

IMPROVISING YOUR WAY TO PURPOSE: ENRICO LETA OF VITALATTE AND YORGUS LATICINIOS

Enrico Leta expected to continue to lead and work in his family enterprise, a highly successful regional chain of high end supermarkets started by his Italian immigrant grandfather. But he did not expect that the second generation—Enrico’s father, aunts, and uncles—would decide the best future for their family business rested on leaving the third generation to find their own ventures. Dazed and untethered, Enrico set off to find a new career path and purpose. His story inadvertently illustrates for us what guest expert Dave Evans refers to as “designing your life” with curiosity, community, experimentation, and storytelling.

Join us to learn how Enrico navigated a season of uncertainty and how he found success with his “best doable option.” In addition to Dave Evans, we are also joined by guest expert Jennifer Pendergast, who discusses trans-generational entrepreneurship and the “entrepreneur gene.”

Enrico Leta:

We're a big Italian family. My father has five brothers and sisters, so there's six and at some point, all of them have worked in the business. And, as the business grows, it creates this complex dynamic that is: I am a shareholder but I also work in the business and sometimes not as upper management.

To give an example, I have an aunt who was a category manager and then she was not in upper management, but she was a shareholder who sat at the shareholder meeting. But she had two levels of hierarchy below my father, so that creates some interesting dynamics that arose between the second generation.

They didn't want us to think of Zonal Sul as a career choice. They wanted to have clear rules and that's the decision they made.

I was frustrated because you grew up with the business. I grew up with the business. The business was growing as I grew up.

Esther Choy:

What to do with your life when you realized that you can't have the very thing that you've always wanted?

Well, find something else! Find another career path! Well sure, but the process of finding something else can be very time consuming and overwhelming. For example, where are you even supposed to start? Now, with the proper framing and tools, it doesn't have to be such a gnarly challenge that could take forever to overcome. That's what we're going to focus on in this episode.

Hi. My name is Esther Choy, the executive producer and your host of the John L. Ward Center for Family Enterprises' own podcast series: Family IN Business. A podcast that features stories of leaders, their families, and the family enterprises they transformed.

In the previous episode with guest Meghan Juday, we've explored how her family has processed all the good and bad that gets handed down through her multi-generational family enterprise. AND how she sustains herself as a family enterprise leader.

In this episode, we're going to hear the story of another family enterprise leader, who up until he was 18 years old, had wrapped his whole identity and purpose around his family enterprise. But because of the decision that his elder generation handed down to his generation, he had to find his purpose somewhere else.

Together with our show's advisor Dr. Jennifer Pendergast at Kellogg's Ward Center, and a new guest expert, Dave Evans, a New York Times bestselling author of the book series Designing Your Life and Designing Your Work Life, we're going to dive right into Enrico Leta's leadership story. Who's Enrico?

Enrico Leta:

My name is Enrico Leta and I'm the managing partner of Vitalatte & Yorgus, a yogurt and fresh cheese manufacturer here in Rio de Janeiro Brazil.

We are a dairy company and we manufacture fresh cheese under the brand Vitalatte, and it's mostly fresh, Italian cheese; mozzarella, Burrata, ricotta, scamorza, which is a cheese for pizza. And in 2014, we launched Yorgus, which is our strained yogurt line and we make fresh, all-natural strained yogurt, which is like the very popular Greek yogurt in the US.

I come from a 65-year-old family business called Zonal Sul, which is a supermarket chain here in Brazil. The supermarket was started by my grandfather, Francesco Leta who is Italian, was born in Italy and fled to Brazil during World War II. Started making a living here any way he could in Brazil. Started working as a butcher, selling vegetables on the street. And then, opened his first grocery shop in a corner in Ipanema in Rio de Janeiro and from there it grew to a small market and he added some more stores. Today, Zonal Sul is one of the top supermarkets in the country, even though it's only located in the state of Rio de Janeiro. It's located mostly in affluent neighborhoods with very differentiated mix of products and a lot of imported products, organic, a lot of different services.

My father, Fortunato, started running from a very early age and he took control of the company when he was in his 30s and grew it to be the company that is today with over 45 stores in here Rio, and very important to note, a very high sales per square foot. One of the highest in the country.

Esther Choy:

How did your father do it?

Enrico Leta:

It was more opportunistic than a brilliantly devised strategy, to be very honest. Rio de Janeiro has a geography that the affluent neighborhoods are very concentrated, so much like Manhattan

If you imagine Manhattan, it's a very dense geography. The business started doing well with the supermarket and they started expanding but very focused on this region, which is called the southern zone. In Portuguese, Zonal Sul, and it's the southern zone of Rio de Janeiro where the affluent neighborhoods are. Zonal Sul started growing in this area and it became the dominant player of

groceries and it naturally became a dominant force in this area where it was very hard for other players to come in.

My father, when he took the role of president or CEO, they had four stores and he started a very quick expansion through the 90s and 2000s focused on this area and also focused on a very differentiated service and mix of products.

The first important fact is that we come from an Italian heritage. Both my grandfather and my grandmother came from Calabria, the south of Italy, during a very difficult economic period and they were able to prosper here in Brazil. So, the connection to Italy was very strong, and our family grew around big family events, meals where everyone enjoys themselves and enjoys great food that my grandfather still makes to this day. There's always a very, strong connection to food.

So, this high value on food was always there in my family. I think that's something that's been passed on through generations. I think when we set out to do something related to food, it has to be of high quality. I think that's just inherent in us.

Jennifer Pendergast:

In Enrico's case in particular, it's so interesting to listen to him about the purpose of food.

Esther Choy:

That's professor Jennifer Pendergast, executive director of the Kellogg's Ward Center for Family Enterprises.

Jennifer Pendergast:

So, they came from Italy, which of course we all think about like great food in Italy anyway, right? But they came because they were poor and had no way to feed themselves. And so, feeding people, that's really core and important to them as a purpose. And also, food is something that brings people together.

They believed in the core purpose of what they did. They're so proud of being part of that and want to perpetuate that.

Enrico Leta:

I think the values of good food was passed on by the business. It was always very customer driven. And if it is customer driven, you have to offer the highest and the best quality, and it started with vegetables and fruits, which has to be something very fresh and well picked. I think that was always in the center of the business and the family.

Esther Choy:

So what happened? Why did G2 decide that G3 could not work in or be part of the business?

Enrico Leta:

It was problems related to being a large group of shareholders who also worked in the business in the second generation. We're a big Italian family. My father has five brothers and sisters, so there're six and at some point, all of them have worked in the business. And, as the business grows, it creates this complex dynamic that is: I am a shareholder but I also work in the business and sometimes not as upper management. To give an example, I have an aunt who was a category manager and then she was not in upper management, but she was a shareholder who sat at the shareholder meeting. But she had two

levels of hierarchy below my father, so that creates some interesting dynamics that arose between the second generation.

G3, as you can imagine, is also a very large group. I think we are about 18 cousins. I'm the oldest. I'm turning 40 this year and we have from 40 to a five-year-old. It's a large group and a large age difference. But our role in the business is we're working together as a group to define our role in the business, which is still undefined. We're still not shareholders. We don't own shares in the business and we don't participate actively in the business. There was an important decision that the second generation made regarding our generation which was, I think, in the end of the 90s. They decided that they weren't letting our generation join the business until they had clear policies of succession. That was set when me and some of my cousins were about to turn 18.

They didn't want us to think of Zonal Sul as a career choice. They wanted to have clear rules and that's the decision they made. From what we learned, it was based on a lot of negative experiences in the supermarket industry in transitions from G2 to G3, but especially in Rio de Janeiro, we knew some supermarket companies that went bankrupt during this transition so that's a decision they made. That's the decision that we grew up with.

I was frustrated because I grew up with the business. The business was growing as I grew up, and my father was obviously 100% involved. My father is a healthy workaholic. He works from Monday to Monday. He wakes up at 4:30 am, and his work is his main pleasure. It was his main pleasure for much of his life. He didn't enjoy taking vacations. When he traveled, it was mostly to visit other supermarkets or to go to trade shows, and sometimes he took me along with him, but I grew up in that environment and I was with him. I helped shelve, I helped stock new stores. When I thought of the business, my reference was always Zonal Sul, and when I thought of a businessman, the reference was always my father.

So, there was naturally a very strong desire to be involved with the business and to work with my father. So, it was frustrating.

Esther Choy:

That's how Enrico ended up in this limbo state. Enrico, his brother Patrick, and many of his cousins were around mid to late teens when G2 made the decision that G3 couldn't work for the business, couldn't be part of the business even though Enrico himself grew up wrapping his identity around the family business.

However, the decision wasn't a final one. There's a chance that G2 could resolve its differences, revert their decision and allow G3 to join. But then again, they might not?

So, if you were in Enrico's shoes at the time, what would you do? How would you feel? Would you hedge your bet? And how do you come up with a purpose while being in limbo?

Esther Choy:

Welcome back! For over twenty years, Kellogg's Ward Center for Family Enterprises has convened family enterprise stakeholders in intimate and large group settings to share their experiences and learn from each other. One way you can leverage this incredible learning environment is by joining our extensive executive education programs. We offer different topics such as governance, leadership, board and family office year-round.

Check out the details at our website at WardCenter.net.

It turns out Enrico, his brother and cousins were in limbo for about two decades. What did they end up doing? How did he wrap his head around his purpose on this new path that he didn't choose for himself?

Dave Evans:

In change theory, there are two primary forces, pushes and pulls. You get pushed by pain, and you get pulled by longing or loss. They both work. If you want to get pulled by something you're really attracted to, great. You want to get pushed by something like, "I've had it. We can't stay here any longer." Okay. Whatever. So don't get picky about your forces of initiation.

This is David Evans, the co-founder of the Stanford Life Design Lab. And in this interview, most well-known as the coauthor of *Designing Your Life*, followed by *Designing Your Work Life*, soon to be followed by the way, this October, by *Designing Your New Work Life*, the second edition to the second book. And before that, 35 years in Silicon Valley is, early days with Apple with Steve Jobs and those guys and co-founder of electronic arts.

The mission of the Life Design Lab is to apply the innovation principles of design thinking to the wicked problem of designing your life

Esther Choy:

I'm a big fan of design thinking. As a framework, it is very useful and can be applied to so many things in life. Like life itself!

Dave Evans and his co-author and collaborator Bill Burnett applied the principles of design thinking to help, initially, Stanford students to think about how to live a productive and joyful life. To scale the impact to the broader public, the pairs published the book *Designing Your Life* in 2016, and then *Designing Your Work Life* in 2020.

So, in a nutshell, how do you apply design thinking to your lives so that you can live a life well-lived and joyful?

Dave Evans:

Get curious, talk to people, try stuff, tell your story. And the middle two are prototyping, talk to people and try stuff, and be in community and go do things.

Esther Choy:

There are four steps, all involving being in a community, and emphasis is on: DOING.

1. Get curious
2. Talk to people
3. Try Stuff
- 4 Tell your story

Dave Evans:

That's why the design mindsets of radical collaboration and bias to action. Life's an improv skit, we're making this up as we go along, but you can learn to be good at improv. You can learn to be good at the making it up as you go along skillset. That's what we help people do.

Esther Choy:

So, let's find out how Enrico made it up as he went along the decision that was handed to him that he couldn't fulfill his life's purpose by working for his family business. How did Enrico improv his way to his eventual purpose?

Without knowing so, he had applied design thinking process to designing his life.

Enrico Leta:

I went to college in the US and I learned during college that this wasn't going to be an option.

Esther Choy:

And by "This", he is referring to the fact that he couldn't work for his family business.

Enrico Leta:

So, I started exploring and I ended up in finance. I worked in finance for over four years first in private bank and then some trading in investment banking. I was doing well. I was growing the bank that I worked with. But I knew deep inside that that wasn't for me. I knew that I wanted to be an entrepreneur. I wanted to create a product that I could touch and feel, that I could serve to other people and that was always inside of me.

Esther Choy:

Having been in a similar situation myself at one point and as well as coaching countless people in the stage of their career where they might be doing well but still feeling that they're not doing what they're meant to do, I can really relate to what Enrico was experiencing.

What do you do?

Dave Evans:

When I sit down with young people contemplating, what's my role going to be, I say, first of all, in our second book, we have a thing called look for the BDO not the BTO. The best doable option not the best theoretical option.

So sometimes as it turns out in life, you've got a really gnarly problem. Well, it turns out in many situations, you don't need to understand it and you don't need to figure it out because the truth is, there are only a handful of viable, implementable, doable alternatives, doable options. If you can get a gnarly essay problem down to a simple, multiple-choice question, all you need to know is just about 1% more information than is the absolute minimum necessary to choose which option. I haven't got this all figured out and there are a whole bunch of things that I still don't know that clearly is door number two.

So, you walk through door number two, and you figure out the rest later.

Now, if you're an upcoming member of one of these families, I would argue you have three, maybe four alternatives, and pretty much that's it.

Enrico Leta:

So, in 2009, I decided to quit my job in finance. I got an offer from a bank in New York and I took that job offer as a way to say, "Okay, I'm going to quit my job and think of next steps." And I decided to do an MBA. Post-MBA, I got a job in consulting and in shopper marketing, which is a great experience. I led projects with supermarkets in the US and in Mexico, too, so that was very interesting.

But I also knew that consulting wasn't for me. At the time, my wife Roberta got pregnant with our first daughter, and I at that time had been in the US for eight years. I thought, "Okay, so I think now it's time for me to move back." I love the United States, it's my second country but I wanted to raise my kids here in Brazil close to their grandparents so that's when we decided to come back and it was a great timing because that was when I decided that I want to make yogurt.

Because Greek yogurt was exploding popularity in the US. It was around 2012. I was a heavy user of Greek yogurt.

I was a heavy user of Greek yogurt. When I lived in Chicago and New York, brands like Chobani, which is our big inspiration and Fage, and I thought I have to do this in Brazil. I love this product. This is a healthy yogurt. It's full of protein, low in carbs, low in fat. This is the type of product that Brazilians will go crazy for. This is in 2012 and my brother, Patrick, had recently started a cheese business, Vitalatte. He actually started it in 2008, so I moved back to Brazil and I pitched to him this project. I said, "Hey Patrick, you've got a dairy company here. You've got the milk; you've got the distribution. I have this idea for this great product that is exploding in the US. Let's do this together." And he said, "Yes, of course."

In early 2013, I came back to Brazil to launch Yorgus, which was when we launched a year and a half later in 2014, was the first all-natural strained yogurt here in Brazil.

Esther Choy:

If you think about it, because Enrico's father's generation made the decision that G3 cannot work for the family business, he and along his brother and cousins had to get curious. They had to go away from the family enterprise to find where they belonged professionally. Getting curious was part one of designing his life.

Then, in part 2 of design thinking where you want to talk to people and prototype, that's Enrico's eight years in the United States, where he was getting his undergraduate degree, working in finance, banking, getting his MBA at Kellogg, and eventually working in consulting. Then, now part 4, he can tell stories. Right?

Because at this stage, he has finally realized that he's an entrepreneur at heart. He needed to create things that he can touch and feel and serve to others. So, he moved his family back to Brazil. He's ready to tell his story. He's ready to share with the world what he's purpose is?

Right?

What is your purpose?

Enrico Leta:

This is a big question. I don't have a definite answer.

Esther Choy:

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That's WardCenter.net

I was wondering how Enrico would word his purpose once he figured out that he'd want to go back to Brazil and start his own business around good quality food. But I was surprised by his answer.

Enrico Leta:

I don't have a definite answer. I think we are all learning human beings and I'm still evolving, but I think I've had the great privilege of having a great education academically and also by my parents. I think my purpose is to leave the world a better place. That is something that I'm working on every day. One obvious way is first with my children. I want to raise children that are very well educated and confident to make a positive impact in the world, to do something they love and make a positive impact. Me personally, it's through my work. I'm very proud of employing hundreds of people and being a good employer but most of all, we have a mission in Vitalatte and Yorgus which is to have a positive impact in the nutrition of Brazilians.

Esther Choy:

At this point of the interview, I was really puzzled. Shouldn't someone like Enrico, an entrepreneur, who grew up in his family business, despite not being allowed to work in it, found his way back to stay close to his family and its business by founding his own company that complements his family business, shouldn't someone like Enrico have an elegant sentence or two to say about his purpose?

Why is his purpose statement sound so generic? Make the world a better place.... And why does he sound like he's struggling to come up with it?

Well, it turns out. It's not so straight forward. Which has everything to do with why I really want you to hear Dave Evans's opposing view on finding and defining purpose. And while we're at it, let's hear what he has to say about another term, passion. How's passion different or similar to purpose? How are they related?

Dave Evans:

Today, the most popular organizing question is, what's your passion? Which is kissing cousins to what's your purpose? But purpose is a little more elevated, and I'll come back to purpose in just a second. But again, passion, the research done by Bill Damon at the Center for Adolescents at Stanford which goes to the age of 27, by the way. Your neocortex isn't fully baked until you're 24 or 25. So it's hard to know. And this passion thing, 80% of highly competent, fully three-digit IQ bearing people who can dress themselves. 80% of those people answer the passion question with, "I don't know yet, I haven't found one. Or I've got a bunch which one did you want to hear about first?"

So, the question, what's your passion, finds eight out of ten, perfectly healthy people as being in need of remediation like, "Oh, you don't know your passion. Oh dear. That's so sad. You should know by now." All questions have belief systems. What's your passion believes everybody has one, you'll know it upfront, what you discovered should be the organizing center of your vocation and the world will let you do it and preferably make a living not make a killing while doing so. Those are false. They're all false. Most people

who find a passion, they develop one in the process. It's the outcome of good work, not the beginning of good work.

So, what I argue is, because as soon as you say, I need to find my purpose. That question, as soon as there is one, there's one superior one, and it should be the organizing principle. And we didn't know that to be the case. What I will say is, let's go live purposefully. So, if I live on purpose, I want to live coherently. We define coherency is, who I am, what I believe, what I'm doing in alignment. I'm evolving my way forward. I mean, do I absolutely have great confidence now that I can declare that my lifelong purpose is available to me right now? And the answer is no. And I can't move forward until I find it, I've just decided to be stuck for the rest of my life, liter. And even if somebody did have one purpose, how many of them knew it before 30 or 35 or even 40? Very few. Let's get good at living purposefully, living into purpose and be purpose-forming people and be formed by purpose, and then you may find, I think this is a keeper.

Esther Choy:

Live. Purposefully.

Instead of struggling to come up with what your purpose or passion at the moment in time might be, live coherently. Meaning who you are, what you believe in, and what you do should be in alignment. Don't let not knowing and not being able to define your purpose or passion prevent you from living your coherent life. Because finding your passion and purpose, according to Dave Evans, is a result of good work, NOT the beginning of good work.

So, Enrico went back to Brazil to start his Greek yogurt business, and he also made another important discovery, one that is of great value that Enrico's grandfather and father passed on to him even more so than the family business.

Enrico Leta:

I started my new venture when I was in my 30s and the opportunity cost is very high, so I literally moved from New York City, the upper west side of New York City, to a rural town in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil called Valenca, which is less than 80,000 people, only farms. If you leave work after 8:00 pm, there are no restaurants. I had to be away from my wife, from my kids for a long time to be in the plant and it took a lot longer to take off than I had planned. Being an entrepreneur in Brazil is very hard. I think it's hard all over the world.

in those first years where I sat down with my wife and I said, "What have I done? I don't think I made the right decision here. But now, I'm too involved. I have to do this.

Esther Choy:

Since the G2 had made the decisions for you guys not to be able to join the business, did they do anything in terms of supporting you guys and helping you? Ideas? Connections? Financing?

Enrico Leta:

There was definitely support. There was no financing but we started a food company having a client that was one of the top supermarkets in Brazil who opened the doors to us to test our products. Obviously if the products didn't do well, it wouldn't stay there because they have a business. But having this door open eliminates a big part of the risk of starting a company and making high investments, especially in

yogurt where we had to make high investments in equipment to start this business. The family was supportive in this sense of having Zonal Sul as a client who supported this business.

But after the concepts were proven, the product started performing well, we started distributing our products nationally to supermarkets in the entire country. We were treated as a regular supplier so there were never any favors. We were treated as a regular supplier and we have a great relationship, and it was also a very interesting way to learn about the business as an outside supplier, someone who's doing business with the family business but independently.

the third generation has created very interesting and very healthy businesses apart from Zonal Sul, which if we would have joined, might not have existed. In retrospect, it can be said that it was a good decision.

Something that I learned during this process of starting my own venture and also writing a case with Kellogg was this notion of trans-generational entrepreneurship.

Esther Choy:

Trans-generational entrepreneurship. That's a very smart sounding term but also a mouthful. What is it? And what was this thing that is of great value that Enrico's grandfather and father passed on to him even more so than the family business?

Jennifer Pendergast:

So, almost every business was started by someone with some idea of doing something somewhat differently. But there was someone who was willing to take a risk. So, the entrepreneurial genes me isn't just the Steve Jobs or Bill Gates. And I have an idea. But it could also be as well that I'm willing to take a risk and go out on my own and make no money and I'm responsible for myself and my family at that point.

I think the challenge you see in families is you have that gene in the first generation, you struggle, you scrap, you get by the second generation, maybe you've locked in. If you get to the second generation, you've walked into something successful, right? And then it all becomes about protecting it like, you don't want to lose this. And then you lose that risk taking mentality. I think that's probably more towards third generation.

I find a lot of children of entrepreneurs tend to be entrepreneurial because they grew up in a family with someone who worked in big Fortune 100 companies. And the idea of not having a pension and or a 401k and benefits was something inconceivable to me, the safety net. But to others to grow up with a dad who sold everything and put a card table in the middle of their apartment. And I can tell you so many stories of kids like that from very successful families. They don't get so scared about someone betting on themselves.

They're like, "Oh yeah. You can do that. And if it doesn't work, you scrape by and you do something else. Look at all. We figure it out in the end or we only see the stories that figured it out in the end," right? It's a self-selection bias there. But that gene, I think of it as the entrepreneurial gene, right? That gene is the gene that's not scared to bet on yourself and to believe that you can do something that you haven't probably done before and that you can sell it to someone and they're going to buy it. You can make money doing it. You can support yourself.

But it's hard to do that one, because I think as human beings is to be risk averse and protective. Then also, you get to a certain level of comfort and you have a lot more to lose, right? So, how you pass on that gene that says, "I'm willing to go try do something new and not just that but I'm actually energized or excited by that idea enough that I'm going to give up whatever the other options are."

One thing research shows about how to pass that on is, is literally the easiest idea of ideas, which is the take your kid to work day. Kids that grow up in the business, sweeping floors, just doing the basic of basic from the ground up are the ones that are more likely to be engaged by it in an early age. That's the apprenticeship model, right? That's how you used to do everything.

The other thing I encourage entrepreneurs to think about is not just telling their kids what but why. Because the fact that I did something as much less relevant than why I chose to do it that way. And by the way, if you don't know the why, sometimes you make the wrong interpretation of why they did it and you might choose to keep doing something that they never would've kept doing because the why is going away.

Very quick aside. Great story. I've heard a family business tell that every year their mom would cut off the two ends of ham to stick it in the pan before they had it for the holiday. And one point down the road, someone said, Mom, what's so special? Why did we cut off the ends of the ham? And she said, "I don't know. That's what your grandmother always did." So, they went to the grandmother and said, "What's the secret of cutting all the ends off the ham?"

She's like, "Because I didn't have a pan that was big enough to fit it there. So, if you had asked the why instead of what, you would have realized with a bigger pan though, it was no longer relevant to lose the ends. There's a lot of stories like that in family businesses, the understanding the why is really important. And then the other thing is being willing to let your kids see failures. So, for every idea you tried, there's probably five others that didn't work and much more you could learn from those five than the one that did.

Because frankly, the one that did could have been luck, circumstances, timing, anything else that you can't replicate but the ones that you didn't, helped form where you were. So, the concept of really going back to storytelling, right? Walking through and explaining how we got to where we were and how those things happen. First of all, there's great learning embedded in that because you can't have your child sit there for all the years you did something.

But second, they lose some of that risk of failure because they realized that you failed. So, you're more likely to create a culture that lets them fail, which is really, really important.

So, I think that combination of really sitting by your side, explaining more of the story behind why things happened and then being willing to share the failures along with the successes or pieces that can really help build that transgenerational entrepreneurship. Because in the end of the day, if you think about where this whole concept started for this podcast and being a family in business is that if you look at very old multi-generational families, they're never in the same business that they started in because the world around them has changed, right?

So, if you can let go of the notion that I am in X business and instead on my family in business, which means that I'm a family trying to perpetuate its wealth across generations and develop new ideas and create new engines of growth, those come from transgenerational entrepreneurship, right? So, any seed

of one could be something that could be your next big business and the other one may go away or get sold or something else. But if you don't keep reinventing yourself, where's that going to come from?

Enrico Leta:

What became clear to me is that the great value in what my grandfather did and what my father did was not the business in itself, but it was the example of being entrepreneurs, and that's something that I would like to carry on. I think today, business is changing very rapidly. We don't know if we'll shop in supermarkets in 20 years. Zonal Sul might not be here, but what I learned from my grandfather and from my father is that if you start something, if you put your energy into it, you have great rewards and I think I was born to run my own venture, to be an entrepreneur and that was because I grew up in this environment. This is something I inherited and that I look forward to passing to my kids.

Esther Choy:

Thank you, Enrico Leta, managing partner of Vitalatte & Yorgus. Also, thank you Dave Evans, co-director of Stanford Life Design Lab and co-author of the book series *Designing Your Life*, *Designing Your Work Life*, and now *Designing Your NEW Work Life*.

The one last thing that Dave told me about purpose that really stuck with me is this.

Dave Evans:

It's almost impossible to know by yourself. It's very hard to hear your own authentic voice by yourself. You really need community; we're not built to be alone.

Enrico Leta:

Yes. I think as I learned in Kellogg, it's challenges that when you're involved in a family business, it seems that are very unique to your family but when I went to Kellogg and was very active on the family business groups, I learned and it was very enlightening that we had the same problems as a guy who has five candy shops in Hawaii and the guy who his father had started, founded and then one of the biggest telecommunications in the United States and in the world.

Esther Choy:

Whether it's in our MBA program or executive education programs, come join a community of family enterprise leaders at Kellogg's Ward Center. We're not meant to be alone. Check out our dozens upon dozens of learning options, some on-demand and some interactive programs at WardCenter.net. That's WardCenter.net.

In the next episode, you will hear how having a clearly defined purpose has helped a fourth-generation family enterprise leader navigate through a political sensitive topic and a morally complex situation.

Family IN Business, a podcast sponsored by the John L. Ward Center for Family Enterprises, is supported and advised by Professor Jennifer Pendergast, executive director of Kellogg's Ward Center for Family Enterprises. Kane Power is our audio engineer. And, I'm Esther Choy, an adjunct lecturer at the Kellogg's Ward Center, founder of Leadership Story Lab, and author of the book *Let the Story Do the Work*.

Esther Choy is the President and Chief Story Facilitator of [Leadership Story Lab](http://LeadershipStoryLab.com), where she teaches business storytelling to organizations and professionals who are searching for more meaningful ways to

connect with their audiences. Leaders trained in storytelling find compelling narratives to communicate authentically, inspire others, and create unimagined, lasting impact.

Since 2010, Esther has combined the science of persuasion and the art of storytelling to help her clients gain a competitive edge. Since launching Leadership Story Lab, she and her team have served clients across industries, including United Airlines, Tyson Foods, ZS, McCormick Foundation, Brookfield Asset Management, Adyen, Moore, US Cellular, SC Johnson and PayNet, an Equifax Company.

Esther is the author of the book [Let the Story Do the Work: The Art of Storytelling for Business Success](#). Her work appears regularly on forbes.com, virgin.com, entrepreneur.com, and ama.org. Her podcast, Family IN Business, is sponsored by the John L. Ward Center for Family Enterprises at the Kellogg School of Management, where she also holds an adjunct lecturer appointment. She is a graduate of Kellogg, as well as Texas A&M, holding an MBA from the former and MS in Higher Education from the latter.

Esther spent nearly half her life in Hong Kong, and now lives in Chicago with her husband and two daughters.

Established in 1999, the [John L. Ward Center for Family Enterprises](#) pioneered much of what is known about the collective challenges that family businesses and their leaders and owners face, making the Ward Center synonymous with new ways of thinking about the ownership and leadership of family enterprises. Clinical Professor Emeritus John Ward, along with co-founder Lloyd Shefsky and numerous faculty and staff aligned with the Ward Center, developed a world-class teaching and research center that provides cutting-edge thinking and guidance for family business purpose, vision and strategy, governance, leadership, succession, entrepreneurship in family business, family engagement and cohesion and family business culture.

The Ward Center has built a collaborative family business community among Kellogg students, faculty, alumni and family business scholars, and has developed a global network of successful business families who can learn from - and connect with - each other to generate innovative solutions to current and emerging challenges faced by family enterprises. The Ward Center also creates unparalleled executive programs and conferences to drive strategic conversations about innovations and best practices in the field of family enterprise.

Renamed the John L. Ward Center for Family Enterprises in 2020, the center today is in a unique position to transform the decision-making and strategic thinking of future generations of family enterprise leaders. The Ward Center is dedicated to producing rigorous and relevant research into the unique demands, strengths and evolutionary paths of family enterprises. Results of this research are delivered in the classrooms to all ages of family business leaders.

In addition to our focus on the complexities of family enterprise leadership, governance and strategy, we integrate Northwestern University's and the Kellogg School of Management's authoritative expertise into our curriculum to create a world-class, comprehensive, cross-discipline family enterprise resource. Our fusion of this deep academic capability with knowledge gleaned from our global community of high-impact business-owning families helps create the Ward Center's unique theory-driven, evidence-based frameworks.

The Ward Center has a three-pronged approach:

- Providing MBA curriculum and programming for students who are part of a family business, as well as students interested in the fields of private equity and venture capital
- Offering executive education courses that cover the full gamut of family enterprise management issues including family business strategy, governance, succession planning, entrepreneurship, family offices and family business culture
- Conducting groundbreaking research, both academic and practitioner-based, to better understand the challenges facing business families