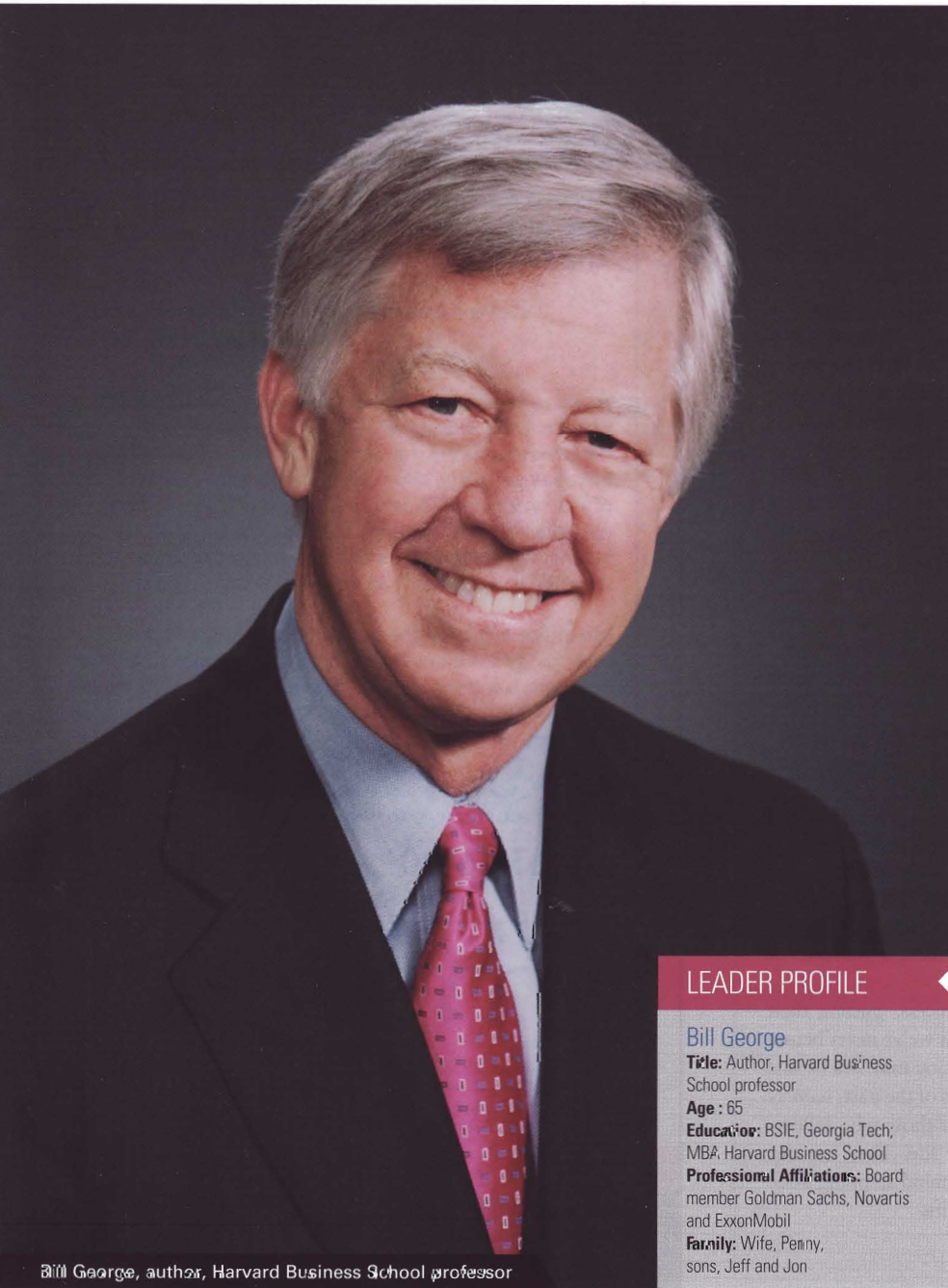


10 QUESTIONS WITH...

Bill George

Bill George is professor of management practice at the Harvard Business School, author of *Authentic Leadership* and more recently *True North*, as well as the former chairman and CEO of Medtronic.



LEADER PROFILE

Bill George

Title: Author, Harvard Business School professor

Age: 65

Education: BSIE, Georgia Tech; MBA, Harvard Business School

Professional Affiliations: Board member Goldman Sachs, Novartis and ExxonMobil

Family: Wife, Penny, sons, Jeff and Jon

Bill George, author, Harvard Business School professor

1) MinnesotaBusiness Magazine: You are writing books, serving on the boards of Goldman Sachs, Novartis and ExxonMobil, and teaching at Harvard Business School. That's a pretty busy "retirement." **Bill George:**

I never said I was going to retire, I just said I was going to do something else. Early in life I adopted the philosophy I wanted to have as many meaningful experiences as I could. When I was elected CEO of Medtronic in 1991 I told the board I shouldn't serve more than a decade, because that was sufficient time to accomplish the organization's goals and develop a successor.

2) MNB: Did you have a clear vision of what you wanted to do next? **BG:** I did not. For six months I explored opportunities in government, education, health care policy and international relations. While each of them were interesting none seemed just right.

3) MNB: How did you end up teaching? **BG:** In 2002 my wife Penny and I moved to Switzerland for a so-called working sabbatical to teach leadership at a pair of Swiss Universities. I found I loved teaching and also enjoyed counseling students and hearing their hopes, dreams and fears. When we returned from Switzerland I taught at Yale for a short time and then became a full-time professor at Harvard teaching MBA courses on leadership.

4) MNB: In your new book *True North: Discover your Authentic Leadership* you say the wrong people are getting chosen to lead companies for the wrong reason. What do you mean by that? **BG:** Too often we value charisma instead of character, style over substance

and image over integrity. In business you don't have to be charismatic, but you do have to be passionate and then have the ability to rally people around your vision.

5) MNB: In your book you say authentic leadership is a journey. What does a successful journey require? BG: We must understand ourselves; have a high degree of self-awareness. We must take responsibility for our own lifetime of development taking inventory of things such as intellectual development, personal discipline, values, motivation and leadership style and purpose. And we must empower others by transforming from "I" to "we."

6) MNB: You are helping transform and train a new generation of would-be entrepreneurs and future business leaders at Harvard. What are they like? BG: It's clear they really don't want to wait 10 to 20 years for their shot, to follow someone else. They want their opportunity now. They also want meaning and purpose in their lives.

7) MNB: Do entrepreneurs need that sense of purpose as well? BG: Absolutely. As people start companies they should not only think about their passion, which they certainly need to succeed, but also their ethics, their values and the things that really matter about their

business. What you do at the start of your company's life define what your company will be later on. It starts with a sense of authenticity.

8) MNB: Why has Minnesota fostered so many successful startups? BG: I believe it is in people's nature first of all, in their blood so to speak. There is also support infrastructure here like legal help and financing that is essential. And we have the underpinnings of a good educational system as well.

9) MNB: I heard you as the keynote speaker recently at an entrepreneurship and small business symposium sponsored by a new group called Club WOW; Wholistic Opportunities for Wealth. Are you optimistic about the future for the types of people who attended that forum? BG: Entrepreneurship and small businesses form the future of the Minnesota economy. It's how our economy will grow and jobs will be created.

10) MNB: Do you have any parting advice for entrepreneurs or business leaders? BG: Don't be afraid to fail. All great decisions are intuitive, but they're also based on a foundation of knowledge. There's no substitute for experience so you need to get in the game and learn about yourself and who you are in the world. —DG