



John Linnartz: The Legacy and Live Your Personal Dream Man

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In [Paul Coelho's](#) book [The Alchemist](#), he refers to it as "following your personal legend." Destiny. Your life's purpose. Life path. There are many ways to describe the innate passion that drives you to fulfill something greater in the world. For John Linnartz, he settles gently on a calling. But, perhaps even more importantly, that's precisely what he does for the people he works with. He helps others to find meaning in their own lives.

His business, [Linnartz & Associates](#), is focused on two particular areas: strategic family philanthropy and preparing heirs for success. Finding clarity and confidence is the foundation of what he has built. Both present challenges that can border on the monumental - just ask any multi-generational family. But, New Canaan, Conn.-based Linnartz makes clear that the rewards in watching families flourish through learning to communicate - while building a culture of learning and growing together - make rising to the challenge worthwhile. "Learning and growing together is one of the pillars of success for families," he emphasizes.

And he'd know.

Thoughtful, Mindful, Meaningful Philanthropy

Linnartz, in fact, is a fifth-generation family member of one of the US' most recognized dynasties (which he prefers not to name), known for its charitable contributions. He understands well the challenges that families face. Part of this comprehension stems from a number of external forces that have shaped his view. Attorneys that sell legal structures, psychologists that want to "fix you," financial money managers that manage financials, "Those are all worthy and noble professions that are required elements for a family to succeed," Linnartz points out. "But the most difficult areas to traverse are the softer skills, or human development. So, how to be thoughtful, how to stay mindful, how to have meaningful philanthropy that connects the generations and protects the legacy of the family, and how to prepare heirs for success."

He was first impelled toward this work after noting extensive research in the marketplace showing that over 80% of families were unable to pass their wealth past the third generation. "I've given deep thought as to the difference between myself, as a fifth-generation family member, and others and to why some families have been successful and others have not," he says.

He was persuaded further when, aware that Linnartz's own family stood at the vanguard of donor intent, another prominent family approached him for assistance in structuring two large philanthropic gifts. At the time, he was - and still is - working for his single family office and serving on several of its foundations.

After successfully developing a plan for this particular family, he formalized his own business in 2007, mainly working with North American families (though some with family members all around the globe). Prior to working



with his single family office, he worked for a two large corporations, [Becton, Dickinson & Co.](#) and [GE Capital](#), doing business development and developing strategic partnerships.

Great Wealth Can Do Great Things

Linnartz is very discerning when it comes to the work he does, which is why he is selective with the families with whom he chooses to work. "I am passionate about this is because I believe that great wealth can do great things," he says. "I look at the wonderful opportunities with which we have been blessed and think that, somehow, I need to do something with them, something to make the world a better place."

The work he carries out is done directly, discreetly, confidentially and marketed purely on a word-of-mouth basis. Linnartz works alone in order to create an impactful relationship in which he is able to inspire meaningful and measurable philanthropic giving while working to understand next-generation family members in order to help them discover their talents. In everything he does, it's about legacy - whether it's for the family or for the greater good.

The 'Associates' part of Linnartz & Associates refers to the "tools" or external resources he brings along. "I have brought in Ivy League professors to talk about ideas, research, provide studies on wealth. I've also brought in psychologists to talk about performance metrics, sustainable teams, human capital as an asset class to be considered in a family," he illustrates. "Those are really the major outside resources that I bring in besides some other folks to help organize events or make family meetings more productive and meaningful."

Linnartz also licenses a few tools from other people, such as a strength-finder tool akin to the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator assessment. The strength-finder allows families to develop a deeper understanding of their values, something he has found is not always easy to communicate. It is also the jumping off point when he begins to work with a family. From there, they work

together to develop a Purpose of Wealth Statement. Linnartz then gains insight into where they are now and where they wish to go, essentially creating a road map. This allows the space for growth: new responsibilities, new structures, new roles. This is the basis for - the heart of - a culture of learning and growing together, says Linnartz.

It's the personal follow-through and deep customization that he feels is a differentiating factor. "What I do is empower and augment the family's team. Almost all of the families that I work for have family offices or a foundation, so I help train them to be the leaders of the family," he explains. "And then those family office executives or foundation executives become the shepherds who carry on with the tools, the strategies and the structures we've developed so they can continue to grow as a family."

Finding a Voice

When Linnartz first started his business, it was solely dedicated to strategic philanthropy. But, as he began working with families, he found it was a means to give a voice to the younger generation family members, many of whom he has seen become impassioned and excited to be in this "age of philanthropy." It has given him a great deal of perspective on the desires of family members as individuals. "I don't believe in black sheep within families," he says. "I believe that if all family members are allowed to find their own voice, they can participate in building a culture of respectful learning. Then those family entities - be they foundations, family offices or other family structures - can flourish instead of being divisive. The real reward I have received - and witnessed with my own family - is to watch them learn, grow and become more optimistic about their own future as wealth holders."

There is a specific instance here, too, that prompted Linnartz to make working with heirs a separate and distinct part of his business, a part he added about four years ago. He was working with a prominent family that is also in its fifth generation and that still has an operating



company dating back to the 1800s. Because of their longevity, family members asked if, in addition to helping with strategic philanthropy, he could also help in preparing their heirs for leadership posts within the foundation and operating posts within the operating company.

It is here that he began to take in outside counsel in developing meaningful programs and processes that help younger generations on their personal journeys. He notes that while both parts of the business are on equal footing, the two are profoundly interrelated. "I am of the belief that philanthropy is a vehicle of giving to mankind and making the world a better place," he says. "But, there is no reason that it can't be structured, legally and ethically, as a means for learning family values, legacy, financial literacy, family governance and the unique ways that families mix."

Through this, he says, family members connect better because it also brings individual talents to the surface. Greater success comes with individual goals that contribute to a family's overall goals, he stresses. It's a point well-taken that if a family member isn't allowed to find his own passion, there's no incentive to carry on the torch. Resentment and unhappiness build from that. "I speak as a parent myself. We want to help our children and sometimes we smother them," he says. "The point is not to create carbon copies of ourselves, but to allow them to find their own voice, which allows them to become legacy multipliers. Then they are willing to take the leadership mantle."

Furthering the point, Linnartz highlights that he has learned, through working with psychologists, two main things: "We need work and we need love. The work helps define who we are. That's where the challenge of wealthy families comes in because if you don't need to work you are a ship without a rudder. I help find meaning in their philanthropy by allowing them to align their talents and their gifts along a passion and a mission to solve a problem of the world. This becomes their life's journey and helps them define who they are and why they are here."

Without that, self-destruction can result. He has witnessed that in suicide, drug addiction, alcoholism, multiple marriages. "I try to help bring people to a higher calling and a higher purpose to move as far away from that as possible." What continues to inspire him is to watch people make a personal investment in themselves.

He reflects on why this work is so important to him personally. "I consider it a privilege to sit alongside and partner with families that I choose to work with," he says. "It helps to shine a light on their talents and skills that really help change the world with new ideas and new strategies. I enjoy shepherding their gifts and talents, urging them along to reach their own family goals while making the world a better place."