

Let My People Go Surfing

A fascinating read on what it means to be a truly sustainable business, and a rousing call-to-arms for companies to tackle the climate crisis

Whether you're a devout follower never seen without your trusty Patagonia fleece on, or you've actually never heard of them, we highly recommend picking up a copy of Journey Further Book Club favourite, *Let My People Go Surfing* by Patagonia founder, Yvon Chouinard.

The book is full of images from the Patagonia archives, stories from when the company was just a group of friends making climbing gear, and anecdotes from Yvon on the persistence and courage that were required to become the head of one of the most respected and environmentally responsible companies on earth. *Let My People Go Surfing* is a must-read for anyone who is responsible for a brand, a business, or a group of people.

We know you're busy, so in true Journey Further Book Club style, we've dropped a 2-minute summary of what the book covers below:

- In 1957, a young man called Yvon Chouinard started teaching himself blacksmithing so he could start making his own climbing hardware. That desire to create functional, high quality products that he and his fellow climbers could use motivated the early team at Patagonia and defined how they approached business.
- By 1970, they had become the largest supplier of climbing hardware in the US. The tools they made were also massively damaging the land and rock faces that they were used on. This prompted the business to rethink its approach, releasing articles and new products to help clean up the community. This was an early moment of realisation for the team that their products had an impact on the world around them.
- To this day, the team at Patagonia are led by a set of philosophies which define the way each part of the business is run. They stay agile by taking the philosophies as guidelines for the way they approach any given project. Ensuring that everyone in the business understands those philosophies is crucial to their continued success.

- For the early years, the MO was: make good tools and functional clothes that Yvon and his friends wanted to use. Whilst doing that, they realised that they wanted to be in an environment where people could dress how they wanted, have flex time to surf the waves when they were good, hit the slopes after a big snowstorm, or stay home and take care of a sick child. They said no to what work had previously looked like and built a system that worked for them.
- More recently, the business has been focused on trying to live up to its mission statement: "Make the best product, cause no unnecessary harm, and use business to inspire and implement solutions to the environmental crisis."

Curated by the [Journey Further](#) Book Club, exclusively for the Digital Leaders Club.