

Endorsements

Francois reached a life of significance. Within the pressure-cooker world of big business, he succeeded in creating a sustainable global enterprise through his resilience and phenomenal business mind. But the real secret behind his success is undoubtedly Francois' child-like faith, coupled with his humility, compassion and Biblical wisdom. This book is a must read for everyone interested in leaving a lasting legacy in the lives of others and in the heart of God.

Stephan Joubert, PhD, DD – Award winning author, Founder of echurch, Extraordinary Professor in Theology, University of the Free State, Research Fellow at Radboud University, Nijmegen, Netherlands and trustee of the Mergon Foundation.

An authentic testimony written with humility. A profitable read for business and political leaders alike. I have been most inspired by what God continues to do through Francois as he fully yields to Christ.

Rachel Ong, Founder & CEO of ROHEI Corporation, Singapore.

Too few people have testimonies. Of those who do, only a handful relate it in a way that empowers the reader to enjoy the same privilege. Francois' testimony is powerful and life changing, enhanced by his wisdom, humour, sincere humility, and lack of pretence. It leaves the reader with more than a handful of gems to treasure. Do not miss the opportunity to read it.

Johan du Preez – Chairman Tree of Life Foundation and CEO SAAD Investment Holdings.

Francois shares his amazing story of trusting not only God, but also his partners and employees. By sharing his life lessons in a practical way, he demonstrates that enduring significance is possible through faith. This book will encourage you to trust God in every aspect of your life as He leads you from success to significance.

Nico van der Merwe – Founder of the H.A.S.S. Group, Eduplex School & SA Ear Institutes. Author of What Does God Know about Business? and Making the Right Decisions in Tough Times.

A wonderful testimony to the grace of God at work as per 2 Corinthians 9:8 (NIV): *And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.*

Wye Ming Lam - Retired Teacher, Ipoh, Malaysia.

A handbook for significance in business and a unique manual for a meaningful life. Francois masterfully uses his deep experience, vast knowledge and humour to give life-changing advice to help the reader understand that real business is about more than making money.

Pastor Francois D van Niekerk – former Senior Pastor: Hatfield Christian Church, Pretoria, S A and leader of TCN, a network of more than 200 churches spread across Southern Africa.

Francois' testimony moved me to reflect on my own life journey – to consider seriously my own practice of prayer and the surprising net benefit of his partnering strategy. His testimony will be of value to an emerging generation of entrepreneurs and business leaders everywhere.

Gideon Strauss, PhD – former CEO of the Center for Public Justice (Washington DC), editor of the journal Comment and professor of leadership and philosophy at various US institutions of higher education.

This is an inspiring story of God's grace literally impacting the world through what started as a small, insignificant business. A must read for those who have a vision and the desire for their business efforts and talents to bear eternal fruit.

JM du Toit – former professional engineer, senior partner in a leading SA law firm and now 23 years with Evangelism Explosion International, currently serving as senior Vice-President.

This book evolved out of the overwhelmingly positive response to Francois' testimony and obedience to God. Francois is loved and respected by friends and colleagues for his sincere, endearing nature, his humility, his knack for simplifying seemingly complex issues, and his flair for the unconventional. All this is reflected in this inspiring account of a journey with God that began with the proverbial mustard seed of faith. The book is filled with practical commercial and spiritual insights and principles. It is a relevant call to action to business leaders and aspiring entrepreneurs, and a glimpse into what might be possible if they act on this.

Pieter Faure – CEO of Mergon and the Mergon Foundation.

I respect Francois for his big-picture ability, his principled obedience to a vow that became a defining destiny, absolute integrity and the inspiring clarity of his vision. The book is about the journey of a man who became humble and silent before God, listened to His call and then acted on that call to be instrumental in feeding the stream of life rather than his own dam.

Carla H van Rensburg – Francois' daughter and a trustee of Mergon and the Mergon Foundation.

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Preface

First Edition:

It is a privilege to live. To experience the way life presents us mere mortals with a kaleidoscope of options, facets and possibilities. These can be overwhelming until we understand some of the basics – and this typically later in life on looking back, when we develop the need to be of service to the next generation.

This story is not really ‘my story’. It simply relates the benefits available to those willing to acknowledge the reality that the stream of life was, is and will always be determined by a Power that is beyond our human understanding. This Power presents us with a simple, guaranteed Key to an uncomplicated, but very significant existence.

It is the story of what God wants to do for each of us. It is a practical perspective on the extraordinary things He can do when we submit to a few basic principles. It recounts what He did for me – of the road He led me and my family down. Your journey may well look different because God works according to His unique plans for each of our lives. My experience is mine and I do not in any way claim that it should be the norm for everyone. But what happened to me brought a strong conviction that God wants to do something extraordinary with each of our lives. He does this not because of who we are, or any worthiness on our part, but because of who He is.

The underlying significance of what happened in our business points to a much wider call on the business world today. The time has come for the business sector to step up and address some of the worst imbalances threatening both the social and the commercial order of the world in which we live.

This story testifies to how the God of the Bible took a one man business start-up, with no possibility of survival, and turned it into an international conglomerate. It is about an enterprise called the Mergon Group and the associated Mergon Foundation that is increasingly being recognised internationally for its approach to the role of business in society. It is in the line-up of commercial corporations that are beginning to realise their obligations towards society at large; rather than a singular and often obsessive focussing of all efforts towards the ‘bottom line’. These companies are acting out their concern for a wider interpretation of the growing need to benefit all stakeholders and standing up for what is being referred to as ‘the good’.

The book recounts the totally unexpected result of being forced to turn to God for help when faced with imminent business failure. Thereafter His grace continually unfolded in successive levels of opportunity. This was in direct response to myself, my family and my colleagues learning about

obedience; as we came to the understanding of our own role being no more than that of instruments in His hand.

My testimony is that the current Mergon Group started in 1980 from practically nothing. The continued survival and eventual success of the company has been clearly by God's grace and mercy alone. It is an incomprehensible privilege to see how God continues shaping Mergon and the Mergon Foundation into a vehicle through which the credo *Regni Negotia Extendimus* – Expanding His Kingdom through Business, is increasingly being fulfilled. May obedience to God, our controlling 'Shareholder', keep the Mergon Group, the Mergon Foundation and all our associates, in His will.

To prevent any misinterpretation I want to state that I am not a theologian – what I relate is how God worked with me. I encourage you to seek Him and find His path and plan for your life. I share the fundamental principles I learnt with the hope that they may assist you.

Second Edition:

The first edition of *Doing Business with Purpose... Beyond Success to Significance* met with unexpected success, selling 4 000 copies within months. Also particularly gratifying is the mounting evidence of the testimony's impact on the lives of readers. Reaction throughout Southern Africa and the far flung corners of Australia, China, Central and Eastern Europe and the United States all bear witness to the testimony's influence on the readers' personal and business lives.

In recent years the footprint and diversity of our endeavours reached a point where prudence requires streamlining the Group's branding. Consequently the adoption of 'Mergon' as the unifying overall brand identity for all our business, foundation and related activities is under serious consideration. The Mergon brand name reflects our endeavours in an absolute sense and may well be adopted over the short term. Any rebranding project requires circumspection and will be concluded later in 2016 whilst time pressure for a reprint is mounting. Hence it was decided to communicate the intention for a Group rebranding without changing any of the nomenclature at this point.

Apart from several improvements and updates, the second edition is expanded with an additional chapter giving broad guidelines to assist the reader in the operation of a family trust. The chapter is in the context of a Kingdom-minded family trust but it gives a basic generic framework that any family can use in setting up a trust working document – see Chapter 8.

Third Edition:

As foreseen the third printing now reflects the Mergon branding along with a number of updates and improvements. To date the name Mertech was used for all commercial activities. But this name has been dropped in favour of Mergon as the unifying overall brand identity for the group.

In 1982, the Mergon Foundation was established in response to God's intervention at a key moment in my life. Mergon is derived from the Greek words *nomè* (the area where the flock graze) and *ergon* (effectiveness). This strongly represents the purpose for which Mergon was established, the reason for our existence and the heartbeat of the organisation.

Choosing Mergon as the new name for the unified group ultimately prioritises our core purpose over and above our activities to fulfil that purpose.

Introduction

In the first part of the book I have given some historical background in order to provide my family with a written record of their heritage. This historical background also adds context to the story.

The second part gives some insights into the operating structures of the Group, followed in closing with some personal perspectives gained over the years.

Despite my 17 years of corporate, and 38 years of business experience, I have purposely avoided the temptation to write a *magnus opus*. Doing so would have served little more than to flatter my ego. So I decided to share my testimony in a condensed format without understating any of the principles, lessons or valued insights gained over the years of corporate and business life.

These lessons are indicated with a bullet sign in the text. I have also shared quotes that are meaningful to me. These are identified with an asterisk throughout the text. Both the lessons and quotes are also summarised in Appendix 5. The six attachments provide more detailed information about certain topics in the text that will be of lesser interest to the average reader, but of significance to others.

To assist readers who may wish to apply principles described throughout the text, Appendix 6 provides a summary of the entire book and a 'toolkit' to facilitate incorporating these business and life values into everyday living.

Doing Business with Purpose... *Beyond Success to Significance*

This book is a testimony of how God transformed human failure into success on a completely unexpected scale. It recounts how we experience His immense grace coupled with His creative capacity. How He always responds so generously, in ways unimaginable, when we turn to Him and adhere to His minimal requirements. It bears witness to how He unfolds the unforeseen exponentially as we grow in our relationship with Him.

**So do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord ... not because of anything we have done but because of His own purpose and grace.*

2 Timothy 1:8–9

God's style is to take the most unlikely of the human race and demonstrate His Power. Why? Because He wants to show off? No, simply because His overriding purpose is for the Gospel of Salvation to be brought to as many of us as possible. One of God's requirements is that He expects each of us to be an effective witness for Him. Being blessed by God complements and enhances the credibility and impact of our witness; especially if the achievement is well beyond our capacity and despite our shortcomings or failures.

Some might see me as an exceptionally successful businessman. But the reality is a different story altogether. From a very small beginning with almost no capital, Mergon expanded to a Group currently operating in some ten industry sectors throughout Africa, Australia, the United Kingdom, USA, Central and Eastern Europe. Before I stepped down as Chief Executive in 2008, the Group posted an average compound growth of 49 per cent per annum for the preceding 20 years. That would certainly qualify as success by any standard, but there is simply no evidence to support any possible claim to personal ability or note-worthy skill.

After a moderately successful corporate career, unforeseen circumstances caused my somewhat ill-considered entry into private enterprise at the age of 38. Disaster struck within months and this book shares what happened and what is still being learnt about working with God in business.

The key challenge was and – because of human nature – still is the sharing of material ownership with, ironically, the Creator and ultimate Owner of the entire universe.

This testimony is a perspective on what really belongs to whom in the long run. It shares the paradox of God's style and what our business operations stand to gain when we venture into an altogether different sphere.

Then it also explains that the by-product of unexpected material benefit will always be in direct proportion to personal gain not being our primary motive.

The sharing of ownership with God and using the Key to His Power can hardly be seen as common business practice. Some may well regard it with cynicism. How can God be a joint Shareholder and how can we have direct access through 'the Door'? What would be the actual motive behind such a view? The way my colleagues and I have come to work with God as our controlling Shareholder and use this Key are two of the core issues covered in this testimony. These concepts will become clear as the story unfolds.

