

**Family Businesses on a Mission:  
Attaining the 2030 Sustainable  
Development Goal of Climate Action**

# **FAMILY BUSINESSES ON A MISSION**



## **Series Editors:**

Naomi Birdthistle

Rob Hales

The Family Businesses on Mission series examines how the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs) can be applied in family businesses around the world, providing insights into cultural and societal differences and displaying innovative approaches to complex environmental and societal issues.

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# **Family Businesses on a Mission: Attaining the 2030 Sustainable Development Goal of Climate Action**

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## About the Editors

**Dr Naomi Birdthistle** is an Associate Professor who has entrepreneurship in her blood. She worked in her family business for over 20 years, which is the largest indoor funfair in Europe. On leaving the family business she ran her own consulting business for a period of time, where she consulted family businesses on management issues. Naomi's passion for family business management and entrepreneurship is evident by her research outputs. She wrote the first ever PhD on family businesses in Ireland which won the Family Firm Institute's 'Best Doctoral Dissertation Award'. She has published 32 peer-reviewed papers, six books, 24 book chapters, 63 conference papers and an abundance of national and European reports. Naomi's research covers many areas within the entrepreneurship and family business discipline including the following: entrepreneurship education, minority groups and entrepreneurship; women owned and led businesses; succession planning in family businesses; divorce and family business and the role women play in family businesses. Naomi supervises PhDs around women entrepreneurship, family business management issues and high growth firms.

**Dr Robert Hales** is the Director of the Griffith Centre for Sustainable Enterprise in the Griffith Business School at Griffith University. The Centre oversees the sustainability strategy and initiatives of the Griffith Business School. He is the co-chair of Griffith University's Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Working Group which oversees the SDG Strategy and Times Higher Education Impact ranking processes of the university. His research interests focus on the governance issues around the grand challenges of our time. His research focusses on SDGs in business and government, a business case for climate change, climate change policy, carbon management, sustainable tourism and working with First Peoples on consent processes and climate change. He created and was the first programme director of Griffith University's Master of Global Development. He teaches in the Department of Business Strategy and Innovation and has convened master's level courses such as Leadership for Sustainable Business, Research Methods for Policy Makers and Sustainability and Systems Thinking. He supervises PhD students in the areas of collaborative governance, sustainability transitions and climate change.

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## About the Contributors

**Chris Cox** is the Managing Director and principal shareholder of George Cox & Sons Ltd, a 75-year-old regional Highways and Civil Engineering company, working in the Northwest of England. He is responsible for the strategic direction of the organisation and has a hands-on role in all its commercial activities. He has overseen a three-decade long period of steady growth, now with a turnover of £12–£14 million and 80 employees. He is the grandson of the founder George Cox and son of Frank Cox, who ran the business from the mid-1960s to the early 1980s. Running three separate business centres, the company principally operates on long-term framework contracts, collaborating with both local authorities and private clients to achieve shared benefits and successes. These key objectives have been recognised by numerous industry awards in recent years for this approach and philosophy. The company also won the Northwest Large Engineering Family Business Award in 2021. Chris has collaborated on several research papers, including Productivity in SMEs; Extent of notions of sustainability and responsibility central to Family Businesses; Succession planning in a family business and Effective use of IT in SMEs. He is a graduate Engineer from University College Swansea, a Teaching Fellow and an Entrepreneur in Residence at Lancaster University. He has presented a series of lectures and workshops on running a family business, succession planning and entrepreneurial learning.

**Dr Allan Discua Cruz** is a member of the Pentland Centre for Sustainability in Business and Director of the Centre for Family Business at Lancaster University Management School (United Kingdom). His current research interests relate to entrepreneurship by families in business. He has published in journals such as *Entrepreneurship and Regional Development*, *Journal of Business Research*, *Journal of Business Ethics*, *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behaviour and Research* and *International Small Business Journal* among others. He has recently co-edited books around the topics of the family firm group phenomenon. He teaches courses in the area of entrepreneurial teams, small and medium-sized enterprises, social contexts and family business.

**Nicole Fidler** is the Contracts Co-ordinator at George Cox & Sons Ltd, a Northwest based civil engineering and highways contractor with 75 years of experience in the industry. With 10+ years of experience within various engineering industries, she has gained a diverse skill set, supporting clients in the sectors in which she has worked. Understanding client needs, expectations and aspirations have been a key part of her job function. Translating these data and

information into strategy and policy helps influence the future direction of the company.

**Innes Larkin** is a trained Physical Education teacher and holds a bachelor of Human Movement Studies (Ed) (University of Queensland) with a Master of Arts in Outdoor Education (Griffith University). Innes has taught in London, Brisbane and the Scenic Rim. During his master's Innes developed a Code of Ethics for the Australian Outdoor Education sector.

Innes has loved being outdoors since a young age and has climbed and hiked around the world, but always felt a tug towards Mt Barney since climbing it at age 11. Together with his wife Tracey, they started managing Mt Barney Lodge in 2003 and then purchased it in 2006 growing the business tenfold since that time. In 2016 Innes was awarded the Australian Search and Rescue award for his work in saving approximately 700 people out of the Mt Barney National Park.

Both Innes and Tracey are passionate about protecting the natural world and have found that expressing this through their business is an outstanding life. Climate change has been a major threat listed in Mt Barney Lodge's SWOT for the last 10 years, and many actions that Innes and Tracey take are the result of trying to mitigate that threat.

**Dr Tafadzwa Leroy Machirori** is an experienced researcher and lecturer whose interests lie in the field of entrepreneurship, in general, and more specifically, immigrant entrepreneurship where he investigated the experiences of immigrant entrepreneurs in high-tech sectors. More recently, he has begun delving into family business research and teaching. His latest contribution is a sole-authored book chapter titled *Australia – When family businesses solve social problems: The case of the McPherson family*. Here, he analysed how one family business was contributing towards the attainment of SDG#4, quality education, in Australia. Previously, he has collaborated in several multi-disciplinary projects including, the evaluation of the status of teaching in Australia, and university–SME collaboration in Australia, among others.

**Markus Pillmayer** is a Professor of Destination Management and Destination Development in the Department of Tourism at the Munich University of Applied Sciences. His research focuses on spatial development which he has explored in several contexts including citizen participation, health and sustainability. In the context of his PhD – funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG) – he dealt with the internationalisation processes of the tourism industry in the Arab World. He can draw on many years of experience in the international tourism industry and tourism policy, which also benefits him in the context of his scientific activities. In addition, he is a fellow of various scientific associations such as IGU (International Geographic Union) and the DGT (German Association for Tourism Research), in the latter he serves on the board.

**Nicolai Scherle** is a Professor for Intercultural Management and Diversity at the Hochschule für Oekonomie & Management (FOM) in Munich. His research interests are mainly in the areas of economic and tourism geography with an

emphasis on sustainability issues, entrepreneurship, intercultural communication and diversity. As a cultural geographer, he has been involved in several national and international research projects, mainly focusing on internationalisation processes of the tourism industry. He is a fellow of the DGT (German Association for Tourism Research) and the Royal Geographical Society.

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# Foreword

*Prof. Walter Leal Filho (PhD, DSc, DPhil, DTech, DEd)  
Chair, Inter-University Sustainable Development Research  
Programme*

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in September 2015 provide a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that by 2030 all people enjoy peace and prosperity.

They also entail elements of importance towards a strategic business engagement with sustainability issues. These offer a framework which provides businesses with a systematic approach to identify new business opportunities while contributing to the solution of the grand sustainability challenges facing the world today, including climate change. Each SDG, if achieved, will have a direct and significant positive impact on millions of people's lives around the world and the environment in which they live. Businesses have an opportunity to widen the purpose of business by adopting the SDGs as targets for their operations. Thus, they can make a meaningful contribution to the greater good by achieving their operational objectives.

Family businesses are uniquely placed to contribute to SDGs for many reasons. Firstly, because family business models have longer time perspectives, and this allows the family business to link with the longer-term SDG time frame – 2030. Second, family businesses often focus on aspects of business operation which do not have an immediate return on investment such as relationship building with stakeholder groups. Thirdly, family businesses tend to rate the importance of ethics higher than standard businesses and thus align well with the social dimensions of the SDGs. Lastly, family businesses have intergenerational perspectives which is a core principle of sustainability.

This book provides insights into how family business operationalises SDG#13: Climate Action. The book uses a rigorous case study approach for family businesses to detail aspects of their businesses that advocate for climate action. The cases provided here are living proof that family business that operate for the greater good actually work! Non-family businesses can take a leaf out of the family businesses portrayed in this book as they can provide different perspectives on how businesses can successfully align SDGs and business strategy.

Despite many businesses having adopted environmental social governance strategies and environmental management systems, the effect of this activity has

not been reflected in a healthier planet. Many ‘state of the environment’ reports indicate that planetary health is decreasing, and planetary boundaries are being crossed or are about to be crossed. Whilst the cause of this decline is not entirely the fault of business, there still needs to be a greater effort to address the decline. The challenge for family businesses is to use their unique characteristics and set ambitious programmes of work that make a meaningful contribution to achieving global goals. This book provides insights into how family businesses can achieve such a mission and how non-family businesses can be inspired to do the same.

# Acknowledgements

The Editors would like to thank the contributors of the book for providing insights and sharing learnings from their business practice. We acknowledge that writing up cases in the format required considerable time and effort. The quality of the cases presented is a testament to their efforts.

The Editors would also like to thank Emerald Publishing for supporting the publication of this book and the mission for deeper sustainability through utilising the SDGs.

The authors of Chapter 3 ‘Germany: *Riedenburger Brauhaus* – Organic Farming and Climate Protection Out of Conviction’ would like to thank Maximilian Krieger (Operational Manager) and Katrin Trattner (PR & Sustainability) for their time, support, and valuable insights into the *Riedenburger Brauhaus*. In addition, they would like to thank their student assistant Patrizia Pluskota (Bachelor Tourism Management at the Hochschule München University of Applied Sciences), who gave them extraordinary support in the preparation of this case study and thus also contributed the students’ perspective.