

*Nurturing Contemporary Enterprise Vitality and Sustainable Development From  
Humanistic Classics*

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**Abstract**

Modern business operations face not only traditional management issues but also new and unknown challenges such as establishing culture, cultivating agile and adaptable leadership styles, adapting to technology and data driven environments, effectively addressing global competition, managing diverse teams, and enhancing employee engagement. This article categorizes contemporary business management key issues into five main areas: Technology and Management, Environmental Concerns, Human Nature and Leadership, Socio cultural Factors, and Macro Environment, and tries to explore their management implications. This research also summarizes contemporary business management into five approaches of utilizing technology responsibly, respecting natural laws, understanding and respecting human nature, understanding and adapting to societal and cultural factors, and fundamentally embracing change. In addition to conventional management approaches, this research aims at drawing insights from Chinese ancient texts such as "The Book of Rites," Zhuangzi, I Ching, and Feng Shui theory to uncover core values and principles for contemporary business management from humanistic classics. By exploring the ancient wisdom of observing the laws governing the universe and interpersonal dynamics, this article intends to find insights from humanistic classics, and tries to suggest the five core values and principles for contemporary business management: practice rational introspection, seek beyond self-interest, harmonize with nature, balance self-interest with altruism in distribution, use humanistic principles and norms to achieve for others, recognize all living things are in the process of changes between yang (positive side) and yin (negative side). This research attempts to embody the essence of contemporary business management for enduring success.

Keywords: Contemporary Business Management, Humanistic Classics, Sustainable Development, Global Competition

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## **Introduction**

Modern businesses face a myriad of challenges that extend beyond traditional domains, necessitating innovative and dynamic approaches to management. This research addresses several critical areas essential for contemporary business success: identifying and categorizing current business issues, exploring contemporary management approaches, elucidating core values and principles, and emphasizing the essence of contemporary business management for enduring success.

Modern businesses also must navigate a complex array of challenges beyond traditional domains. One key challenge is enhancing cross-cultural communication abilities, essential for effective collaboration in an increasingly globalized workforce. Additionally, cultivating agile and adaptable leadership styles is crucial to respond swiftly to changing market conditions and unforeseen disruptions. Adapting to a technology and data-driven environment demands continuous learning and integration of advanced digital tools and analytics for informed decision-making.

Furthermore, global competition requires businesses to innovate and maintain a competitive edge by understanding diverse market dynamics and consumer preferences. Managing diverse teams presents its own set of challenges, necessitating strategies for inclusivity and harnessing varied perspectives for better problem-solving. Enhancing employee engagement is also vital, as a motivated workforce drives productivity and long-term organizational success. Addressing these multifaceted challenges is critical for modern businesses to thrive in a dynamic and interconnected world.

From an article in Harvard Business Publishing in 2023, it listed 4 Key Challenges for Leadership Development Today: Contending with Continuous Disruption Beyond the C-Suite, Building the Tech-Savviness of All Leaders, Humanizing Leadership in the Digital Age, and Leading the Hybrid Work Strategy. Also, from a McKinsey report in 2021, there are Four Interrelated Trends are Poised to Unwind the Old Rules of Management: More Connectivity, Lower Transaction Costs, Unprecedented Automation, and Fundamental Societal Shifts. Further, World Economic Forum, published in January 2024 raised the Global Risks over the Short and Long Term: Misinformation and Disinformation, Extreme Weather Events, Societal Polarization, Cyber Insecurity, Interstate Armed Conflict, Lack of Economic opportunity, Inflation, Involuntary Migration, Economic Downturn, and Pollution.

The author of this research summarizes these viewpoints and proposes Five Categories of Contemporary Business Issues (Table 1). The author will discuss these issues and suggest how contemporary businesses could cope with these issues in this research.

Table 1: Five Categories of Contemporary Business Issues

Key Challenges for Leadership Development Today	Four Interrelated Trends Unwind the Old Rules of Management	Global Risks Over the Short and Long Term	Contemporary Business Issues
Building the Tech-Savviness of All Leaders	More connectivity	Misinformation and disinformation	Technology and Management
	Unprecedented automation	Cyber insecurity	
		Extreme weather events	Environmental Concerns
		Pollution	
Humanizing Leadership in the Digital Age			Human Nature and Leadership
Leading the Hybrid Work Strategy			
	Fundamental societal shifts	Societal polarization	Socio-cultural Factors
Contending with Continuous Disruption Beyond the C-Suite	Lower transaction costs	Interstate armed conflict	Macro Environment
		Lack of economic opportunity	
		Inflation	
		Involuntary migration	
		Economic downturn	

Beyond conventional business management strategies and operational details, adopting alternative approaches and core values can significantly aid businesses in thriving and sustaining growth. Principles from Oriental classic thinking in Confucianism, Taoism, I Ching, and Feng Shui theory offer valuable insights.

Incorporating trajectories from the natural order into human thought and behavior can also be beneficial. Observing how ecosystems maintain balance and sustainability can inspire business practices that prioritize long-term viability over short-term gains. This perspective encourages a holistic approach, integrating environmental stewardship and social responsibility into core business strategies. Embracing values such as mindfulness, interconnectedness, and balance can lead to more sustainable and ethically sound business practices, ultimately fostering a thriving organizational environment that aligns with broader societal and environmental goals.

### Contemporary Business Issues: Technology and Management

In the contemporary business environments, the advent of Industry 4.0 and Artificial Intelligence (AI) offers businesses transformative opportunities but also presents significant challenges. One critical concern is the identification of errors and misinformation, which can proliferate rapidly in the digital age. Ensuring that a wider audience has access to accurate information is paramount, as is the need for individuals to acquire new skills to adapt to technological advancements. Moreover, businesses must be cautious of overreliance on technologies, as it can lead to complacency and a neglect of human oversight, ultimately undermining the benefits these technologies can provide.

The Great Learning from The Book of Rites and the Inner Chapters of The Writings of Zhuangzi offer timeless wisdom on the use of technology. From The Great Learning section of The Book of Rites 《禮記·大學》：

*“Their knowledge being complete...Their thoughts being sincere, their hearts were then rectified ...Their states being rightly governed, the whole kingdom was made tranquil and happy.” (Legge. J. Trans.,n.d.)*

In The Writings of Zhuangzi, Inner Chapters Nourishing the Lord of Life 《莊子·內篇·養生主·二》：

*“His cook was cutting up an ox for the ruler Wen Hui. ...The ruler said, 'Ah! Admirable! That your art should have become so perfect!' the cook laid down his knife, and replied to the remark, 'What your servant loves is the method of the Dao, something in advance of any art.’ (Legge. J. Trans.,n.d.)*

These ancient texts advocate for the pursuit of technological advancement while emphasizing the importance of a comprehensive understanding and mastery of both people and the broader context. Central to their teachings is the necessity of sincere and earnest intentions for the effective governance of knowledge and methods. They underscore the essence of scientific inquiry through the pursuit of understanding phenomena, highlighting the integral role of ethical considerations and holistic comprehension in technological progress.

### **Contemporary Business Management Approaches: Utilizing Technology Responsibly**

As represented in The Great Learning section of The Book of Rites, Confucian thought emphasizes rational self-reflection, the pursuit of ethical conduct beyond self-interest, and adherence to moral principles. By embodying these values, we can utilize technology responsibly and mitigate the negative consequences of unchecked technological development. Ethical conduct and moral adherence guide us in leveraging technology for the greater good, ensuring that advancements serve humanity rather than harm it. This approach fosters a balanced and conscientious integration of technology into society, aligning innovation with ethical imperatives.

### **Core Values and Principles for Contemporary Business Management: Practice Rational Introspection, Seek Beyond Self-Interest**

The management of businesses should balance the benefits of technologies with introspection, applying technology judiciously and ethically. By practicing rational introspection and seeking beyond self-interest, leaders can ensure that technological advancements align with ethical standards and broader societal goals. This approach fosters responsible innovation, integrating technological progress with a commitment to moral principles and the well-being of the community.

### **Contemporary Business Issues: Environmental Concerns**

Contemporary businesses are increasingly challenged by extreme weather patterns and various forms of pollution, which test their risk management capabilities. Addressing these issues effectively reflects a company's resilience and adaptability. With the integration of ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) principles into management priorities,

companies are recognizing the importance of intangible assets such as goodwill. This shift underscores the need for sustainable practices and ethical governance, which enhance a company's reputation and long-term viability while contributing positively to the environment and society.

From the Yellow Emperor Classics about Fengshui 《黃帝宅經卷上》：

*“The home is the foundation of human life. When one's dwelling is peaceful and secure, prosperity and good fortune flourish within the family.”*

The Yellow Emperor Classics on Fengshui emphasizes the profound influence of one's dwelling on human life. According to this ancient text, a peaceful and secure home forms the cornerstone for prosperity and good fortune within a family. This belief has transcended generations, highlighting the enduring desire for favorable external environments that foster positive growth and development.

Grand Master Hunyuan Chanshin of Taiwan elucidated that the I Ching symbolizes cosmology, and Feng Shui represents environmental studies. Viewing these disciplines through the lens of Chinese synthesis and documentation of natural phenomena underscores the imperative of harmonious coexistence with nature. This perspective highlights the profound insight ancient Chinese wisdom offers into understanding and harmonizing with the natural world, emphasizing a holistic approach to environmental stewardship and sustainable living.

### **Contemporary Business Management Approaches: Respecting Natural Laws**

Resonating with the values of Eastern culture, respecting natural laws and maintaining harmony with the environment can significantly enhance business competitiveness and differentiation in the face of environmental challenges. By aligning operations and strategies with ecological principles, businesses not only mitigate environmental impact but also foster sustainable practices that appeal to conscientious consumers and regulatory bodies. This approach not only reduces operational risks associated with environmental degradation but also cultivates a positive brand image and strengthens market position through innovation in eco-friendly products and services. Ultimately, businesses that prioritize respect for natural laws can achieve long-term viability and enhance their competitive edge in a rapidly evolving global marketplace.

### **Core Values and Principles for Contemporary Business Management: Harmonize With Nature**

When businesses integrate the concept of harmonization with nature into the establishment and development of their factories, logistics centers, or office spaces, they increase the likelihood of operating in more suitable and advantageous environments. This approach entails conscientiously selecting locations and designing facilities that minimize ecological footprint, optimize resource efficiency, and respect natural habitats. By prioritizing harmonization with nature, businesses not only enhance operational efficiencies and reduce costs associated with environmental impact but also position themselves favorably in terms of regulatory compliance and community relations. This enduring commitment to creating environmentally sound workplaces underscores a strategic advantage, fostering resilience and long-term sustainability in competitive markets.

## **Contemporary Business Issues: Human Nature and Leadership**

In management science, effective leaders play a pivotal role in guiding their teams towards consensus, leveraging strengths, and achieving organizational objectives. They do this by fostering effective interactions among team members, nurturing mutual trust, understanding individual needs, and cultivating a sense of well-being within the team. By facilitating open communication and collaboration, leaders create an environment where diverse strengths are utilized optimally, consensus is reached efficiently, and organizational goals are met effectively. Thus, their leadership is characterized by a blend of strategic direction and interpersonal skills aimed at maximizing team performance and cohesion.

## **Contemporary Business Management Approaches: Understanding and Respecting Human Nature**

Confucian economic thought emphasizes the importance of understanding and respecting human nature in addressing business issues. Contrary to merely advocating frugality and benefiting others, Confucianism highlights the significance of equitable distribution and ensuring the well-being of others within the framework of self-interest. The core lies in distribution and benefiting others within self-interest, rather than frugality and benefiting others (Tseng, 2017).

This perspective underscores the belief that fostering a harmonious society and sustainable economic relationships hinges on recognizing and respecting the inherent needs and aspirations of individuals. By aligning economic activities with the principles of empathy and fairness, Confucian thought seeks to cultivate a business environment where mutual benefit and ethical considerations prevail, ultimately contributing to societal prosperity and stability.

## **Core Values and Principles for Contemporary Business Management: Balance Self-Interest With Altruism in Distribution**

In modern enterprises, the integration of personal values with organizational goals is facilitated primarily through interactions with colleagues and stakeholders. By fostering meaningful relationships and understanding shared objectives, individuals can align their personal values with the mission and vision of the organization. This alignment is crucial for cultivating a sense of purpose and fulfillment in one's work, as emphasized by Kuo and Wong (2017). Moreover, achieving this integration requires balancing self-interest with altruism in distribution practices.

This approach ensures that organizational objectives are met while also considering the ethical distribution of benefits to stakeholders, thereby promoting a harmonious and sustainable corporate culture. Ultimately, by harmonizing personal values with organizational goals through balanced practices, enterprises can enhance employee engagement, organizational effectiveness, and societal impact.

## **Contemporary Business Issues: Socio-Cultural Factors**

Culture is fundamentally integral to human society, shaping its values, behaviors, and social structures. In the realm of business, operations are deeply intertwined with societal development, as a flourishing civilization forms the bedrock for economic activities. Businesses leverage cultural insights to discern and meet the diverse needs of society,

determining what goods and services to offer. Successful business management hinges significantly on understanding and adapting to social cultures, recognizing their nuances and implications for operational strategies. Thus, culture not only defines societal frameworks but also guides strategic decisions essential for sustainable business growth.

### **Contemporary Business Management Approaches: Understanding and Adapting to Societal and Cultural Factors**

Understanding and adapting to societal and cultural factors are pivotal in contemporary business management approaches. Confucian belief emphasizes that civilization's progress hinges on the centrality of people and the alignment of human conduct with natural order principles. In organizational management, culture is defined as a dynamic system encompassing shared values, beliefs, experiences, and behavioral norms, shaping a distinct organizational identity (Zhang et al., 2022). Acknowledging and integrating societal and cultural dynamics into business strategies foster organizational resilience, effectiveness, and sustainability. Thus, businesses that embrace cultural insights can navigate complexities, enhance employee engagement, and forge meaningful connections with diverse stakeholders in an evolving global landscape.

### **Core Values and Principles for Contemporary Business Management: Use Humanistic Principles and Norms to Achieve for Others**

Using humanistic principles and norms to encourage employees to achieve for others can significantly align their beliefs with organizational culture, fostering a strong sense of identification and belonging. This alignment enhances operational efficiency by promoting collaboration, mutual support, and a shared commitment to common goals. When employees are motivated by humanistic values such as empathy, fairness, and respect for others, they are more likely to work cohesively and proactively, thereby reducing the likelihood of errors. By nurturing a culture rooted in humanistic principles, businesses not only cultivate a positive work environment but also strengthen their capacity to achieve sustainable success through engaged and motivated teams.

### **Contemporary Business Issues: Macro Environment**

Today's business operations are confronted with macro factors such as resource competition and conflicts in cultural ideologies. To ensure continuous survival and operation, businesses prioritize continuous improvement initiatives aimed at enhancing efficiency, innovation, and adaptability. Additionally, respecting employee diversity fosters inclusivity and unlocks varied perspectives crucial for navigating complex challenges. Adherence to ethical standards maintains trust with stakeholders and sustains long-term viability. Furthermore, learning to effectively address globalization challenges equips businesses with the resilience needed to thrive in diverse and interconnected markets. By proactively addressing these macro factors and integrating strategic responses, businesses can fortify their foundations and achieve sustainable growth in dynamic global landscapes.

From the Tao Te Ching by Laozi, specifically in Chapter 64 《道德經·六十四》, the advice to anticipate and mitigate risks before they manifest underscores a proactive approach to risk management:

*“before a thing has given indications of its presence, it is easy to take measures against it; ...Action should be taken before a thing has made its appearance; order should be secured before disorder has begun.”*

This ancient wisdom emphasizes the importance of foresight and preparedness in preventing disruptions and chaos. In contemporary business contexts, this philosophy resonates deeply with management practices that prioritize early identification and mitigation of risks. Utilizing management indicators and assessments such as Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) criteria enables organizations to anticipate potential challenges related to sustainability, regulatory compliance, and stakeholder relations. By integrating these principles into strategic planning and operational frameworks, businesses can enhance resilience, foster sustainable practices, and preemptively address issues before they escalate, thereby promoting long-term success and stability.

### **Contemporary Business Management Approaches: Fundamentally Embracing Change**

Almost two thousand years ago, in Zheng Xuan's interpretation of the I Ching, phenomena are delineated by "simplicity", "change", and "unchanging" in Understanding of Yi 《易論》. Nowadays, entrepreneurs are compelled to continuously assess and decide, ensuring their actions harmonize with the evolving dynamics of people, events, and circumstances. Consequently, businesses must adopt a fundamental orientation towards embracing change. This approach not only acknowledges the impermanent nature of conditions but also underscores the strategic imperative of adaptability in navigating complexities and achieving sustained growth.

### **Core Values and Principles for Contemporary Business Management: Recognize all Things Are in the Process of Changes Between Yang (Positive Side) and Yin (Negative Side)**

Grand Master Hunyuan Chanshin of Taiwan posits in Weixin Shengjiao website, that I Ching encapsulates the cyclical nature of natural transformations, urging individuals to integrate its principles into daily life, particularly in business strategy and operations. By understanding that everything undergoes a continuous flux between Yang (positive) and Yin (negative), managers can adeptly navigate the dynamic business environment. This recognition fosters resilience and strategic agility, enabling them to respond effectively to evolving circumstances and cultivate sustainable success.

### **Way for Sustainable Development and Enduring Prosperity for Enterprises**

A sustainable path to development and enduring prosperity for enterprises involves steadfast adherence to core principles and values, coupled with a commitment to peaceful coexistence with all entities. By engaging in regular self-reflection and maintaining resilience amidst external fluctuations, businesses can cultivate mutually beneficial relationships with stakeholders including suppliers, customers, and employees. This holistic approach not only enhances operational stability but also fosters a harmonious environment conducive to sustainable growth and ethical business practices.



## Humanistic Classics to Suggest Five Core Values and Principles for Contemporary Business Management

This research advocates for integrating principles from Humanistic Classics to guide contemporary business management towards revitalization and sustainable development. By drawing from these foundational texts, businesses can adopt Five Core Values and Principles (Table 2) such as:

- Practice Rational Introspection, Seek Beyond Self-Interest
- Harmonize with Nature
- Balance Self-Interest with Altruism in Distribution
- Use Humanistic Principles and Norms to Achieve for Others
- All in the Process of Changes Between Yang (positive side) and Yin (negative side)

These values not only enrich organizational culture but also foster innovation, resilience, and ethical decision-making. Embracing these principles enables enterprises to enhance their operational vitality and achieve enduring success in a dynamic and interconnected global landscape.

Table 2: Humanistic Classics to Suggest Five Core Values and Principles for Contemporary Business Management

Contemporary Business Issues	Five Approaches of Contemporary Business Management	Core Values and Principles for Contemporary Business Management	
Technology and Management	Utilizing Technology Responsibly	Practice Rational Introspection, Seek Beyond Self-Interest	<p>Inside</p> <p>Outside</p> <p>Adhere to Principles and Values</p> <p>Drive and Revitalize</p>
Environmental Concerns	Respecting Natural Laws	Harmonize with Nature	
Human Nature and Leadership	Understanding and Respecting Human Nature	Balance Self-Interest with Altruism in Distribution	
Socio-cultural Factors	Understanding and Adapting to Societal and Cultural Factors	Use Humanistic Principles and Norms to Achieve for Others	
Macro Environment	Fundamentally Embracing Change	All in the Process of Changes Between Yang (positive side) and Yin (negative side)	

## Conclusions

The five core values and principles proposed by this research epitomize contemporary business management essential for enduring success (Figure 1). Rooted in humanistic ideals, these values of: Practice Rational Introspection, Seek Beyond Self-Interest, Harmonize with Nature, Balance Self-Interest with Altruism in Distribution, Use Humanistic Principles and

Norms to Achieve for Others, and All in the Process of Changes Between Yang (positive side) and Yin (negative side), form the bedrock of ethical leadership and sustainable organizational growth. By embracing these principles, businesses cultivate a culture of trust, innovation, and resilience. This holistic approach not only enhances stakeholder relationships but also equips enterprises to navigate complexities and achieve long-term prosperity in today's competitive landscape.



Figure 1: The Five Core Values and Principles suggested by this presentation demonstrate the Essence of Contemporary Business Management for Enduring Success

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