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Franco Antonello with his son Andrea



The social Enterprise

*Franco Antonello's revolutionary,
though obvious, idea*

From a strictly entrepreneurial point of view, perhaps it would have been better to break through emerging markets, increase earnings tenfold, or open branches abroad. But making profits on the sale of a product or service is not the only way to do business. It does not matter what goods are put on the market, a true business professional knows how to handle it, and how to make his business grow. Even if the business centers on the social. This is the illuminated thinking of Franco Antonello, that is the entrepreneur and founder of I Bambini delle Fate Foundation which helps children with autism and other disabilities and their families. Today, as for the last 10 years, Franco Antonello is a pioneer in interpreting "a new way to do social activity". Thanks to his intuition, to the idea of a possible





Great creativity to conquer a disease

Andrea can type on the computer. He uses a non-conventional method that he learnt thanks to his father, Franco, who was able to pay for his lessons, but all the same, Andrea can express himself, unlike so many other autistic children. He does it in a marvelous way and in great depth, because, as his father says, “he is a transmitter-receiver who receives but does not transmit” verbally. And this is how Andrea’s thoughts have become a book, *Kisses to All*, “*Baci a tutti*”, the last of a series of three which tell of Andrea’s world and the efforts made by his loving father who had understood how to have him live a serene life in spite of his autism. Earnings from the book have been entirely invested in the construction of Jorge’s house. Jorge, an autistic boy from South America, lived in conditions of extreme poverty and discomfort. He is known from the voyage narrated in “If I Hug You, Don’t Be Afraid”. Earnings from the second book were given to the foundation. And who knows what Andrea will do with the third. Among projects for the future is a fourth book for elementary school children, and a movie. “Because we need to talk about autism – explains Franco Antonello – to ensure that these children will never again be locked up in a room under under sedation”.



marriage between entrepreneurial competence and the development of a foundation, already seven million euros have met the needs of those involved in the painful experience of autism, a pathology that just in Italy affects over 400,000 children and their families. The story of Franco Antonello’s enterprise begins here, from his being the father of Andrea, a smiling and good-looking twenty year old, autistic since the age of two. “I am the son of entrepreneurs in the hotel business, and I have always lived in the business world, to be more precise, in advertising – he explains-. When Andrea entered my life, and above all, when he was diagnosed with autism, my days were divided in two halves. I would spend the morning dealing with sales, invoices, meetings, etc, while I would spend my afternoons with my son, taxing him to specialized centers, in places which should have lightened my, and his, pain. And it was during just those afternoons that I realized the difficult condition in which associations providing assistance survive, run by a few volunteers who struggle between the lack of funds and the lack of organization. No, I told myself, neither improvisation nor sporadic donations should be the means to keep these important undertakings for the social fabric. For a long time I thought about how to give my contribution to the cause, until on July 4, 2004, while I was on vacation in Puglia, I decided to change my life. I chose to put my entrepreneurial mentality at the disposal of the social. This is how, on July 5, 2005, the foundation “I Bambini delle Fate” was born. It is organized just like a company. 12 employees, with a real salary, work on development and administration. 15 external collaborators, paid as if they were sales reps, travel Italia proposing real and proper contracts to companies. The product sold is a guarantee of continuative solidarity. In other words, I Bambini delle Fate do not accept donations, do not organized charity events, and has decided not to ta-

ke advantage of the 5 per 1000 tax donation formula. The foundation, instead, seeks out companies who wish to aid it with continuity, by signing contracts which oblige them to provide set quotas of 500 or 1,000 euros a month. Up to today we have involved 700 companies in eight Italian regions, that believe in our work. The foundation-company keeps only that which is needed for the economic management of the company and gives the entire proceeds to associations that deal in various ways with autism. With around three million euros a year, I Bambini delle Fate has financed 36 projects in eight Italian regions and two research projects – one by Assis, the association of a group of doctors who work for the prevention, defense,

and cure of people, and one actual part of the state's Superior Health Institute (ISS). A paradox because ISS, a government institute, is financed by a private foundation. "My goal as an entrepreneur working in the social context, is to have within two years groups of 30 to 40 companies on contract in every province to finance projects in every Italian region". From this year on, we will also be working with private citizens, who we are enticing with the campaign "Dirty Your Hands" to participate in the project. The formula is the same. The contribution however equals 20 euros. "Just like every self-respecting company, and in conse-

ration of the fact that the foundation finances but does not manage the projects, we have a scientific committee which supervises our work and its benefits – continues Antonello. Maximum transparency for each operation and for the internal administration of the company is seen in the fact that each month the foundation publishes in the newspapers, Il Sole 24 Ore and Corriere della Sera an accounting of sums and the names of the beneficiaries. And Andrea, in all this? Andrea takes part in every phase of work. He is the cultural head of the campaign. An occasion that all autistic children should have". ■ **-P.ORECCHIA-**

the cover



Franco and Andrea Antonello with Renzo Rosso, supporter and endorser