

MIT Industrial Liaison Program Faculty Knowledgebase Report

The New Formula for the Long-term Success of Family Enterprises

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John A. Davis is a Senior Lecturer in the [Family Enterprise Executive Programs](#) at the MIT Sloan School of Management. He is a globally recognized pioneer and authority on issues related to the family enterprise, family wealth, and the family office. Since the 1970s, he has been a leading researcher, professor, author, advisor, and speaker on family enterprise, and is the creator of some of the field's most impactful conceptual frameworks. His insights help to develop leaders, strengthen families, professionalize businesses and family offices, grow shareholder value, and pass sustainable enterprises to the next generation.

A renowned academic and shaper of the family enterprise field, Davis teaches family business and family office management, and strategies for family enterprises to position themselves for the future. His upcoming programs can be found [here](#).

Trained in management, psychology, and economics, Davis has advised multigenerational family enterprises in more than 65 countries, including a number of the world's leading enterprising families. He advises on sustaining long-term success; governance; family wealth; family office; ownership strategies; developing next generation talent; succession transitions; life and career planning; conflict resolution and family unity; selling the family business; and adapting to disruptive change, among others. He is founder and chairman of the [Cambridge Family Enterprise Group](#), a global organization he created in 1989 that is devoted to helping enterprising families achieve long-term and lasting success for their families, enterprises, and financial wealth.

Davis is an award-winning teacher and researcher, and lifelong creator of innovative education courses and teaching materials. He is on the Advisory Council of the *Inclusive Capitalism Programme on Purposeful Ownership* at the Said Business School at the University of Oxford—a research study that explores current family ownership issues. During his 21 years on the faculty of Harvard Business School, Professor Davis founded and led Harvard's family business management area and was founding faculty chair of the *Families in Business* program. He created and led the MBA course, *Management of the Family Business*, to explore the management, career, and personal issues found in family-owned companies, and taught family business management and leadership in the *Owner/President Management* executive program, as well as in other programs and courses.

An early founder of the family business field as an academic discipline, Davis has written significant works explaining family enterprise dynamics and success. In 1978, with HBS Professor Renato Tagiuri (now deceased), he co-created the [Three-Circle Model of the Family Business System](#), the fundamental paradigm in the family business field. He developed the [Family Enterprise](#) framework to help families map their collection of meaningful activities and assets that unite and define them, and the [Family Enterprise Sustainability](#) framework which distills the three essential ingredients needed for the successful longevity of a family enterprise. He is coauthor of the book, [Generation to Generation: Life Cycles of the Family Business](#), a preeminent work. He has published an extensive body of educational materials—case studies, articles, and diagnostic worksheets—that are used by graduate schools of business across the globe. He is coauthor of the book [Next Generation Success](#) and author of [Enduring Advantage](#), 2nd Edition. His theories and observations are regularly cited in publications such as the *Wall Street Journal*, *New York Times*, *Financial Times*, *Economist*, *Bloomberg*, *NPR*, *Forbes*, and *Fortune*.

Davis speaks at conferences and workshops for enterprising families around the world, such as the World Economic Forum, Harvard Business Review, YPO and WPO, Cambridge Institute for Family Enterprise, and Family Business Network, as well as for financial institutions, private member networks, and individual family companies.

Davis earned his Doctorate in business administration from Harvard Business School, his MA in economics from the University of Wisconsin, and his AB in economics with high honors from Kenyon College. He tweets [@ProfJohnDavis](#).