



ASIAN
INSTITUTE OF
MANAGEMENT

BASANT AND SARALA BIRLA
PROFESSORIAL CHAIR
IN ASIAN FAMILY CORPORATIONS

Volume 1, Issue 3 / First Quarter 2018
A Quarterly Newsletter

VANSH SHAstra

Advancing the Knowledge-base to Strengthen Asian Family Businesses
by Asians for Asians

SPECIAL FEATURE

Carving My Own Niche

By Prof. Dr. Andrea Santiago

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ISSN 2599-3798



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UPCOMING EVENTS

Family and Business Wealth Continuity: Building a Foundation for the Next Generation

12 March 2018

In response to the implementation of the tax reform law (TRAIN), BIRLA will hold a whole-day event entitled, "Family and Business Wealth Continuity: Building a Foundation for the Next Generation." The event is composed of three sessions which will cover and/or incorporate the impacts of the TRAIN law on wealth, financial, and estate planning. Invited speakers or experts will lead the discussions, engage the audience, and respond to questions/concerns regarding the policy change and its effect on their personal or business plans.

Breakfast Forum 3

Traversing the Family Business Path: Insights from Non-Family Leaders

19 April 2018

Family business owners tend to bring non-family managers on board their business as this generally benefits company performance and supports the professionalization of the family business. During this forum, non-family members in key family business leadership positions will share their journey in taking on a substantial role in a business that is not their own. They will share the experiences and challenges that come with having a powerful role in a family business and how they are able to work in harmony with the family owners while furthering the business as well as their own career growth.

Workshop 3

Careers in Family Businesses: Views from Different Lenses

24 May 2018

Family businesses today require collaborative effort across both family and non-family members. This requires addressing issues related to career paths for both family and non-family members to ensure sustained growth of the business. This workshop addresses the complexities of career models for family and non-family business members.

BIRLA Asian Family Business Case Competition

25 – 27 July 2018

The BIRLA Professorial Chair in Asian Family Corporations will be holding the first Asian family business case competition. The case competition is a platform to bring together students across Asia to analyze unique real-life family business issues. The competition will help harness their focus to produce solutions which are original, innovative, relevant, and practical.

Workshop 4

Growing the Family Business in a Global Setting

Family business owners are continuously looking for strategies to successfully grow their business to ensure sustainability. Some of the strategies for growth include merger and acquisition, internationalization, innovative business practices, and digitization. This program focuses on helping participants explore the challenges associated with such opportunities and various models adopted by family businesses to address the same.

For inquiries, please contact the **BIRLA Team** at birla@aaim.edu.

VANSH SHASTRA

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is a quarterly publication of the Basant and Sarala Birla Professorial Chair in Asian Family Corporations, 3/F Eugenio Lopez Foundation Building, Asian Institute of Management, 123 Paseo De Roxas, Makati City, Philippines 1229 | ISSN# 2599-3798

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About Basant and Sarala Birla



From a mere surname, the name Birla has morphed into a known global brand. The business has grown into a legacy exemplified by the grit and determination across four generations and a solid foundation based on values and strong business acumen.

ORIGINS

On 9 July 1918, Mr. Ghanashyam Das Birla (1894-1983), a noted philanthropist, freedom fighter, "Padma Vibhushan" (the second highest Indian civilian honor) recipient, and one of the closest associates of Mahatma Gandhi, established Birla Brothers and under its aegis set up a jute brokerage firm and jute mills in West Bengal, thus laying the foundation for the beginning of the Birla industrial group.

Mr. Basant Kumar Birla is the youngest son of Mr. GD Birla, born on 16th February 1921. His journey into the world of business started at the age of 15 in the offices of Birla Jute Mill, Kesoram Cotton Mills and Bharat Sugar Mill. In the next two decades, he set up many companies including Bharat Air, which was later nationalized and merged with Indian Airlines on 9 August 1953; Bharat Commerce and Industries Ltd.; Jay Shree Tea & Industries Ltd.; and Century Enka Ltd., and acquired various companies including Manjushree Plantations Ltd. and Century Textiles. In 1959, he established the Indo Ethiopian Textiles Shares Company, which was the first major venture by any Indian industrialist. Thus, the family business became one of India's first truly multinational corporations with a wide array of various business categories.

PERSONAL LIFE

On 30 April 1942, Mr. Basant Kumar Birla married Madam Sarala (1923-2015), the daughter of freedom fighter Mr. Brij Lal Biyani. She came from a very emancipated family and was very well educated. She studied at Fergusson College and was an active sportsperson of repute especially in 'Kho-kho' and badminton.

The union of Mr. Basant Kumar Birla and Madam Sarala Birla became a partnership that shaped the dynamics of the BK Birla group. The foundation they laid, based on strong Asian family values, enabled future generations to bring the Birla legacy to greater heights. Mr. Basant Kumar and Madam Sarala raised three children; a son, Mr. Aditya Vikram Birla (1943-1995), AIM Governor (1991-1995) and founder of USD 41 Billion Aditya Birla Group; and two daughters, Mrs. Jayashree Mohta and Mrs. Manjushree Khaitan (current Executive Vice Chairperson of Kesoram Industries), to whom they passed on the Birla family values of honesty, dependability, and hard work.

Apart from the business, Mr. Basant K Birla and Madam Sarala Birla are well-known for their community outreach initiatives and promotion of social causes. Mr. Basant K. Birla is the Chairman of the Birla Education Trust, Shree Krishnarpan Charity Trust, BK Birla Institute of Engineering & Technology (BKBIET), and various educational trusts and institutes such as the Sangeet Kala Mandir and Birla Academy of Art & Culture. Madam Sarala pioneered education for girls and was actively involved in the running of several schools in different parts of the country till her demise. They established more than 30 leading educational institutions that imparted education to more than 50,000 students in India and abroad.

Today, while Mr. Basant Kumar Birla is the Chairman of the group, Mrs. Manjushree Khaitan manages the business affairs as the Executive Vice Chairperson of Kesoram Industries Ltd., aided by a team of trusted professionals. She ably carries forward the BK Birla group mission of adding value for stakeholders, namely customers, shareholders, and society with integrity, commitment, zeal, seamlessness, and speed.





Photo Credit: Himawari Hotel Apartments

Carving My Own Niche

By Prof. Dr. Andrea Santiago

➤ **Andrew Tay was the youngest child of Tay Choon Hye, founder of SUTL Corporation, one of Singapore's largest-owned service and trading companies. Opting to see his family and the rest of the world through rose-colored lenses, Andrew swapped his shares in SUTL Corporation for a company investment in the wounded city of Phnom Penh – a serviced apartment then known as MiCasa Hotel Apartments.**

Andrew first visited Cambodia with his father and siblings in the mid-1990s, shortly after the United Nations-sponsored national elections. During their visit to the country, Andrew's father saw an opportunity to establish a premium hotel in a prime lot along the Mekong River in Phnom Penh. Since Andrew was the only one with a background in tourism, it seemed natural that he would take charge of the hotel. Initially, he served as a liaison between SUTL and the property managers. Shortly after Andrew's father died in 2002, his eldest brother discussed the restructuring of the family business. Knowing that it was not a priority for his family, he jumped at the opportunity to manage the hotel.

“Just imagine the early 2000s. Almost everything had to be shipped from overseas. Even food and all those things, so everything is very difficult. Even the simplest thing as an aircon remote. I need to hand-carry, just to have it here. The hotel was not the main business of the family. Thus, I was last in their priority. So, I think I'd be able to run it more efficiently if I run it myself. And I think that's what my late father would be happy with. So, then they said okay, you run yours.”

By 2005, Andrew had full control of the hotel, which he renamed Himawari Hotel Apartments. It was difficult at the start because of the language barrier. However, in 2008, he met his future wife in Singapore, a local who had been studying in the country, during the celebration of the Cambodian Independence Day. They were married the next year and have three children to date.

“All the money in the world will not give me pleasure if I compromise on my faith. Himawari Hotel Apartment is my vessel to do God's will.”

“Alicia has been a big help, particularly when it comes to reviewing the contracts of suppliers. I am not comfortable with the local language because I cannot read it.”

Andrew considers Alicia a strong partner in the home and in the business. At one point, they opened a restaurant in Singapore, offering only authentic Khmer dishes, but they had to abandon the venture when they realized the hotel needed their full attention. Still, they maintained ties within Singapore, particularly the St.



Photo Credit: Himawari Hotel Apartments

John Brigade where Andrew engaged in volunteer work when he was much younger. They currently support the initiatives of the St. John Brigade Singapore, Zone 2, Phnom Penh Corp, of which Andrew is the president, as well as Project Khmer H.O.P.E., a non-government organization registered in Cambodia.

Andrew draws his inspiration from his father who had a soft heart for the needy and the poor, as well as his conversion to Christianity. He grew up Buddhist but underwent a personal crisis while he was earning his university degree in Hawaii. He carried the “light” within him and this influenced how he managed the hotel and his employees. He also encouraged his wife to convert so that they could raise their children with the same love for Christ, family, and countrymen. Together they lived purposeful lives.

“All the money in the world will not give me pleasure if I compromise on my faith. ‘Himawari Hotel Apartments’ is my vessel to do God’s will.”

More than 20 years after he first set foot in Cambodia, Andrew has carved his own niche in a land of bleeding hearts.

“When I first arrived in Phnom Penh, there were hardly any tourists. The property where the hotel now stands used to be covered with soot, remnants of civil war. Today, it is a bustling city. It has come a long way.”

In October 2017, Andrew Tay received the prestigious National Service Advocate Award for SMEs 2017 presented by Dr. Maliki Osman, Singapore Senior Minister of State, Ministry of Defence and Ministry of Foreign Affairs at the Total Defence awards ceremony.

CORPORATE HIGHLIGHT



HIMAWARI HOTEL APARTMENTS CAMBODIA

> Himawari Hotel Apartments, previously known as MiCasa Hotel Apartments, is a five-star hotel in Phnom Penh. Originally managed by the Tan and Tan Development in Malaysia, MiCasa Hotel Apartments was first inaugurated in 2001.

MiCasa Hotel Apartments was an investment of SUTL Investment, one of the companies under the SUTL Holdings company. In 2005, Andrew Tay, who had been involved with the hotel since its inception, purchased the investment from the family with a swap of his outstanding shares in SUTL. With the purchase,

the property management contract was terminated, the hotel name was changed, and Andrew became president of the hotel. The hotel is officially owned by Himawari Group (Singapore).

Himawari Hotel Apartments has 115 fully serviced suites and apartments. It also houses the first microbrewery in Cambodia. The hotel has received several awards including the Best Scenic Environment and the Best Serviced Apartments from the World Luxury Hotel Awards.



EDITORIAL

Spirituality in the Family Business

By Prof. Dr. Andrea Santiago

> Family businesses are the backbone of many societies. Found in all industries, family businesses move through similar transitions as they grow in size and scope. Throughout its growth trajectory, each business has its own culture that takes its roots from the founder.

Researchers are beginning to explore the role that founders play in embedding spirituality in their businesses. Where founders are the dominant characters in the business, it is not difficult to imagine that their belief system will permeate their business. Thus, founders who have a strong sense of spirituality are likely to influence its internal stakeholders to behave in accordance with the tenets of their religion.

Some founders are more encouraging than others, introducing programs that invite employees to participate in services and lectures to listen to divine words. Others are more passionate and insist that employees adhere to the teachings or leave the company. Still, others are subtler, allowing their being to permeate the organization but careful not to impose personal beliefs on others. They act as role models and introduce practices that encourage others to do what is right.

Researchers find that family businesses are able to introduce workplace spirituality more naturally

compared to non-family businesses and therefore reap the benefits of a more committed workforce. Whether spirituality introduced by the founder is carried onto the next generation would be of interest. Can spirituality in the family business help families transition or does it impede growth?

Join us as we explore the many issues that confront family businesses.



Religiosity in Asian Family Businesses: Cases of Paying it Forward

By Fiona Mae Reyes and Krystyna Oseña



► ***In Asia, there is a great diversity of religions which serve as the foundation for family businesses. Among the many religions, Islam, Buddhism, and Christianity can be identified as the most commonly practiced. Family businesses are equipped with high levels of emotional or family capital such that strong supportive relationships among family members form a multifaceted web that unifies and moves the firm forward (Haygroup, 2012). Further, family firms tend to be value-oriented, wherein religious belief can affect family, business, and individual decisions (Cruz & Kellermanns as cited in Astrachan et al., 2018). Subsequently, religious beliefs in family businesses are incorporated from the founder's religious convictions and passed through subsequent generations, shaping organizational values and culture (Astrachan et al., 2018).***

Similar to non-family businesses, family corporations, in general, opt not to align themselves with a specific religion. However, there are cases wherein family businesses are explicit about their religious orientation through their business structure. One of the methods by which family firms show their spirituality is through corporate social responsibility (CSR). The International Organization for Standardization (2010) defines corporate social responsibility as “the responsibility of an organization for the impacts of its decisions and activities on society and the environment, through transparent and ethical behavior.” As such, CSR initiatives may be viewed as business practices that strengthen an organization’s sustainability and competitive advantage.

THE PRACTICE OF ZAKAT IN ISLAMIC FAMILY BUSINESS

Islam is the second largest religion in the world, comprising 22% of the world’s population (Desilver & Masci, 2017). In Islam, piety (or taqwa) and the worship of God are identified as the backbone for conducting business. As such, Muslim entrepreneurs are encouraged to carry the right intention in the promotion of their beliefs or religion. Under Islam, business intentions should be directed toward the improvement of lives and welfare, rather than personal gain (Mohamed & Sani, 2016). Included in the five pillars of Islamic faith, which serve

as their core obligations and spiritual values, is charity or zakat. According to zakat, Muslims believe that they are meant to share their wealth with the less fortunate. According to the National Zakat Foundation, zakat is a divine injunction and an ordinance from Allah Himself. It is not a personal matter or voluntary contribution; rather, it is an obligation which one will be called to account before almighty Allah. It is also regarded as both a right of Allah as well as the right of the poor; there are some cases where the Islamic government can forcibly take zakat from the rich if they withhold it. In relation to business activities, the Islamic law strongly encourages followers to be fair and honest in their business activities and for the business to be conducted in a manner which is in accordance with the law such that it can gain a reward from Allah (Cerimagic, 2010).

In Malaysia, the Syarikat Faiza Sdn Bhd (SFSB) is a family firm which incorporates Islamic religious beliefs in its business practices. In 1964, Hajjah Faiza Sayed Bawumi, managing director and founder of SFSB, developed her business while sewing for her neighbors’ children. Rather than the pursuit of personal profit, Faiza explains that the business is aligned with the five pillars of Islam, specifically zakat. Following Islamic beliefs, SFSB’s CSR efforts include: scholarship grants to students from poor families; assistance to flood victims and centers; donations to mosques, prayer agencies, government offices, and schools in conjunction with the Allah’s birthday; and support for the TV program Bersamamu which highlights the “plight of the poor and needy” (Sani & Mohamed, 2016). Today, SFSB is known for producing high-quality products ranging from halal rice to spices with the help of its founder’s daughter, Najwa Abu Bakar, who tirelessly marketed and manufactured the products.

INCORPORATING KARUNA IN FAMILY BUSINESS PRACTICES

In Thailand, Buddhism is one of the most commonly practiced religions (Chou, Chang, & Han, 2016). The Thai people’s belief of Dhamma is manifested in their practice of five basic precepts which include: not taking life or doing bodily harm, not stealing, not engaging in sexual misconduct, not lying, and not consuming alcohol. Karma refers to an individual’s actions which lead to

the individual's subsequent positive or negative life experiences (Payutto, 1997). Further, it encourages the practice of doing good (e.g. helping those in need) and practice of internal happiness which results in the return of positive things (Chou et al., 2016).

Chug Yont Engineering Co., Ltd (CYE), founded by Kriengsak Lertpittaypoon in 1962, is involved in the production of small-sized machineries and industrial construction. The company also offers consultation, product design, installation, and after-sales services. Lertpittaypoon and his wife are the main representatives and decision-makers in the business. When he was forty-five years old, Lertpittaypoon observed Buddhist practices as a monk for a week. Since then, he has been practicing Buddhism accompanied by the belief that without his employees, the business will become unsustainable as he considers them to be his wealth and family.

In terms of CSR initiatives, Lertpittaypoon stated that he cares about the people surrounding him, giving back through financial and non-financial contributions to the local hospitals, Buddhist temples, schools, and local government agencies (Chou, Chang, & Han, 2016). Lertpittaypoon practices the Buddhist belief Karuna, the desire to help others escape from suffering, by allowing people to buy something they need and pay back when they have the means. Although risky for the business and its finances, CYE still maintains an annual profit of \$100,000 (Chou, Chang, & Bou, 2016).

CHRISTIAN VALUES AS A FOUNDATION FOR FAMILY BUSINESS

Christianity, with its various sects and branches, is another religion which is commonly practiced in Asia. In a broad sense, Christians believe that there is only one God. When examined from a business perspective, a family business

can be characterized as Christian when God is placed first before the business (Cruz, 2013). In family businesses, love and trust should be present to allow families to come together and acquire a business venture (Cruz, 2013). According to Maynard (2012), a Christian business should "build a business to glorify God; understands and operates in the spirit realm using spiritual principles to bring life through businesses; bound by scripture which dictates his/her conduct or values and manner of trade; should be submitted and belongs to God but run by man; should exalt Christ." When these ideals are exemplified in the business, it can be said that the Christian business is founded on Christian values.

Lamoian Corporation, known for their Hapee Toothpaste, was founded by Cecilio K. Pedro, who is vocal about his religious beliefs. The quote, "Making the difference for the glory of God," can be seen in the company's website. Further, Lamoian Corporation can be viewed as a Christian family business which values human life and the environment. Included in Lamoian Corporation's CSR efforts are: waste water management projects where the company utilizes recycled waste water for non-commercial purposes; dental outreach programs; "Operation Smile" which supports and/or funds corrective action surgery on children with cleft palates; and DEAF Inc., where persons with hearing impairments are provided with employment opportunities in Lamoian Corporation's businesses.

In the cases of the three companies above, religion generates positive effects, in terms of branding and reputation, for family businesses. The three religions carry similar beliefs and ideologies regarding how to give back to the community and its positive impact on the business. Based on the discussed cases, family businesses which incorporate religious beliefs in their business practices can be successful on their own terms in accordance with their belief.

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Integrating Religion in Business: Exploring Christian Values in Family Businesses

By Karina Iris B. Yuvallos and Chariz Danielle Saño

► *Understanding religious values and how they affect family firm dynamics is becoming more important. Several studies on family business have shown that the integration of religion in family businesses affects the way that they are managed (Patterson, 2013; Kavas, Jarzabkowski, & Nigam, 2017; Payne, G.T., et al., 2011).*

For instance, Patterson (2013) found that incorporating religious values in family businesses has fundamental implications on a variety of management aspects, specifically on how they “handle a variety of management issues, the way that they define success, and the fulfillment they experience through their business.” A study on Islamic family businesses demonstrated how spirituality plays a pivotal role in business organizations by providing a “shared meaning system” by which business practices and endeavors can be evaluated. That is, the application of religion in the family business often acts as a set of values that can be referred to and employed by family members and employees (Kavas, Jarzabkowski, & Nigam, 2017).

Research has further suggested that religious family firms generally display greater levels of virtue across different dimensions in the workplace compared to their non-religious counterparts. These specific virtues suggest that there is a greater value for harmony in family businesses (Payne, G.T., et al., 2011). Thus, it is safe to say that religion, when used as a guide, can have profound implications on determining business motives, practices, and outcomes.

Presently, Christianity, in combination of all its branches and sects, is the largest, most-followed religion in the world, with over two billion individuals identifying with its doctrine (Illsley, 2016). However, there is a substantial lack of Christian perspectives in family business literature (Cruz, 2016). Due to Christianity’s enormous influence and presence around the globe, there is great significance in furthering the literature examining the prominent themes that emerge among family firms that strongly adhere to Christian values.

Cruz (2015), in his exploratory paper on Christian family businesses, introduces an interesting link between Biblical principles and the principles outlined in the Stewardship Theory. Stewardship Theory pertains to a management view where actors of a corporation are perceived as self-actualizing, motivated by intrinsic, non-financial, and collective goals, and relying on trust as a control mechanism (Davis, et al., 1997). According to this perspective, individuals gain a sense of achievement by accomplishing their jobs well, and therefore, “their behavior is pro-organizational and in line with [the] organization’s interests. There is no conflict between managers and shareholders” (Glinkowska & Kaczmarek, 2015). In other words, managers, considered to be stewards, focus on achieving certain objectives in order to fulfill the interests and goals of the whole organization, rather than their personal objectives. Managers and businesses are bound to the concept of



mutual trust toward the fulfillment of serving a greater good (Seyama, 2015).

This perspective is especially relevant to the discourse on Christian family businesses; persistent passages in the Bible outline Christians as “stewards,” “servants,” and “ambassadors” for Christ (Cafferky, 2012 as cited in Cruz, 2015). This demonstrates a focus away from self-motivation. Instead, Christians are taught that they are simply custodians of God’s possessions, are commanded to take great care of and to pursue the conscientious growth of such possessions, and to live for the glorification of God in all things (Cafferky, 2012). Moreover, love and trust play fundamental roles in Christianity (Cruz, 2015), as the Christian Bible is explicit about pursuing healthy relationships, loving others, striving toward team-oriented rather than self-oriented aims, and avoiding conflict against one another. One may then argue that the greater a family business’ adherence to Christian values, the greater their tendency to exhibit stewardship principles.

According to Leonne (2015), Cheryl Bachelder, Popeyes Louisiana Kitchen CEO, along with a number of company executives, intentionally integrates Biblical principles into her business practices. In an interview, Bachelder mentioned that one of her major business objectives is “to inspire servant leaders and achieve superior results,” further noting that “people who are well served, serve others better.” Moreover, Oppenheimer (2013) found that Christian business Hobby Lobby also includes a company policy guaranteeing Sunday as a rest day for all of its employees, in accordance with the Sabbath day in the Bible, the one day in a week dedicated to rest.

There are also notable examples of Christian executives in the Philippines. Patricia Alejandro “Patsy” Paterno of Papemelroti is explicit about the integration of her religious beliefs into the way she leads her enterprise.

The most important mission we have is to inspire people to be better, to be nicer, to be kinder, to love more, and to make each day count.

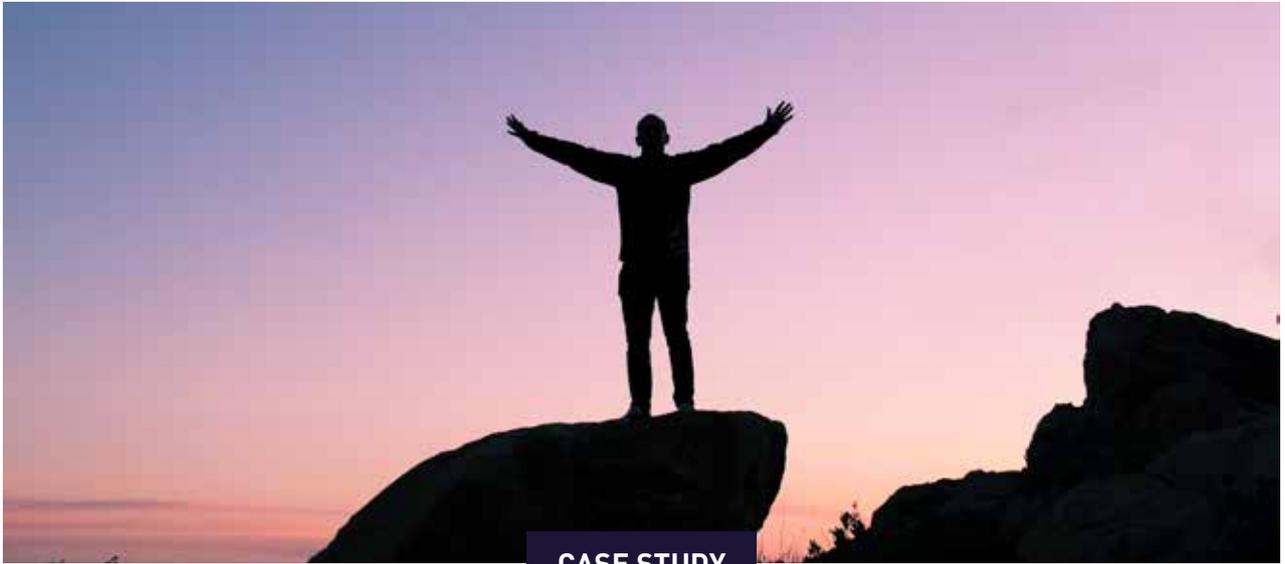
Paterno shared on the company website, “the most important mission we have is to inspire people to be better, to be nicer, to be kinder, to love more, and to make each day count.” In another interview, her family further stated that, “this is not really our business, but God’s business. He is the one who allowed it to grow, who provided the talents and the inspiration and the vision that has made Papemelroti what it is today” (Gwee, 2017). Paterno attributes her success to three key factors: focusing on people, on values, and on faith. As such, she actively strives toward fostering closer relationships with her staff in order to “bring out the best” in them, toward strengthening values like honesty, hard work, and diligence among those in her organization, and toward faith as a source of guidance in advancing the family business (Lincklaen Arriëns, 2016).

Wyden King, the former president of the famed Anito love hotels, also presents a particularly intriguing case in terms of Christian spirituality integration. After his religious conversion in the 90s, King effectively terminated the Anito Motel chain and diversified his assets into a number of wholesome businesses—a case that will be assessed more deeply in the upcoming section. He shared in an interview, “I’m just a steward of God’s blessings—these things are not even mine. I don’t hold on anymore to things that are temporary, because my view is now in the eternal...God himself is my reward” (Antiporda, 2016).

All in all, it appears that the greater a business leader’s adherence to Biblical principles in business applications, the more likely an enterprise will steer toward objectives beyond economic incentives, particularly employee and consumer welfare. While the incorporation of religious values in business can be considered as unorthodox, there could be an added-value for corporations to consider applying Christian values to their business practices as a way of creating products and services that bring positive value, not only to the lives of their consumers, but also to the lives of their workforce.

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CASE STUDY

A Radical Change Toward Spiritual Leadership The Case of Wyden King*

By Karina Iris B. Yuvallos and Carla Melissa Habito

▶ *Wyden King, the 64-year-old president of Abraham Holdings Incorporated (AHI) wondered if he was doing enough to transform his employees the same way he transformed his businesses. A converted born-again Christian, he had made it his mission to influence the lives of others, so that they could also experience the glory of salvation. Each time an employee resigned unconverted, he felt sad.*

“Perhaps I am not doing enough,” Wyden thought.

Wyden recalled his own journey which he referred to as his “long road to obedience.” Growing up in the lap of wealth, Wyden’s life had been an adventure, living the life of a bachelor even if he was married. He and his brother took over the motel business of his father. Their paths split when he encountered God in the early 1990s. Although he wanted his brother to join him in his newfound glory, he knew the way to God was an individual choice. This was the same belief he held with his employees.

He said, “I installed structures, policies, and procedures and even used visual symbols to remind employees of the straight path. Some accused me that I was going overboard. But am I?”



FROM ARMADILLO TO ABRAHAM: COMPANY BACKGROUND

Wyden King first made his mark in the motel business after inheriting one of the two largest love hotels in the

Philippines, succeeding his father, the “Motel King” Angelo King, in the late 80s. This business was the Anito Motel chain, a commercial establishment that was popularly known for providing couples affordable venues for quick, romantic rendezvous. The Anito Motel chain grew from just one to fourteen branches in 1992 and, at its peak, earned approximately two million pesos in one day.

From Armadillo Holdings Inc., Wyden renamed the business Abraham Holdings, Inc., after the principal Biblical character of Genesis who was meant to be a medium of blessing to all nations (Genesis 12:2-3, New International Version). This signaled the beginning of Wyden’s diversification into a wide variety of wholesome businesses. He grew organically and established hotels targeting overseas Filipino workers, dormitories for low-income students, and laundry shops. He also established a Christian academy to shape the hearts and minds of the young, encouraging them to believe in God right away. He subsequently founded Nameless Faceless Selfless, to provide spiritual services to his employees.

THE EFFECT OF WYDEN'S CONVERSION ON PROFITS

Redirecting Anito took a while longer while for Wyden, but it had to be done if he wanted to remain true to his conversion. Undergoing a series of life changes, he ended his extra-marital affairs and repaired the relationships he had with his then bitter wife and family. The next challenge was to put his business in order.

“In the beginning, I had no moral qualms about running the motel business and was consumed with perfecting every little amenity in order to ensure a loyal following among clients but, continuing to run the motels became incompatible with my new life as a Christian,” Wyden

reflected. “I couldn’t say that I wasn’t accountable for what was going on inside the premises. The hotel itself was really designed to promote illicit affairs, may it be marital or pre-marital. No matter how I went about it, I was promoting immorality, and it went against my beliefs at the time,” he shared.

Christians believe, based on the Bible, that having sexual affairs beyond that of marriage is an explicit sin, as written in verses such as Ephesians 5:3. Wyden knew very well that his business was a service that provided a venue for sexual affairs, which strongly contradicted his assumed moral beliefs.

Wyden attempted to sell his business, but the offers made to him were undesirable. He could not close the business because there were 2,000 employees whose lives would be affected. Thus, he repositioned the motels as wholesome, family-oriented hotels. The half that could not be converted due to bad location were closed.

It took 10 years to close all the motels. The wholesome hotels did not generate as much revenue as the motels. This was the price that Wyden had to pay when he changed his business motive from profit maximization to the glorification of God and the development of his character through his business. With his conversion came a new and deeper outlook. “What’s important with God is character, and not wealth... What is important with God is we become in His image and likeness, because that’s God’s plan.”

It was no easy task to leave a booming enterprise and convert it into several profit-creating businesses, but Wyden has taken up the challenge in the past two decades. For each love hotel branch that he shut down, he put a sign proudly stating “Anito Hotel, closed for the glory of God” and he has pursued varied business interests that he hopes will add positive value to the lives of consumers.

SHIFTING TOWARDS A HEALTHIER WORKPLACE AND MORAL BUSINESS PRACTICES

Wyden’s religious transformation not only resulted in a change in his business’ direction, but also in its internal policies and working environment. “I used to bribe a lot of local government officials so that they can either promote our business, or turn a blind eye every time we failed to pay our taxes on time,” he admitted. After his conversion, he began to say “no” to officials who asked him for bribes in return for favors and made it a point to punctually fulfill his tax obligations.

Wyden also endeavored to develop healthier and wholesome working relationships. Notably, he offered counseling to employees as part of his pursuit of a healthy workplace, and did so together with his family. In addition, all his business establishments have worship halls and prayer rooms where employees can spend time meditating or seeking fellowship. There are also prayer request boxes where guests can drop written requests for prayer. However, despite his expressiveness regarding his spiritual convictions, Wyden does not require his employees to be Christian. “I don’t force it on anyone because it’s a personal decision—the Lord wants it to come from their hearts,” he shared.

DEALING WITH EMPLOYEES

Wyden expressed that one of his greatest challenges was to get everyone on board with the new corporate culture. He experienced resistance from employees and a number even resigned. He hired new people but some of them also left after a while because they felt constrained by the unspoken pressure to conform to a Christian environment. Employees were barraged with gospel sharing and kingdom-building lectures that offended others.

Wyden stated, “It is my company and I want to ensure that everyone lives by God’s values. Is it wrong?”

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The Family Incorporated: LESSONS FROM FILIPINO BUSINESS FAMILIES

By ANDREA SANTIAGO

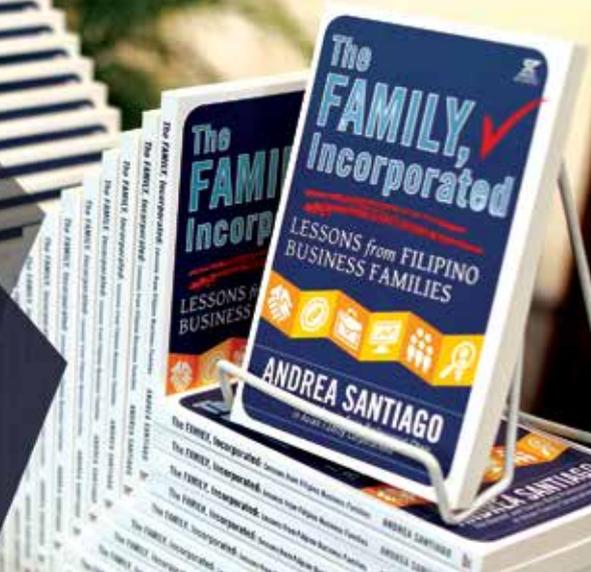
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