

## NOMINATION FORM: Global Business & Interfaith Peace Awards

**Note:** Nominations are open to CEOs (present or past) of companies who have championed interfaith understanding and peace.

### Nominee Contact Information

1. Nominee Full Name: Donald Larson
2. Corporate Title: Founder and CEO
3. Company Name: Sunshine Nut Company
4. Company Headquarters Location (Country): USA
5. Engagement with the UN Global Compact and/or the Religions Freedom & Business Foundation\*
  - Company is a signatory of the UN Global Compact
  - Company has joined Business for Peace
  - Company has signed the Religious Freedom & Business Foundation's pledge to protect freedom of religion
  - Company intends to join one or more of the initiatives listed above in the next six months, please specify Business for Peace

\* Nominees are invited to:

1. join the [UN Global Compact](#) and its [Business for Peace](#) platform and,
2. make the Religious Freedom & Business Foundation's [corporate pledge to protect freedom of religion or belief](#) (FoRB)

### Nominator Contact Information

1. Nominator Full Name: Tarryn Govender
2. Corporate Title: Quality Manager
3. Company Name: Sunshine Nut Limitada
4. Email Address: Tarryn@sunshinenuts.com
5. Phone Number: +258821796599
6. Relationship to the Nominee: Employee

Please submit a Biography of the Nominee (max 200 words)

[Click here to enter text.](#)

**Don Larson**, Founder & CEO of the Sunshine Nut Company and author of The Sunshine Approach, is a visionary leader with a "quadruple bottom line" business: adding a *transformational* bottom line to the financial, environmental and social bottom lines of corporate social responsibility.

Don has over 25 years of experience in the food industry – many of which were at the Hershey Company. Don's 13 years at Hershey were in turn-around assignments in manufacturing, industrial engineering, e-business, strategic sourcing, global sourcing, commodities trading, new product introductions, and project management.

In 2011, Don and his family left their lifestyle of abundance and material wealth for one of purpose. They sold nearly everything they owned – including his hot air balloon - and poured their life savings into Sunshine Nut Company. Don and his wife Terri and their youngest son, relocated to Africa – away from their daughter in college and son in his last year of high school. They have lived in Mozambique for 5 years now – one of the world's poorest countries – working to make a difference in the lives of the poor and orphaned.

### **Information about the policy, programme or initiative**

1. Please describe a policy, programme or initiative that the Nominee has launched or spearheaded to advance the company's efforts to champion interfaith understanding and peace (max 300 words)

Don Larson works across faith and cultural lines using The Sunshine Approach™ based on the simple idea that companies can have profound positive impact on people's lives. The Sunshine Nut roasting facility in Mozambique allows them to deliver the freshest product worldwide while training and employing adult orphans. Sunshine Nut profits are re-invested in Mozambican communities with a total of 90% of proceeds going to transformative initiatives. Why Mozambique? At the time of independence in 1975, Mozambique was the leading cashew producing country. Cashew processing was a major industry and an employer for many. Independence was followed by sixteen years of violent civil war in which over one million lives were lost. To make matters worse, orchards were ravaged by rampant disease causing the industry to collapse, leaving thousands destitute. Mozambique is ready to regain the status it once had. Sunshine Nut Company believes in Mozambique and is playing an active part in reestablishing the industry. These cashews are transforming lives in Mozambique through bringing opportunity, dignity, and fairness to everyone beginning with the grower. Don Larson quit his corporate life in America working as an executive for some of the country's top companies to pursue a calling of transforming the lives of the poor and orphaned in sub-Saharan Africa. He developed a business model called the Sunshine Approach which has a quadruple bottom line – financial, environmental, social, and transformational. Sunshine Nuts is the first of what he hopes to become a network of companies using this business model -- developing world class food products in these sub-Saharan African countries for the benefit of the entire value chain. The purpose is to develop a market for the smallholder farmer communities. The factories will employ mainly young men and women who were abandoned or orphaned in their youth. 90% of the company's distributed profits (a reverse tithe) will go to the poor and orphaned of the country – 30% to orphan care, 30% to transformative projects for the farming communities, and 30% as a growth component to open up other food companies using this same philanthropic business model. Don Larson and his family sold all of their possessions in 2011 and moved to Mozambique, Africa where they have lived the last 5 years. He formed Sunshine Nut Company in the USA and Sunshine Nut Limitada in Mozambique. In the last 18 months, Sunshine Nut Company cashews are now on the shelves of nearly 2,000 of the best retailers in the USA (Whole Foods, Giant, Stop & Shop, Wegmans, Martins, Raley's, Harmons, Mother's Markets, Natural Grocers, and many more). Don's presence has been requested at the Grow Africa/World Economic Forum for the

past 4 years with them paying his way, the European Economic Summit, and next month he will be at Oxford University for a Roundtable Forum. He has performed 2 TEDx talks and has articles appearing in Forbes, Christian Science Monitor, Skoll World Forum, ONE.org and other publications.

2. Which category or categories does the policy, programme or initiative fall into:
- Core business
  - Social investment & philanthropy
  - Advocacy and public policy engagement
  - Partnership and collective action
3. Does the policy, programme or initiative address any of the following related to Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB)<sup>1</sup>:
- Promote sustainable and innovative business through protecting Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB)
  - Non-discrimination and/or non-harassment on the basis of religion or belief
  - Religious accommodation and inclusion
  - Protecting and promoting freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) in the community
  - Other (describe below, max. 25 words)  
[Click here to enter text.](#)
4. Please describe the objective of the policy, programme or initiative and the need, goal or gap that it was designed to address. (max 200 words)
- The objective of the Sunshine Approach is to improve the lives of the poor and orphaned in sub-Saharan Africa. The Sunshine Company is targeting the cashew growing communities of Mozambique and its orphan population with projects specifically designed to impact these two groups of people. We have initiatives run by the Sunshine Nut Company and also outside companies which we host to perform their core competencies (such as universities, doctors, dentists, etc.). We are inviting different organizations from around the world to participate in our objective. Don envisioned a business model that would select a certain geographic region in one of the poorest nations of the world and jumpstart economic growth by building a food factory that would create a market for the smallholder farmers' crops in that region. The business goal is to succeed in the world market but mainly to succeed in fairly treating the entire value chain. For that reason, most of the company's profits are poured back into the objective of improving lives. The major theme of the Sunshine Approach business model is value driven business – where values such as dignity, love and community come together with excellence.
5. How was the policy, programme or initiative implemented? What role did the Nominee play? (max 200 words)

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<sup>1</sup> Article 18 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights states: "Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance."

Don Larson formed the Sunshine Nut Company, hired all of the employees, and trained them in the art of world class food production. The factory now produces the freshest, most flavorful cashews in the world – and this has been reflected by the immediate acceptance into some of the finest retailers in the world. The factory in Mozambique has a Dutch HACCP food safety certification and has an All-African staff – all Mozambican with the exception of one South African (me). Don has coordinated programs at the orphanages and in the villages. As an example, we have volunteered on several occasions to plant trees as “Gestures of Love” among the village communities which is 5 hours of driving from our factory. So far, we have planted 2,000 trees in four different villages to increase the income of these rural farmers as these cashew trees start producing cashews in 3 years and give income for 50 years. Don coordinated Penn State University to come and perform WHO Standard of Living assessments among 200+ families in the villages where he intends to build factories to shell cashews. This will allow us to track the impact we have had on their standard of living.

6. What were/are the most persistent challenges in implementing the policy, programme or initiative? How were they/are they being overcome and what was the role of the Nominee? (max 200 words)

Don was expecting more challenges than he thought in building the Mozambican factory. Initially he hit resistance with delays in getting paperwork approved. He refused to pay additional fees often associated with gaining approvals but things have eased over the years with Mozambicans starting to understand and embrace the benefits of his business model and the impact it is having on their fellow countrymen. The main challenge has been finding the financial support to realize this vision of building factories. The model is built to increase the trust of the country as it is focused on transformation at all levels. The Mozambique government now enjoys that their cashews are gaining an increasing view of being the best in the world. With this trust comes an increasing ability to do more in the communities. On a recent trip to the Gaza Province, the Governor of Gaza made a public statement to Don in a gathering - saying “Don, you can do anything you want in my province – as long as it’s legal”. That is a demonstration of the trust that Don believed would form when he began to implement the Sunshine Approach business model.

7. What are the key lessons learned from launching the policy, programme or initiative? (max 200 words)

Patience has been a key to success. Don has said that with new things and change – it is best to be patient. People are uncertain about change – especially when the change is coming from outsiders. When obstacles are encountered, we are told to move forward and be persistent – but be patient. Along with patience comes perseverance. I don’t think that Don has failure in his vocabulary. Even when we face setbacks, Don is there with a plan to start moving us forward again. It takes an optimistic person such as Don to keep everyone moving on the right direction. With this optimism, we have the energy each day to achieve the objectives before us.

### **Impact and Reporting on Progress**

1. How do you monitor and evaluate progress on the policy, programme or initiative? If relevant, what indicators and metrics are used? (max 200 words)

We are establishing many metrics in the factory to measure our success in terms of profitability. But when it comes to the philanthropic side of the business, we are aligning ourselves with groups that can perform the metrics. One case in point was a team from Pennsylvania State University that came to Mozambique. We had four people (professors and students) perform a WHO (World Health Organization) assessment in 2015 in the Gaza Province in 5 different communities (Nwadjahane, Laranjera, Chalala, Rigwane, and Macuacua). This will allow us to track the progress of living improvements as we install factories and implement hand-up transformative projects. We did a similar metric study with Remote Area Medical combined with Northwestern University. They did a written Healthcare Assessment Study of nearly 200 families – along with medical outreaches – in these same communities. We will be training Community Healthcare Workers over the years to ease the burden on the medial facilities. Those healthcare workers will be paid by Sunshine Nut Company. In both projects, Sunshine Nut Company coordinated the efforts of the teams, supplied the visiting teams with Sunshine workers to translate, and accompanied them on the village trips.

2. What outcomes or impact have been reached to date? Please be as specific as possible and supply available data. (max 200 words)

We have built a world class food factory in two years. In the USA, we are selling in nearly 2,000 of the finest retailers. We have been supporting 4 larger orphanages around the area for the last five years with donations, food, and volunteering. We opened our first Sunshine House in late 2014 where we formed a family unit between a widow and three recently orphaned children. They have been living happily since. We purchased the home, renovated it, and put it in the children's name. We intend to replicate these Sunshine Houses as the widow and children benefit from a family environment in a Mozambican neighborhood and culture. In the rural farming communities, we have performed WHO standard of Living Assessments as a baseline metric with over 200 households. We have also performed nearly 200 medical assessments for an understanding of medical needs in these same communities. We have planted 2,000 cashew trees free of charge to increase income for these smallholder farmers. Each week, we host a community feeding program for the neighborhood children in our area as they are in a vulnerable condition. Current count of children each week is 100.

3. Is the Nominee's company reporting on its practices, policies, programmes and/or initiatives to champion interfaith understanding and peace? If so, please provide relevant weblink(s) for posting on the Awards' website. If integrated into the company's corporate sustainability report, Global Compact COP or GRI Report, please indicate relevant pages and/or sections. (max 200 words)

Not applicable – yet.

**Additional Information:**

1. Are there additional actions the Nominee has taken on an individual level to support interfaith understanding and peace within the organization? If so, please specify. (max 200 words)

Don Larson displays a general desire to be inclusive of all faiths. We have a Muslim accounting firm which does all our financial work in Mozambique. We purchase raw cashew kernels from Muslim companies. Don has met with these Muslim company owners and has gained the acceptance of his business model and our intent to improve the lives of the poor and orphaned.

2. How has the Nominee taken action to support and promote the UN Global Compact's Ten Principles? If so, please specify. (max 200 words)

As I read over the 10 principles of the UN Global Compact, I cannot think of a more appropriate example of a person who has sacrificed to incorporate these principles and demonstrate them in a way that will positively impact the lives of tens of thousands. Our small factory employs 50 people – but that requires 1,000 people to shell those cashews, and 50,000 smallholder farmers to grow those cashews for our factory. As we grow, the numbers grow.

Please provide any additional information to be considered. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the Nominations team [nominations@religiousfreedomandbusiness.org](mailto:nominations@religiousfreedomandbusiness.org)

Here are some links to articles, talks, and videos from Don and Sunshine Nut Company:

Sunshine Nut Company Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5hb4a40de5o>

Don's TEDx talk done in 2015: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XB7xAEuwhDo>

Sunshine Nut Company has been featured in many publications – just google for the links (Forbes, Bono's ONE.org, Christian Science Monitor, etc.). Three articles have appeared in Skoll World Forum:

- 1) <http://skollworldforum.org/2015/06/26/high-flying-executive-goes-nuts-in-africa/>
- 2) <http://skollworldforum.org/2014/11/13/opportunity-and-dignity-not-pity/>
- 3) <http://skollworldforum.org/2013/08/26/providing-hope-never-tasted-so-good/>

Another article was written by Penn State University who have asked us to enter a ten year relationship with them sending teams of professors and students each year to take part in the transformation.

<http://www.altoona.psu.edu/ivyleaf/t.php?v=060001002>.

Don was asked by ONE.org organization in Washington DC (with 7 million members) to write articles:

- 1) <http://www.one.org/us/2013/08/22/they-thought-i-was-the-enemy-and-that-drove-me-nuts/>
- 2) <http://www.one.org/us/2015/01/26/photo-series-trees-of-hope/>
- 3) <http://www.one.org/us/2014/12/15/opportunity-and-dignity-not-pity/>.

Most of our employees are orphans who have been raised in children's centers after being out on the streets. Most orphans here have difficult pasts of rape, physical/mental abuse, and abandonment. Here is a video we prepared that has gone over very well – interviewing a few of our employees about the hope they now have in life: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UVO1tPO7vFM>.