in my life. I use the principles daily, probably minute by minute in order to achieve what I want to achieve and have the great relationships I have. Perhaps most of all they allow me to make a large contribution by sharing the principles with other people so that they can and will give wings to their hopes and dreams. Making a contribution is important for most people. Sometimes we just don't know that. But not making a contribution can show up as feeling dissatisfied and with the vague notion that "There's gotta be more to life than this." So yes, I could imagine a The Un-Game series like Jack Canfield's Chicken Soup for the Soul. I think I'd love to write one for parents next. We have the toughest and most important job in the world, and we only have our parents as models who never learned how to parent either. The un-game is important to me because it's the most fun and satisfying way for me to make the greatest contribution I'm able to make.

**Q: Conventional wisdom says "Change is hard." The Un-Game teaches people an effective process for challenging assumptions they don't know they have but which determine their actions. What flawed assumption is at work in business that has companies fail to execute even their most brilliant plans at least 50% of the time? And this despite the fact that business throws a lot of money at helping deal with the by-products of change initiatives. Does The Un-Game shed any light on what is so elusive and difficult about change? How? What are the six dimensions an organization has to become competent in to produce effective and lasting desired change?**

A: The flawed assumption that has companies fail so often has a lot to do with failing to make and then act on the distinction between a technical and an adaptive challenge. Companies assume that success will flow from a thoughtful set of goals and a plan to achieve them. That would be nice, but it's simply not true, because actually achieving goals is not a "Do step 1, 2, then 3" activity. That would be true if achieving goals were a technical challenge. It's not. It's an adaptive challenge. And not achieving the goal is most often related to failures of leadership, teamwork, and communication. Do you notice, however, where the onus of responsibility is placed? Usually in the wrong place! Corporations may send their team members to training in teamwork, communication skills, leadership skills when in fact the top

leadership should look at itself. Besides, most of the training programs are a mismatch. They treat the adaptive challenges as if they were technical ones. How well is that working? All we have to do is look at the very personal example of having a goal to lose weight. How well does it work to just tell the person: Step 1: Eat smaller portions. Step 2: Cut out red meat and dairy. Step 3: Exercise. They already know all that. But do they do it? Generally not, because you've given them a technical answer for an adaptive challenge, and that's a mismatch.

Yes, The Un-Game sheds a light on change and asserts that changing how we deal with change and our resistance to change may be easier than we think. The six dimensions you ask about can be downloaded from The Un-Game website for free. Go to [www.theungamebook.com](http://www.theungamebook.com)

**Q: How is the four-step process, the mastery of which is the pre-requisite for playing The Un-Game effectively, able to change a corporate culture to foster innovation, team-work, and communication? Speaking about communication, what are the components of a transformative conversation? What's your definition of "transformative." You said that a corporate leader who is also a skilled un-game player is likely to assertively stand by what is presently considered a radical notion, namely that a sustainable business strategy could be the greatest business opportunity of the century." Why is this an idea whose time has come? What global trends are supporting this not as a quaint notion of environmentalists whom the business community is glad to dismiss, but as a reality to be embraced?**

A: The four-step COSA process brings out the very best in people as you can see in the actions of the characters in the book. When we are at our best it is rather natural to be creative, open, receptive, truthful, courageous, alert, attentive, generous, kind, compassionate, clear, focused among other wonderful qualities that foster innovation, teamwork, and communication.

A transformative conversation has four components. It has to interrogate one's reality (Wal-Mart had to challenge its assumption that low price and environmental responsibility were mutually exclusive.). It has to provoke learning. It has to tackle the tough stuff, and it has to enrich relationships. That often feels counter-intuitive to people who haven't challenged the assumption that confronting tough stuff hurts relationships. I bet you've never or rarely heard anyone say "I confronted him because I wanted to protect the relationship!"

The global trends that are supporting “A sustainable business strategy could be the greatest business opportunity of the century” are that people, especially young people in the youth climate change movement and other sustainability movements are clamoring for responsible far-sighted action on the sustainability front (Leaders are not yet “following” in great enough numbers). Global awareness of the limits of nature given the world population and countries like India and China emulating the consumption patterns of the US is reaching a tipping point. We are beginning to know we could not replicate at any price the services that nature gives us for free. The US is seeing that our behavior of using 25% of the world’s resources and producing 25% of its waste when we are only 5% of the world’s population is not sustainable, and we are losing credibility and status. Collaboration and transparency are seen as desirable in a flatter, denser, and more connected world. We no longer are as isolationist as we once were. And we have seen experts like Bill McDonough and his partner, chemist Michael Braungart demonstrate for companies like Ford and Herman Miller that nature’s brilliant zero waste strategy can be replicated in our buildings and goods. Finally, the trend that interests me most is that a company that packs the wallop of a Wal-Mart is making life-cycle assessments of their products (looking at the real price of their products upstream and downstream). They are getting out of denial and assessing the real costs of doing business as usual. Doing business sustainably is cheaper by far than doing business as if we had five earths rather than just the one we have. Even if Wal-Mart can’t pull this off, they have already caused many other big players to look for the high cost of low price in anticipation that the next generation will demand corporate responsibility and even be willing to pay the price to get it.