Good Ethics is Good Business – Revisited

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Abstract: Why should businesses be ethical? An attractive answer would be that ethical behaviour is good for business. Sometimes other answers are regarded as missing the point, being blind to the obvious, being unnecessarily philosophical or esoteric, or being irresponsible for failing to properly indicate the close connection between ethical conduct and the well being of a business. This essay does two things: (1) it point out that there is not just one connection, but rather a variety of possible connections between “good ethics” and “good business”, some of which are immediate, and some of which are not so immediate, and even contrived. In this regard, the essay investigates senses in which good ethics can be (or can be made to be) good for business. (2) It reflects on the question of whether good ethics is good business, a question which is sometimes raised more as a demand that there be a clear connection between good ethics and good business. The essay asks whether this itself is a reasonable question. It is certainly a question which carries with itself a presumption which might or might not be legitimate.