

# Reinhard Mohn – Business Leader. Philanthropist. Citizen.



Reinhard Mohn



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In all of his endeavors, Reinhard Mohn worked to uphold the values long maintained by his family. The photos here show him with portraits of his ancestors, at the award ceremony for the Carl Bertelsmann Prize and out enjoying the countryside near Gütersloh.

Reinhard Mohn



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Daily routine: Reinhard Mohn leaving  
the company cafeteria after lunch

# Reinhard Mohn – 1921 to 2009



*“I did what came naturally to me.”*

Reinhard Mohn



Assuming responsibility and demonstrating commitment were of utmost importance to Reinhard Mohn. He took responsibility for Bertelsmann, the family company, by successfully rebuilding it after the Second World War. One of the globe's largest media groups, it now employs more than 100,000 people worldwide. Demonstrating his civic engagement, he founded the Bertelsmann Stiftung, using it to advance causes that benefit society and eventually transferring to it a majority of his shares in Bertelsmann AG.

One of his core convictions was that creating a democratic society is not only a responsibility of the state, but one that requires each individual to get involved too. He therefore worked to increase civic engagement among his fellow citizens through a number of activities, not least of which was the establishment of Germany's first community foundation in his hometown of Gütersloh.

Reinhard Mohn died on October 3, 2009, in Gütersloh.

## Reinhard Mohn – Business Leader



*“Positioning a business such as Bertelsmann as Reinhard Mohn did is an incredible achievement. Given his modesty, we might not be aware of it day in and day out, but remarkable it truly is.”*

German Chancellor Angela Merkel



Reinhard Mohn's achievements as a business leader are among the most impressive in the history of modern Germany. Returning to a destroyed country two years after the end of the Second World War, he found Bertelsmann, the family company, in ruins – and took on the challenge of rebuilding it.

Although he originally had another career in mind – he wanted to be an engineer – he assumed responsibility for re-establishing the company and, above all, for its employees. His wartime experiences and his time as a prisoner of war in the United States showed him that people must be given the freedom to take responsibility if they are to work together toward common goals – and succeed in achieving them. He structured the company in a decentralized manner and motivated the people working there by providing

them with opportunities for making decisions on their own. By delegating responsibility, creating a corporate culture that emphasized partnership and sharing profits with those who helped produce them, he laid the foundation for the company's resounding success.

Working together with his forward-looking employees and dedicated managers, he came up with innovative ideas such as the company's book and record clubs, which provided the basis for its rapid and enduring growth. He gave Bertelsmann AG an international outlook early on, with business activities extending from Spain and France to South America and, later, the United States.



In 1947, having returned home from his time as a prisoner of war in the United States and wearing his military coat, Reinhard Mohn addressed employees of the destroyed family business.



With that, he laid the foundation for one of the largest media groups in the world, which today includes RTL, one of Europe's leading entertainment companies; Random House, the world's largest trade-book publisher; newspaper and magazine publisher Gruner+Jahr; service provider arvato; and the DirectGroup, the successor to the company's original book clubs.

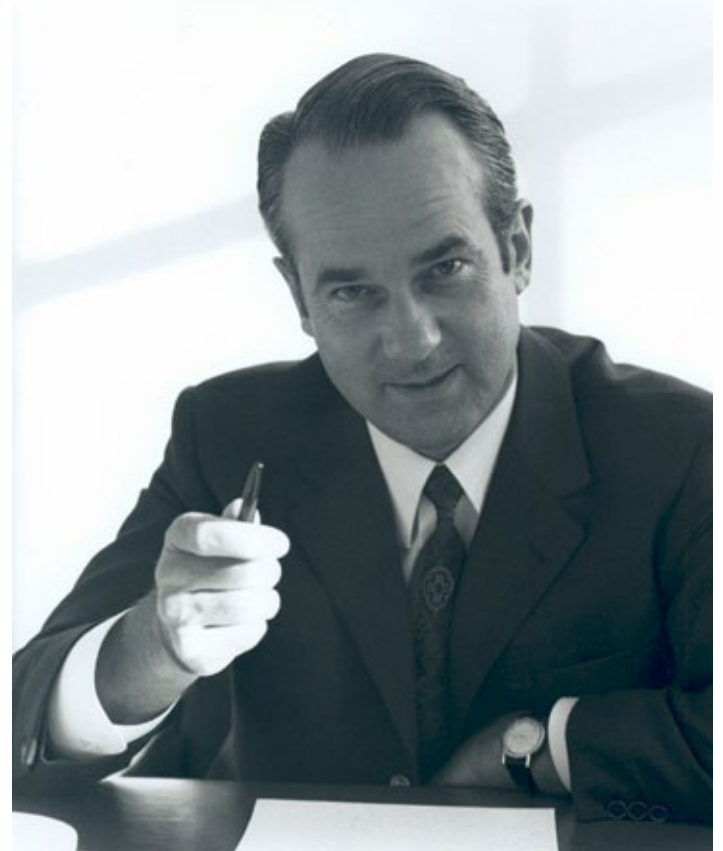
He always remained true to his belief that wealth entails responsibility. Together with his wife Liz, he saw to it that "making a contribution to society" became one of his company's key goals. He did not view his role as a business leader as a privilege; instead, he felt it brought with it a responsibility toward the company, his employees and society as a whole.

At the beginning of the 1990s he transferred the majority of his Bertelsmann AG shares and voting rights to the Bertelsmann Stiftung, which he had founded in 1977, demonstrating the commitment inspired by his convictions.

The founding of the Spanish book club Circulo de Lectores was Bertelsmann AG's first step in becoming an international enterprise.

When he turned 60, the age limit he himself had set, he gave up his position as CEO and joined the Bertelsmann AG Supervisory Board – just one more example of the pragmatic and rational manner in which he made decisions to benefit the company. Ten years later he also retired from the Supervisory Board, dedicating his time and expertise to expanding the Bertelsmann Stiftung as an independent laboratory for reform.

He wrote numerous essays and books detailing his business principles and examining the topic of social responsibility as well as cultural attitudes. At the age of 88 he could still be found at the foundation every day, and often at the company, learning more about what was happening and discussing current issues with employees at all levels. His ideas, his interests and his vast experience were always welcomed. One sign of his affinity for others was his daily lunch at the company cafeteria, where he came into contact with many employees and, even in his later years, remained visible as a leader and role model.



Reinhard Mohn as he appeared on the cover of his first book, *Success Through Partnership*



Following his time as a prisoner of war in the United States, Reinhard Mohn was intrigued by the principles of American thought. His many visits to the country and contacts there left their mark on his beliefs and ultimately led to the internationalization of Bertelsmann AG.



Reinhard Mohn engaged in discussion with politicians of all stripes, both in personal conversations and at conferences hosted by the Bertelsmann Stiftung.

In 1961 during a visit from Berlin's mayor, Willy Brandt

In 1982 with German Chancellor Helmut Kohl



In 1989 with German Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher at a conference on European affairs



With Pehr Gyllenhammar, winner of the 1989 Carl Bertelsmann Prize



Talking with German President Roman Herzog in 1996 at an international symposium held at the Bertelsmann Stiftung

# Reinhard Mohn – Philanthropist



*“Reinhard Mohn is one of the business leaders and philanthropists who have played a decisive role in driving economic and social developments in the Federal Republic of Germany.”*

Former German Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher

The family tradition, which expected business leaders to assume social responsibility, greatly influenced Reinhard Mohn. His own social commitment led him to found the Bertelsmann Stiftung in 1977.

His efforts as a philanthropist were the logical consequence of his experiences in the corporate world, where he viewed society, government and politics through an entrepreneur's eyes. Based on its benefits for business, he called for more competition in the public sector. For him, competition, transparency and benchmarking were the drivers of innovation within society.

In order to promote innovation and to investigate its possibilities, he established the Bertelsmann Stiftung in 1977. Unconstrained by economic and political concerns, it was designed to carry out its own projects by examining social problems and developing solutions. In addition, the foundation was meant to provide Bertelsmann AG with continuity by acquiring, at a later date, the Mohn family's capital shares in the company, thereby ensuring the company's independence.

The Bertelsmann Stiftung has now been active for over 30 years pursuing the goal set by its founder: shaping social change to benefit people everywhere. The foundation's work is predicated on the belief that competition and civic engagement are key means for moving society forward.



A life's work: the Bertelsmann Stiftung, founded by Reinhard Mohn in 1977

Working together with academics and practitioners, the Bertelsmann Stiftung carries out pilot projects that anticipate solutions to societal challenges. In doing so, it searches for best practices at both the national and international levels, looking beyond Germany's borders for successful reforms. As globalization has progressed, driving political developments, international partnerships and networks are playing an increasingly important role in its work.

In the 30 years since the foundation's launch, hundreds of projects have been developed to promote reform in the areas of social affairs, education, culture, integration, health promotion and civic engagement. The outcomes have helped get people more involved in social issues and policymaking processes; they have also introduced new decision-making mechanisms and increased transparency in a number of crucial areas impacting society.

Reinhard Mohn recognized the importance of civil society and very much fostered its development, in accordance with his belief that government cannot solve all of society's problems and that individual citizens must also do their part.

He transferred the vast majority of shares in Bertelsmann AG to the Bertelsmann Stiftung, thereby ensuring it will have a solid basis for supporting society in the future – an exceptionally effective, generous and persuasive way for demonstrating social responsibility and social commitment.



In 1998 Reinhard Mohn awarded the Carl Bertelsmann Prize for the first time. It was given to management and labor organizations in the construction, chemicals and metalworking industries for their efforts to modernize wage agreements.



German President Roman Herzog, Reinhard Mohn, President of the German Bundestag Rita Süssmuth and German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder (left to right) at the award ceremony for the 1998 Carl Bertelsmann Prize





German Chancellor Angela Merkel (center) at the award ceremony for the 2007 Carl Bertelsmann Prize, with (from left) Reinhard Mohn, Brigitte Mohn, Liz Mohn and Gunter Thielen



Liz and Reinhard Mohn with conductor Gustav Kuhn, artistic director of the NEUE STIMMEN International Singing Competition, at the competition's 2008 master class



Together with his wife Liz, Reinhard Mohn invited Mikhail Gorbachev to visit the Bertelsmann Stiftung in 1992.



Johannes Rau, Reinhard Mohn, Liz Mohn and Kurt Biedenkopf (left to right) at the celebration in Gütersloh marking the 25th anniversary of the Bertelsmann Stiftung's founding

## Reinhard Mohn – Citizen



*“Reinhard Mohn’s outstanding success as an entrepreneur and his far-reaching sociopolitical ideas and initiatives have not only left their mark on Gütersloh and its environs, but on our country and the world as well.”*

Gütersloh Mayor Maria Unger

“We have the freedom to act and we should use it” was one of Reinhard Mohn’s core beliefs. Assuming responsibility as a private citizen therefore played a key role in his life – since he always felt it was a valuable opportunity to shape the world around him.

As a child, a young soldier returning from war, an entrepreneur and a philanthropist, his roots in Gütersloh ran deep. After the Bertelsmann Stiftung was founded, its first pilot projects, especially in the area of education, were carried out in collaboration with the city of Gütersloh.

Structured as a company with limited liability, the new municipal library in Gütersloh was revolutionary among its peers. Focusing squarely on its patrons, their needs and their interests, it soon began serving as a role model for similar institutions, both in Germany and beyond. Mohn also sponsored the creation of a media center at his former secondary school in the 1980s, providing students there with multimedia resources and other innovative tools.

He first encountered community foundations – created by local citizens to improve life in their city or town – in the United States, where they had proven highly effective. Fascinated by the concept, he established one in Gütersloh, which, thanks to its success, became the model for hundreds of others in Germany.



Reinhard Mohn helped create a forward-looking media center for students at the school he once attended, the Evangelisch Stiftisches Gymnasium, in Gütersloh.

When Mohn was made an honorary citizen of the city of Gütersloh in 1981, City Manager Gerd Wixforth noted that Mohn's ideas were often far ahead of their time and had therefore provided critical momentum for Gütersloh's development. His contributions were not only financial in nature, but were always related to causes that inspired him personally.

Mohn's civic engagement was honored on other levels as well. In 1994, for example, he received the Commander's Cross of the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany and, in 1998, its Knight Commander's Cross of the Order of Merit. In 1999 he was awarded North Rhine-Westphalia's State Prize and the Hanns Martin Schleyer Prize. In 2001 the University of Münster recog-

nized him with an honorary doctorate. He was given the German Founder's Prize in 2007 in the category "Life's Work."

His efforts also received recognition internationally. In 1996 he was made an honorary member of the Club of Rome, and in 1998 Spain's royal family presented him with the Prince of Asturias Award. In 1999 he received Spain's Grand Cross. In 2003, together with his wife Liz, he received the Teddy Kollek Award, and in 2005 the city of Alcúdia, Spain, made him an honorary citizen.



Reinhard Mohn was made an honorary member of the Club of Rome in 1996. The honor was presented by the organization's president, Ricardo Díez-Hochleitner.



Founded by Reinhard Mohn in 1996, Gütersloh's community foundation was the first such foundation in Germany and soon served as the role model for many others throughout the country.



With his wife Liz and Gunter Thielen at the 2005 ceremony during which he became an honorary citizen of Alcúdia, Spain



In 2007 Reinhard Mohn received the German Founder's Prize, bestowed at the Bertelsmann Stiftung by State Secretary Peter Hintze.

After Mohn's death in October 2009, the University of Witten/Herdecke honored him by creating the Reinhard-Mohn-Institut for Corporate Management and Corporate Governance.

In 2011, the Bertelsmann Stiftung awarded the Reinhard Mohn Prize for the first time as a way of commemorating his life's work and goals.



In 2010 Liz and Christoph Mohn presented Gütersloh's municipal museum with a bust of one of the city's most illustrious citizens.



**Reinhard  
Mohn  
Prize 2011**

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**Photos:**

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Archiv Bertelsmann Stiftung  
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Hartmut Blume/BAG  
Stefan Brams  
Josef Heinrich Darchinger  
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Thomas Kunsch  
Robert Lebeck  
Wolfgang Wesener

**Production Credits:**

Executive Editor:  
Karin Schlautmann

Senior Editors:  
Ulrich Lünstroth,  
Ulrike Osthus

Translation:  
Tim Schroder, Frankfurt/M.

Printing:  
Druckerei RIHN, Blomberg

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Gütersloh

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