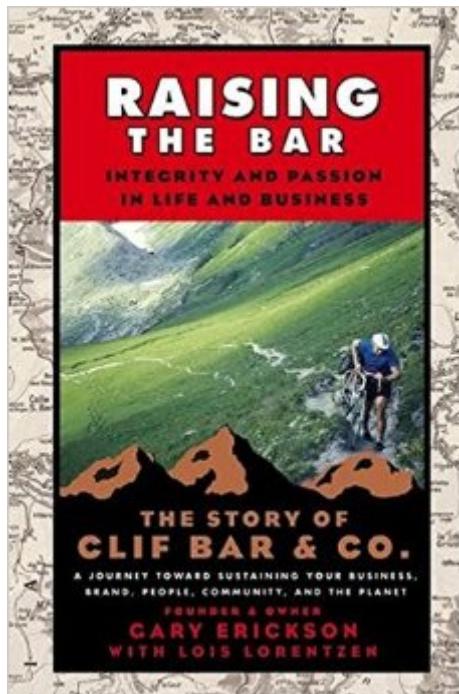


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# Raising The Bar: Integrity And Passion In Life And Business: The Story Of Clif Bar Inc.



## Synopsis

In April of 2000, Gary Erickson turned down a \$120 million offer to buy his thriving company. Today, instead of taking it easy for the rest of his life and enjoying a luxurious retirement, he's working harder than ever. Why would any sane person pass up the financial opportunity of a lifetime? *Raising the Bar* tells the amazing story of Clif Bar's Gary Erickson and shows that some things are more important than money. Gary Erickson and coauthor Lois Lorentzen tell the unusual and inspiring story about following your passion, the freedom to create, sustaining a business over the long haul, and living responsibly in your community and on the earth. *Raising the Bar* chronicles Clif Bar's ascent from a homemade energy bar to a \$100 million phenomenon with an estimated 35 million consumers, and a company hailed by *Inc.* magazine as one of the fastest-growing private companies in the U.S. four years in a row. The book is filled with compelling personal stories from Erickson's life-trekking in the Himalayan mountains, riding his bicycle over roadless European mountain passes, climbing in the Sierra Nevada range--as inspiration for his philosophy of business. Throughout the book, Erickson--a competitive cyclist, jazz musician, world traveler, mountain climber, wilderness guide, and entrepreneur--convinces us that sustaining one's employees, community, and environment is good business. If you are a manager, executive, business owner, or board member, *Raising the Bar* is your personal guide to corporate integrity. If you are a sports enthusiast, environmentalist, adventure lover, intrigued by a unique corporate culture, or just interested in a good story, *Raising the Bar* is for you.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I love Clif Bars, especially the "carrot cake" flavor! When I saw this book by the CEO and founder of the company, I picked it up right away. It is always insightful to read about people who founded or run companies and get an inside look at how they built the organization and what they value. Where most business books focus on financials, strategy and how to be successful in their market, it is rarer to find a company that has been very successful financially while still placing their values as a higher priority than the profit-at-all-costs culture that plagues many organizations. The book describes in detail the founding of the company, from the almost storybook beginnings in his mom's kitchen. What started as a desire to create a "sports bar" that didn't taste like dirt, has turned into a quality and well known brand. While these types of rags to riches stories may be sounding familiar, this path is actually quite different. Gary describes his passions for biking, travel and climbing, and how he has learned to value the environment and focus his company on sustainable growth. When his competitors were becoming part of large conglomerates with the resources to outspend and out market his brand, he resisted the lure of millions to sell the company and chose to remain private. I found myself marking pages, pondering quotes, and admiring the spirit and values that Gary brought to the organization. He describes the difference between the "red path" and the "white path". Developed through an analogy of taking roads less traveled, and traveling light on his numerous bike trips in Europe, he discovers that the real joy is in the journey not the destination. Those who take the "white path" play it safe, and make the kinds of business decisions that accountants love.

This is a fascinating book about the creation of Clif Bar and the business philosophy of its co-founder Gary Erickson. It's a good story, but at times it seems too good to be true. While reading it, I wasn't fully convinced that there wasn't some authorial bias, so I did some Google-based research on the Internet. This confirmed many of the assertions in the book, so I believe Erickson to be the genuine article -- someone committed to building a great company and sticking to his idealistic principles for sustaining his employees, customers, and suppliers as well as sustaining his community and the planet. It seems that the best way to build a principled company is to keep it privately owned with no intention of ever going public. In fact, Erickson has talked to people like Mo Siegel of Celestial Seasonings, Ben Cohen of Ben and Jerry's and Gary Hirshberg of Stoneyfield Farms and comes to the conclusion that nothing less than 100% ownership is acceptable. As he puts it, "I didn't want to become a slave to Wall Street--I'm an entrepreneur who cherishes freedom." Earlier in Clif Bar's history, Erickson touted his 50/50 partnership with Lisa Thomas, but as

he points out in the book, 50% ownership can lead to a stalemate when important decisions have to be made. He hardly mentions his former partner after the first chapter, which describes the point in 2000 when he walked out on a deal to sell the company for \$120million. It appears that this was the significant emotional event that drove his effort to build Clif Bar into a great company and to leave it behind as his legacy. As his wife Kit puts it, Clif Bar is the way Erikson expresses himself in the world. This statement seems fully borne out by the rest of the book.

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