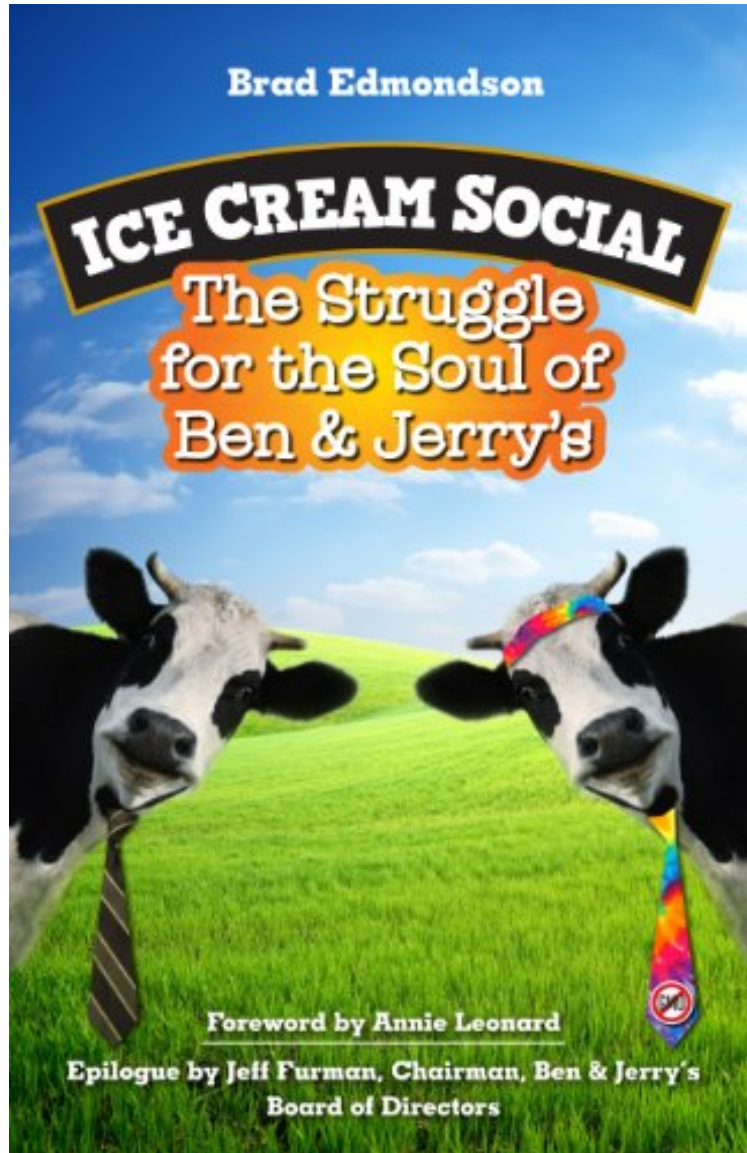


(Read free) Ice Cream Social: The Struggle for the Soul of Ben Jerry's

Ice Cream Social: The Struggle for the Soul of Ben Jerry's

Brad Edmondson

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Brad Edmondson : Ice Cream Social: The Struggle for the Soul of Ben Jerry's before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Ice Cream Social: The Struggle for the Soul of Ben Jerry's:

11 of 11 people found the following review helpful. The true story of Ben Jerry's By Mal Warwick One of my most vivid memories of the dozens of Social Venture Network (SVN) conferences I've attended over the years was seeing Ben Cohen walking into the dining hall in 2000, in tears over the sale of Ben Jerry's to Unilever. I went over to hug him — that's the sort of thing you do at SVN conferences — and as he sobbed I said

something stupid like “Look at it this way, Ben. You walked away with a s**tload of money.” (\$41 million, actually.) Ben was not consoled. As I recall, I first saw Ben Cohen sitting in a circle at an SVN conference in 1991. (Anita Roddick was sitting next to me, literally bouncing up and down, impatient to speak.) Not to put too fine an edge on it, I was star-struck. We didn’t speak then, but within short order I found opportunities to ask Ben about some of the innovations he’d introduced to Ben Jerry’s to advance social justice. I learned a great deal from him, with profound results for my company when I later put those lessons into action. In the ensuing years — SVN’s four-day conferences were held twice annually — I got to know Ben as a person rather than a star. He invited me to join him on the board of his organization, One Percent for Peace, and I became engaged in the negotiations to merge that small venture into Business for Social Responsibility, of which we’d both been co-founders in 1992 (along with a cast of dozens). At one point, believe it or not, this marketing genius even hired me to do some marketing work for his company’s huge nationwide campaign in support of the Children’s Defense Fund. Much later, I felt comfortable enough with Ben that I was able to talk him into putting his name as my coauthor on a book I was writing for SVN, published in 2006 as *Values-Driven Business: How to Change the World, Make Money, and Have Fun*. Despite this unusual degree of access to Ben, and strong relationships with a number of mutual friends, I wasn’t aware of what had really happened in the tumultuous days leading up to the sale of the company, much less in the thirteen years that followed. None of the several books I’d read about Ben Jerry’s had helped at all. Now I believe I know . . . well, a lot, though certainly not everything, thanks to Brad Edmondson’s excellent new book, *Ice Cream Social*. Edmondson’s subtitle, *The Struggle for the Soul of Ben Jerry’s*, is right on target, melodramatic though it may seem at first glance. Much of the author’s information and contacts came from Jeff Furman, who, little known outside, was effectively Ben and Jerry’s third partner in founding the company. In fact, factoring in both Ben’s and Jerry’s long absences — Jerry through several years in the 1980s, and both of them through most of the 2000s — Jeff is in all likelihood the only person (at least at a senior level) who has stayed with Ben Jerry’s throughout its history. A board member for many years now, he has served as chair since 2010. Jeff is fiercely dedicated to social and economic justice — and a nice guy to boot. *Ice Cream Social* details Ben, Jeff, and Jerry’s halting journey through the 1980s toward shaping the three-part mission that the company has been known for since 1988: making the best ice cream in the world; supporting causes that promote economic, social, and environmental change; and taking into account all the company’s stakeholders when making business decisions. Ben publicly called this the “double bottom line.” Within the company, and in *Ice Cream Social*, the concept is termed “shared prosperity.” For a quarter-century, Ben Jerry’s has been an icon of socially responsible business — a movement that the company was a leading factor in creating — but through much of the decade following its sale in 2000 the company fell far short of its exemplary performance in the last century. Clueless executives placed in charge by Unilever progressively whittled away at all three pillars of the mission, deliberately lowering product quality, getting in the way of the social mission, and shoveling economic benefits toward the outsiders brought in as executives. *Ice Cream Social* is most compelling when telling the story of how Jeff Furman and his allies on the company’s board started fighting back against Unilever in 2007. Aggressively holding the parent company to the precise terms of the extraordinary sales agreement Ben and his colleagues had negotiated, and holding the threat of a major lawsuit over their heads, the Ben Jerry’s board ultimately succeeded in winning over Unilever’s top management — and, in the process, embedding some aspects of its uniquely progressive mission into the priorities of a \$68 billion global conglomerate, the world’s third largest food company (after Nestle and Pepsico). Today, Ben Jerry’s is once again a sparkling example of how a company under brilliant and visionary management can realize big profits not despite an aggressive social and environmental mission but because of it. Though every company is unique, and the Ben Jerry’s story is far more unusual than most, there are lessons to be learned from the company’s experience. For starters, the differences in perspective between social entrepreneurs like Ben Cohen and Jerry Greenfield on the one hand and top executives at most large public corporations are profound. They can’t be bridged simply by briefings, educational sessions, or show-and-tell exercises. The differences lie on the level of values. B Corporations like Ben Jerry’s express the personal values of their founders. Most big companies are still mired in the narrow-minded focus of Wall Street on short-term financial performance. The hard bargaining between Ben Jerry’s and Unilever, and the rocky relationship between the two companies after the sale, makes clear that good intentions are far from enough to preserve the unique character of a socially responsible company. The extraordinary sales agreement — a year and a half in the making — contained tough, enforceable provisions that made it a legal requirement for Unilever to operate Ben Jerry’s in a manner that would maintain its unique and quirky character. Even so, the company was nearly driven into the ground over its first seven years as a subsidiary of Unilever, and it took extraordinary courage and disciplined action by Jeff Furman and others on the Ben Jerry’s board to confront the reality and hold Unilever’s feet to the fire: genuine corporate responsibility doesn’t come easily in a classical corporate environment.

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Most Instructive Story for how business can be defined in society By David Wellel thought I knew the story of Ben Jerry’s Ice Cream but discovered in reading this book that I understood only the barest

outlines. Truly fascinating tale of how the best-laid principles can be upset by practical realities. And yet, how the most practical pursuits are only as valuable as the principles that underly them. I loved learning about the characters and individuals at the heart of the company - how they hatched eureka moments and suffered errors in judgment, both. What I found most interesting of all was a different interpretation of 'Goliath swallowing David' version of events around Unilever's purchase of Ben Jerry's. Rather than the international conglomerate bleeding Ben Jerry of its soul, Ben Jerry's has actually 'infected' the giant with greater idealism in their business practices. It's a compelling notion that gives me hope. The book not only tells a tale of a few idealistic business folks, it also illustrates why and how those ideals matter for every local business and community in the country. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. "Linked prosperity" vs corporate culture By Wade L. [Disclaimer: The author is a friend of mine, so if I didn't like the book, I probably wouldn't be reviewing it. But I did, so I am.] In "Ice-Cream Social", Brad Edmondson documents the rise, semi-fall, and partial resurgence of Ben Jerry's Ice Cream as a pioneer of corporate responsibility and the principle of "linked prosperity". Launched in the 70s in Burlington, Vermont, the company grew quickly through the 80s by making really good ice cream and marketing it in clever ways. The American public was eager to buy every pint of super-premium, high-fat, full-of-giant-chocololate-chunks ice cream they could make, and the founders used the profits to establish a company that was profitable, sure, but was also committed to respect for its employees and to stewardship of the environment, as well as to supporting many progressive causes. In 1993 BJ hit the wall. The easy growth was over; a new factory had gone way past deadline and over budget; there were now serious competitors (Haagen-Dasz, Dreyer's) in the super-premium ice cream game. At this point the story becomes much more dramatic than the usual business tale. The board hired a turnaround artist CEO (from Winchester!), awarded him a ton of stock options, and found itself maneuvered into being acquired by the Unilever conglomerate, greatly enriching the CEO and the senior executives he had brought on board. (Some kind of corporate acquisition was probably inevitable, given the realities of late 20th - early 21st century capitalism.) Edmondson is a great storyteller, and he brings out the personalities of the people who shared a commitment to making their company a good citizen and a force for social justice. And the story has a reasonably happy ending: The founders and the board negotiated a really interesting sales agreement with Unilever. Unilever runs the business, but the independent board (currently chaired by cofounder Jeff Furman) has authority over maintaining product quality and the company's commitment to social justice - starting with a living wage for all employees, something that is shamefully hard to find in corporate America these days. Highly recommended.

Ben Jerry's has always been committed to an insanely ambitious three-part mission: making the world's best ice cream, supporting progressive causes, and sharing the company's success with all stakeholders: employees, suppliers, distributors, customers, cows, everybody. But it hasn't been easy. This is the first book to tell the full, inside story of the inspiring rise, tragic mistakes, devastating fall, determined recovery, and ongoing renewal of one of the most iconic mission-driven companies in the world. No previous book has focused so intently on the challenges presented by staying true to that mission. No other book has explained how the company came to be sold to corporate giant Unilever or how that relationship evolved to allow Ben Jerry's to pursue its mission on a much larger stage. Journalist Brad Edmondson tells the story with an eye for details, dramatic moments, and memorable characters. He interviewed dozens of key figures, particularly Jeff Furman, who helped Ben and Jerry write their first business plan in 1978 and became chairman of the board in 2010. It's a funny, sad, surprising, and ultimately hopeful story.

From Booklist When you think of Ben Jerry's, you probably think of two laid-back hippies who just wanted to produce "ice cream for the people." And though the origin mythology of this no-holds-barred superpremium chunky ice cream pretty much holds true to the legend, the fact is that the brand was sold to Unilever in 2000 and is now part of a multinational corporation, much to the consternation of social entrepreneurs everywhere. This is the story of how the Ben Jerry's team fought to retain the counterculture values and social missions that the founders successfully instilled into the company: paying employees a living wage, treating their cows responsibly, and pouring a good portion of profits into causes such as child poverty, world peace, human rights, and the environment; it is also a story of how those values have been compromised. Edmondson traces the journey from the first ice-cream store, in a renovated gas station in South Burlington, Vermont, in 1978, through several expansion cycles and the success that ultimately led to the controversial sale. --David Siegfried In 2011, the Martin Luther King, Jr. Center gave Ben Jerry's one of its highest honors. This book explains why. --Martin Luther King III, human rights activist As this fine telling of the Ben Jerry's story indicates, it's harder than it looks to integrate consumer capitalism and political integrity. There are lessons here: hard ones and of course some sweet ones. --Bill McKibben, author of *Oil and Honey: The Education of an Unlikely Activist* A fascinating look behind the scenes of a company as beloved as the ice cream it makes. --Barbara Ehrenreich, New York Times bestselling author and Founding Editor, Economic Hardship Reporting Project The pioneering experience of Ben Jerry's shows that corporate social responsibility can, thankfully, be contagious.

Brad Edmondson takes us behind the scenes to tell this riveting and timely story. —United States Senator Patrick Leahy
“This book reveals the true ingredients that go into every pint of Ben & Jerry’s: GMO-free cream, fair-trade cane sugar, and a lot of blood, sweat, and tears.” —Eric Utne, founder, Utne Reader
“What once was radical is becoming mainstream. By earning B Corp certification, Ben & Jerry’s has proven that you can sell without selling out and scale with integrity. Much of the global movement to redefine success in business stands on its shoulders, and much of what we know about better practices and better governance can be traced to lessons the company learned the hard way. Finally, this important story has been well and completely told.” —Jay Coen Gilbert, cofounder, B Lab
“Brad Edmondson vividly conveys the passion, conflicts, and raw humanity behind an iconic brand. He gives us an uncensored look at how smart, caring people poured their hearts and souls into making Ben & Jerry’s the standard-bearer for ‘caring capitalism.’ The story leaves the reader in awe of all they achieved, and it also imparts invaluable lessons by talking frankly about their failures. It puts on full display the contradictions and painful choices that eventually confront all successful mission-driven businesses. It’s a journey into uncharted territory.” —Rink Dickinson, cofounder and copresident, and Rob Everts, copresident, Equal Exchange
“The founders of Ben & Jerry’s put up a long and determined fight to keep their dream of a socially responsible company intact. Cutthroat capitalism doesn’t make it easy for entrepreneurs who want living wages for their employees, environmentally sustainable ingredients, and socially beneficial business practices. Brad Edmondson gives us a fascinating look behind the scenes of a company as beloved as the ice cream it makes.” —Barbara Ehrenreich, New York Times bestselling author and Founding Editor, Economic Hardship Reporting Project
“Ice Cream Social is a factory tour of the ups and downs and arounds of Ben & Jerry’s. We get an insider’s description of the struggle of two guys who strived through good times and bad to achieve their mission to make the world’s best ice cream, pursue social change, and treat both employees and shareholders fairly. Much of the time, they succeeded.” —Madeleine M. Kunin, former governor of Vermont
“St. Albans Cooperative has been a proud partner of Ben & Jerry’s since the beginning. Through all of its organizational changes, it has remained committed to its core values, family dairy farms, and the cooperative. I am proud to be part of this story.” —Ralph McNall, dairy farmer, St. Albans Cooperative Creamery
“When Calvert first heard about Ben & Jerry’s, we wondered whether our mission of social investing could even include a company that sold ice cream treats. This book shows how the founders convinced us. For decades, they have been a stellar example of walking the talk.” —Wayne Silby, Founding Chair, Calvert Funds, and cofounder, Social Venture Network
“A fascinating business morality tale . . . Edmondson offers an entertaining and enlightening account of the highs and lows that can be encountered in the quest to give capitalism a soul.” —Lynn A. Stout, Distinguished Professor of Corporate Business Law, Cornell University Law School