

Case Study Overview  
**Dr. Schär Glutenfree 2020-2021: Parts A, B & C**  
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**Case Summary**

Part A exemplifies numerous strategy concepts (cf. keywords) that were instrumental in the rise of Dr. Schär AG from a declining artisanal grain processor to the world leader in gluten-free products. In 1980, Ulrich Ladurner, a young drugstore owner in Meran/Italy, (a) recognized the health problems and the unfulfilled nutritional needs of his gluten and wheat intolerant customers; (b) created an innovative and complete product line of gluten-free convenience products that were healthy and also palatable; (c) disruptively created a completely new niche markets; (d) expanded his local Meran company into a worldwide business with a turnover of Euro 419M /1400 people in 2020; (e) made it thus possible for millions of gluten sensitive people all over the world to maintain or improve their digestive health while enjoying tasty food and a normal life and (f) became, as a consequence, one of the wealthiest business people in South Tyrol. Part A ends in the middle of the 2020 Corona crisis and Ladurner (\*1949), presently President and CEO, faces three urgent decisions on how to (a) handle his succession as CEO; (b) to further increase his sales and earnings in key gluten-free markets that might be soon saturated; and (c) create a disruptive breakthrough with new products for currently unfulfilled health needs to diversify the company. The students are requested to present ideas and recommendations, preferably unconventional, on what Ladurner should do next. In particular, students should evaluate (a) whether the company could and should still use Ladurner's 40-year-old recipe for success at a time the health care sector is going through a digital revolution (Medicine 4.0) and (b) if there are any other yet undiscovered possibilities due to, for example, digitization, medicine 4.0 or the Corona aftermath.

Part B outlines (a) the re-positioning and the agile management projects of the new CEO who was appointed end-2020, (b) Ladurner's renewed push for truly disruptive medical nutrition offerings.

Part C sketches out visionary ideas for a "Health Nutrition Valley South Tyrol". At the end of Parts B and C, the students are asked to assess the initiatives and to present innovative, action-oriented proposals.

**Didactics: Teaching/Learning Objectives, Study Hints, and Collaboration with Dr. Schär AG:**

This case study is a "live case" with multiple purposes: to impart knowledge of state-of-the-art strategy concepts, foster practical skills and ultimately lead to action proposals. The students are encouraged to develop analyses, action ideas or proposals, to "sell" them to their instructors and possibly to Ladurner himself. In more detail, the goals are:

- To teach knowledge of modern business strategy concepts through guided self-study or distance education as well as in-person teaching. To steer readers toward the learning objectives, there are sidebars and text boxes serving as "built-in teaching notes". These text boxes highlight (a) the management concepts exemplified in the surrounding case narrative; (b) reference pertinent websites as well as videos, and (c) encourage students' reflections/discussions about the usefulness of the concepts for business as well as for the students' own life situations.
- to impart skills and the hands-on use of the acquired concepts by developing ideas, scenarios, and/or practical recommendations for submission to Dr. Schär. The company is especially interested in unconventional ideas and disruptive suggestions, as this fits in with Dr. Schär AG's on-going implementation of its own internal management philosophy. Contact: manuela.covi@drschaer.com, subject line –student ideas. This process has worked well in the past: years ago, a student submitted the conclusions of his thesis to Ladurner, was subsequently offered employment and is now a member of their worldwide management team. The company also awards scholarships and cooperates on student projects.

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Dr. Mike Domenghino is a professor emeritus for strategy at the University of Applied Sciences and Arts Northwestern Switzerland (FHNW) in Basel (michael.domenghino@em.fhnw.ch). In addition, he is an affiliate faculty member of Harvard Professor Michael Porter's worldwide management course on strategy and competitiveness MOC (mike.domenghino@post.harvard.edu). Dr. Ingo Pleser is an entrepreneur with extensive experience in the baking industry as well as the former owner/president of Pleser GmbH and Lucillus Backzutaten GmbH (lucillusshop@t-online.de). The case was written without any outside funding for solely academic purposes: to meet students' requests/preferences for "living cases" in German about European businesses and suitable for distance learning as well. It is based on (a) information on the internet, (b) internal documents of Dr. Schär AG as well as (c) interviews with its majority owner, President and CEO, Ulrich Ladurner, who has reviewed the case and granted his full permission for publication.

**Keywords:**

Distance learning, strategy, marketing, Porter's Five Forces, generic strategies, value proposition, value chain, Ansoff Matrix, SWOT, entrepreneurship, start-up, disruptive strategy, agile management, family business issues.