

Behaving Like Sages: How Good-ark Strategically Use Religious Beliefs to Give Meanings to Entrepreneurial Activities

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Abstract

- Expanding non-family employee bases poses great challenges for family businesses that go beyond simple economic concerns.
- Adopting a **rhetoical history lens** and incorporating, interviews, observations, and documentation, we find that the founder established a **comprehensive belief system** that reinforces family ownership and promotes organizational identification by **three strategies**.
- We contribute to the emerging conversation of religious study in entrepreneurship by revealing the strategic use of religious beliefs and discussing their moral implications.

Keywords: **Rhetorical history**, entrepreneurship, family business, **Chinese culture**

RQ: How religious beliefs, from historical sages, can be strategically used and embedded to create competitive advantages?

Case Description

[Good-Ark Snapshot] 📄

- Founded: 1991 Employees: 2000+
- Industry: Semiconductors & New Energy
- Core Strategy: "Family Culture" since 2009

[Key Impacts] 🏆

- ✓ Efficiency ↑ 66.6% Defect Rate ↓ 33.5%
- ✓ Employee Turnover 1.29% (vs 20% industry)
- ✓ 5 National Awards for cultural innovation

[Global Recognition] 🏆

- UNESCO forums
- World Conference on Religions for Peace
- "China's Green Influence Model" 2021

Background

- China provides a unique context — an **atheist society** with a combination of a variety of cultural and ideological beliefs.
- Confucian beliefs are deeply rooted in every aspect of Chinese life (Tu, 1998)
- Good-Ark has been renowned for practising religious beliefs for 15 years. The founder established **Traditional Cultural Education** Department solely in charge of belief education among their employees.

"We pledge wholeheartedly to bring the culture of the sages to the world to benefit mankind." (from Good-ark)

Findings

Scripting Tactics

Generalizing Belief System

🌟 Creating Multi-faith Shared Space

Sacred Work Practices

🌱 Green Actions as Faith

Using Family Language

💖 Engaging Family-Style Care

Strategic Use of Religious Beliefs

Orchestrating beliefs

Religionizing entrepreneurial activities

Familizing non-family employees

Method & Data

Good-Ark is a theoretically unique case (Glaser et al., 1968) and our team has generous ongoing access

[Observation] 🌐

- 3 Field Phases
- 56 Photos (workshops/farms/prayer rooms)
- 6 Culture Courses

Phase I (Aug 2023)	Phase II (Nov 2023)	Phase III (Dec 2024)
- Facility tours 7hr Culture workshops	- Executive meetings with founder 6hr recordings	- Oral history focus groups 20 veterans

[Interviews] 🎤

- 20 Veterans (oral history)
- 6 Employees (random)
- 4 Top Managers

[Achieves] 📄

- 969 Pages Company Books
 - Employee stories & culture practices
- 6 Hours Founder's Videos
 - 230 short clips on philosophy
- 180 Pages Training Materials
 - Etiquette standards & history
- 34 Pages Media Reports
 - Public perception analysis

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