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**Operation Love: A Business That Provides Places for People to Flourish**

*co-authored by Nancy Yeang, staff writer at Round Table Companies.*

How do you operationalize love? How does a company do a thousand things a day in order to be a great company? How can those thousand things that it needs to do be demonstrations of love?

I met Bryan Ungard, Chief Operating Officer of Decurion, at a Conscious Capital CEO Summit in Austin last October. Bryan poses these questions when discussing the value of Decurion's employees, or "members" as they prefer to call them. Decurion owns and manages an impressive portfolio of companies that includes ArcLight Cinemas and Pacific Theatres.

Rather than identifying itself with the success of the companies under its arms, Decurion focuses on the personal success and growth of each member alongside the monetary value the companies create. The question of why the corporation exists is more important than the businesses they partake in, and the companies they own and manage are "expressions of the purpose of the company."

"If somebody asks what Decurion does and I answer only that we are in the movie theatre, real estate or senior living business first, then I have missed an opportunity because that is not the primary thing that Decurion is about," Bryan said. "What we really do is provide places for people to flourish."

Bryan used to reject the idea that businesses were a safe place where people could grow on an individual level. His previous occupational titles include partner, consultant and project manager at other companies, but he suspected that business was "inherently corrupt" and that the structures for profit and ownership were going in the wrong direction.

"I had been on a path of real inquiry on what does it mean to be whole. What does it mean to be in deep integrity with the fullness of what I am experiencing? What is possible?" Bryan said. "Quite frankly, before my role here, I had come to the belief that individual wholeness and fullness couldn't show up in business."

His opinions changed when he came across Decurion where they defined flourishing as wholeness and growth for each member -- concepts that he felt were lacking in the organizations he was a part of. Through Decurion, Bryan learned that while most of the business world wasn't focused on nurturing individual development, that didn't mean a structure where individuals can thrive within a company didn't exist.

"We are facing a time of disruption and change," Bryan said. "Social, economic, ecological and spiritual realms are all showing signs of disruption and chaos. It is the human organizations in all of these realms that are struggling to figure out how to meet a vastly more complex world where the current playbooks aren't enough."

Bryan wasn't the only person who felt the strain of not fitting in with traditional business culture. Decurion employs about 1,100 members, where Bryan describes the work ethic as "intense." But for each member, the growth experiences are rewarding, and despite the difficulty they wouldn't trade in those opportunities because of the life changing lessons they've learned. At the same time, Decurion does not aim for employee retention and instead adheres to a maximum growth benefit model, and not only in an economic sense.

"I honestly believe that there is a period of time when each member's journey in life intersects with Decurion's journey in life," Bryan said. "When it comes time for those paths to part I don't resist it."

Decurion's culture seems like a personal development incubator that empowers each individual who wouldn't settle for a place within the traditional business structure. The platform of cultivating a flourishing environment arises from incorporating love into Decurion's work operations. Bryan explained two structures of how love and personal growth works within a business.

The first model defines love in order for the individual to fully catch the possibilities to flourish:

* Love and flourishing deals with wholeness and growth
* Love is a behavior, not a feeling
* Love is having the honesty and the integrity to be present in the now rather than what you want to be going on right now
* Love is part of being loving

Bryan used former Hanover Insurance President Bill O'Brien's definition of love to elaborate on the model: a predisposition toward helping another person to become complete. In order for a person to feel whole and to grow, there must be a human community that can support and challenge each individual. Love is an action, and not a feeling that strikes the individual. It deals with each person's reality in the moment, no matter how difficult it may be to face, and that who you are, no matter what different roles you have at home or at work, remains the same.

"What does it mean for an individual to flourish? What does it mean for them to be complete today as well as grow into their full potential?" Bryan said. "Those exact same questions are crucial questions to ask about a business. What does it mean for a business to flourish? What does it mean to be complete today? What does it mean to grow into its full potential?"

By asking all of these questions while having the definitions of love in mind, companies are able to bypass the traditional business model and look at their operations on an organizational and market level while at the same time paying attention on the individual's growth.

The second part of Decurion's structure creates the environment that allows for the maximum potential for growth:

* People are not only a means, but also ends in themselves.
* Individuals and communities naturally develop
* All work is meaningful

Pursuing human development and profitability emerges as one thing; nothing extra is required.

"There is a structure where having a business flourish can allow both the people within the business to flourish and the people that the businesses touch to flourish," Bryan said. "The business results are important and can be used so that I don't compromise how I live for the business results."

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