

## George's Business

This is a story about an entrepreneur named George<sup>i</sup>. George lives in England and has built a family business dedicated to much more than enriching himself and his family. His strong commitment to a greater purpose in business is built on his religious faith. These values influence all of his decisions.

Now, hold on a minute, you might be thinking. How smart is that? To let your values drive your business decisions? Isn't that risky? Well, let's follow George and find out.

### George's Background

George's father, John, was prominent in the community and devoted himself to preventing animal cruelty. John built a moderately sized business trading in beverages (coffee, tea, hot chocolate) and gained a highly coveted endorsement from an eminent member of society. However, as George grew up, the years were not especially kind to the family. They were significantly less wealthy than might have been expected given their social status. Perhaps because of their minority faith, or perhaps because of a lack of funds, George received only a limited education at home and at a community church school. He did not attend university.

Instead, in his early 20s he took charge of his father's company with his older brother, Richard. The business was on the brink of collapse, so the brothers laid off half the twenty-person workforce and refocused on a small but promising element of the business. When their mother died, the brothers invested their inheritance to buy the latest foreign technology, which greatly increased product quality. With these changes, they seemed to have a product that set them apart from local competition. Business improved, and things began to look up financially.

## **Food Safety and Quality**

Integrity has always been central to George's values. He sees little distinction between the values of his personal life and those of his business dealings. As such, he believes business should be about selling products he can be proud of.

In recent years, the food industry has suffered a number of scandals in which consumer health was threatened by cost-cutting manufacturing practices. George, and the religious community he comes from, are becoming widely known for their strong, even obstinate, values. The family name and their religious affiliation have together become synonymous with integrity, safety, and quality.

## **Workers, the Community, and the Village**

George is also strongly committed to treating his workers well. He has ensured that anyone who works with his company is paid above-market rates and offered benefits (e.g., a pension) far more generous than what competitors are offering. A few years into their management, George and his brother expanded to a new greenfield location with good transport links for workers from the nearby city.

George has also bought land and developed a neighborhood for hundreds of workers to live near the factory. This neighborhood includes parks, recreation areas and higher-quality housing than the workers could ever find in the city. To build this neighborhood, George engaged the best architect he could find. The neighborhood reflects his values, even including a ban on alcohol sales. George has placed control of the village in trust under professional management. George has also established a higher educational institution which has an overt religious underpinning. And, to complete the neighborhood, he has founded a hospital and other public service ventures.

## **Lobbying and Activism**

George has strong opinions on issues and never shies from voicing them. George is now older, and he has recently clashed with the government over foreign policy in matters

largely unrelated to his business. Because of his values, especially his strong religious commitment, he simply can't remain silent on his opposition to war. Indeed, George's entire family has always had strong values. George's first wife passed away relatively young but his second was active in the church, the anti-war movement, and received a number of high-profile honors for her work.

George is now going further in his campaigns beyond business, purchasing a local newspaper with a history of activist journalism. The paper reflects George's views and is running a campaign to help the elderly poor, with a focus on improving pension provision. The paper is also leading the fight for better working conditions, raising awareness of the problem of dangerous workplaces. And it is supporting women's rights. Despite this, the paper is struggling to retain its writers, some of whom want more radical change. Ten years in, George is passing the reigns of the paper over to his son, Edward, who will help keep the legacy of his father alive for many years to come.

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