



WORKBOOK 5

Playing the Authentic Game of Business

Welcome to the workbook for Module 5 of the Agents of Conscious Business course, with Fred Kofman!

The aim of this fifth module's class was to explore some of the core 'moves' of the practice of conscious business with Fred.

The points that were covered:

- What you need to bring the philosophy of conscious business into practice
- How to show up and take unconditional responsibility – and why that's so crucial
- How to communicate more authentically and consciously with others
- Getting a taste of what these 'moves' look like in practice, through a live coaching session

This workbook is going to make most sense if you have listened to the recording of the class for module 5.

You can either listen to the whole thing and then dive into this workbook, or do it in parallel, pausing the recording to work on an exercise, and then listening to the next bit.

The Five Big Ideas from the Class

Here are the five main things that we took from this module's class with Fred:



1 - Conscious Business is both a philosophy and a practice

They are like two sides of a coin. It's not particularly hard to understand the philosophy. You can get it from reading a book, or listening to people talking. Taking those ideas and implementing them in your own life, however, takes skill and practice. In this class, we're going

to focus on the practice of conscious business. You can get the main ideas from the resources on the Academy website, or from Fred's book, *Conscious Business*.

2 - You start with yourself, by going to the *dojo* (a place to practice)

If you want to learn how to defend yourself, you don't start by going into a motorcycle gang hangout and insulting one of the members to see how well you can defend yourself against multiple opponents, some of whom might be armed. That's a really bad place to start.

Yet that's what most of us do when we take the ideas of conscious business and then try to create real change in an organization, and at a massive scale. If you want to learn to defend yourself, you go to the *dojo*, a place that's safe, where you can learn the basic moves and develop some minimal skill.

If you want to learn how to practice conscious business, you do the same thing. You find a community of practice so you can learn the basic moves together and develop some skill in applying them, in a safe environment.

3 - The first move is to show up - which is 90% of the work

The first move is to show up and put yourself in the picture. Showing up, here, means acknowledging that you are a part of the system that is producing the situation you want to change. Most people feel *apart*, as in 'separate' from the situation. But if you want to change it, you first have to acknowledge, not that you're apart from it, but that you are *a part* of it.

This doesn't mean that you're to blame, or that you're responsible for the situation. There are a lot of problems that you have absolutely nothing to do with in a causal way, problems which are not your fault. You didn't break it, so you don't have to fix it. However, the fact that you didn't create the situation doesn't mean that you're not being affected by it!

There is a different notion of responsibility, which is being able to *respond* to the situation. It doesn't matter who created the situation, but you're affected by it, and therefore you need to respond to it. Everything you choose to care about (i.e. be affected by) becomes your problem. This is 90% of the work, the other 10% is just developing skills and techniques.



4 – Speaking and listening are not separate from doing

As soon as you take response-ability, then the question becomes ‘How do you respond?’ Most interventions involve communicating with other people. Speaking is not separate from doing, and neither is listening. In fact, speaking and listening are tremendously important ways of doing. Whether verbally, in writing or in any other way, they are a form of meaningful exchange with other people, and they impact the situation in very real ways.

5 – Communication proceeds from mutual understanding to negotiation to commitment to action

Communication involves three distinct steps. We can be looking at the same situation, but have a completely different experience and interpretation of it. So the first step is to listen and communicate respectfully, so you can understand each other.

Then the second step after understanding one another is to try to come to terms with the situation and resolve it together. Can we find a mutually beneficial solution? This involves negotiation, or creative problemsolving. What is important to you and what is important to me? What are the elements that we can play with in this situation? Is it possible to resolve the situation in a way that would work for both of us?

And then after we agree, the last step of communication is to commit to action to resolve the situation. This involves making promises to one another about who will do what and by when, and how are we going to track our decision, so that we can observe whether the commitment is fulfilled or not.

90% of the work is showing up

Another way of looking at what Fred calls ‘unconditional responsibility’, is by looking at two typical characters: the victim and the player. Both of these characters have a very different way of explaining challenging situations.

As the victim, you only pay attention to those factors you cannot influence, and therefore you see yourself as somebody suffering the consequences of external circumstances. The victim is always innocent, because as the victim you are *apart from* the problem – not *a part of* it.



Exercise!

Where in your work are you currently showing up as a victim? Briefly describe the situation and the main reasons why you can't be held responsible for this situation.

When you're thinking about this situation, what do you notice about yourself? If you like, you can look at what you've just written down and read it out loud. What sensations and feelings do you notice? What does your voice sound like? How do you feel about the situation? Write down your observations below.

It's important to recognize that you're taking the victim stance in this situation, because it makes sense to do so. Let's take a minute to explore that. Reflect on the following question:



What are you getting out of being a victim in this situation, that's important to you?

As the victim, you only pay attention to those factors you cannot influence. As the player, on the other hand, you pay attention to those factors you *can* influence. You see yourself as somebody who has the *ability to respond* to external circumstances.

That doesn't mean that you are to blame for them, or that you are omnipotent and can change these circumstances as you see fit. It simply means you acknowledge you are *a part of* the situation, and that gives you the ability to respond.

Exercise!

Consider the same situation we explored above, but now from the player stance. Remember, this is not about 'taking the blame' – we're making the first move of the practice of conscious business: to show up by putting ourselves in the picture. See if you can describe the situation from the player logic. How are you a part of this situation?



Having done this exercise, how do you feel right now? What do you notice? If you read your description above out loud, what does your voice sound like?

Compare your 'player' observations to your earlier 'victim' observations. What's different? What do you notice?

If you want to go deeper with this, find someone you can trust and get them to ask you the following questions to elicit the story of the victim (about the same or another situation):

1. What happened to you?
2. Who wronged you?
3. What was wrong or unfair about what (s)he did to you?
4. Why do you think (s)he did this to you?
5. What should (s)he have done instead?
6. What should (s)he do now to repair the damage?
7. How should (s)he be punished?

Now answer the following questions, referring to *the same situation*:

1. What challenge did you face?



2. How did you contribute (by acting or not acting) to create this situation?
3. How did you respond to the challenge?
4. Can you think of a more effective course of action you could have taken?
5. Could you have made preparations to reduce the risk or the impact of the situation?
6. Can you do something now to minimize or repair the damage?
7. What can you learn from this experience?

Remember the player story is not 'better' or 'more true' than the victim story. It is however more preferable because it puts you 'in the picture' and gives you the ability to respond and influence the situation.

This last exercise comes from Fred Kofman's awesome book [Conscious Business](#), which is a great resource for digging deeper into the principle of unconditional responsibility as well as the other 'moves' of the practice of conscious business.

Authentic communication

As soon as you take the player stance, then the question becomes 'How do you respond?' Most interventions involve communicating with other people. How do you communicate authentically? There is often a wide gap between public speech and private thoughts. On the outside, it may look like a polite conversation, while on the inside you're seething. Let's explore some of the moves of conscious business as they relate to authentic communication.

Exercise!

Take a moment to think about a difficult conversation you've recently had at work. It may be easiest to start with a 1-on-1 conversation. Briefly describe the context for the conversation below. What triggered it? Where did it take place? Who did you have the conversation with?



Now write down the dialogue that took place as accurately as you can in the *right-hand* column below. Avoid interpretations or additional remarks, just write down what was actually said as best you can.

What you were thinking (but did not say)	What was said



If you need more space, grab an extra piece of paper to continue the exercise.

When you're finished, turn to the *left-hand* column and write down all of the thoughts and feelings that you experienced but did not express. Don't worry about what the other person(s) may have been thinking or feeling, just focus on your thoughts and feelings in relation to what was said (i.e. what is in the right-hand column).

Done? Now let's look at the impact of the conversation. How did this conversation impact the issue you were discussing?

How did the conversation impact your relationship with the other person(s)?

And how did the conversation impact you?

Now let's turn to the left-hand column. Imagine that you had given voice to all of those comments exactly as you wrote them down. Then answer the following questions.

How would sharing your actual thoughts and feelings have impacted the issue you were discussing?



How would sharing your actual thoughts and feelings have impacted your relationship with the other person(s)?

And how would sharing your actual thoughts and feelings have impacted you?

You probably had very good reasons for not sharing what you actually thought and felt (i.e. what was in your left-hand column). However, not sharing them may have negative consequences as well. Briefly explore this by answering the following questions.

How did *not sharing* your actual thoughts and feelings impact the issue you were discussing?

How did *not sharing* your actual thoughts and feelings impact your relationship with the other person(s)?



And how did *not sharing* your actual thoughts and feelings impact you?

Writing out these columns helps get some perspective on everything that's happening in a difficult conversation. Here's a final question to integrate your learnings from this exercise.

How could you use your left-hand column as a resource to improve your communication?

This exercise was taken from chapter 5 on Authentic Communication from Fred's book [Conscious Business](#). This chapter contains a number of powerful 'moves' on how to practice more authentic communication. Among other things, they focus on how to prepare for a difficult conversation, how to speak your truth, and how to elicit the truth from others.

Another powerful resource in this area is the excerpt from Bill Torbert's book [Action Inquiry](#) that was published on the [Academy website](#) as a bonus resource the Module 4 class. You will probably recognize a lot of connections between this module's class with Fred and the four modes of communication that Bill talked about in the previous module (framing, advocating, illustrating, and inquiring).

Exercise!

As a final exercise for those of you that want to go the extra mile and get the most out of this class, we suggest you listen again to Fred's live coaching of Dino during the class. See if



you can figure out what it is that Fred is doing in each of the stages of the coaching conversation. What ‘moves’ is he making, and how is that impacting the conversation? How could you use some of those moves in the example of your two-column exercise? Can you pick out how Fred is using Bill Torbert’s four modes of communication, i.e. framing, advocating, illustrating, and inquiring?

Bonus: Brian Robertson ‘versus’ Fred Kofman

On Thursday, June 21st (the day after the class was recorded), Fred and his wife Christiane Schneider engaged in a 90-minute dialogue with Brian Robertson, who you will remember taught the class for Module 3 of this course. The context for the call is the [community of practice](#) that Brian’s organization [HolacracyOne](#) created around the practice of Holacracy.

In this conversation, Brian and Fred talk about a number of wide-ranging topics that are very relevant to conscious business, including free markets and property rights, evolutionary organization, government and their use of power, and how all of that relates to the practice of Holacracy.

We asked Brian whether we could provide participants in the course with the recording of the conversation. We’re happy to report he said yes, so we’ve added the link to the [Academy website](#). Warning: this dialogue will likely challenge many of your beliefs and assumptions – listen to it at your own risk ;-)

In addition, we’ve added another Axialent paper by Fred Kofman to the website, called *Multi Step Communication: combining thought, emotion and action*. This should prove a valuable resource, because it digs deeper into how you can prepare and engage in more authentic conversations. The other papers which were already available on the Academy website should also be helpful in this regard, particularly *Observations and Assessments* and *The Ladder of Inference*. Enjoy!

That’s it for this module’s class “Playing the Authentic Game of Business”! We hope to see you all in Module 6 with Cindy Wigglesworth. As always, you’ll find more info on that class on the [Academy website](#).

If you have any comments or questions, please email us at mail@wakinguptheworkplace.com or throw a comment on the Academy website page for [Module 5](#).