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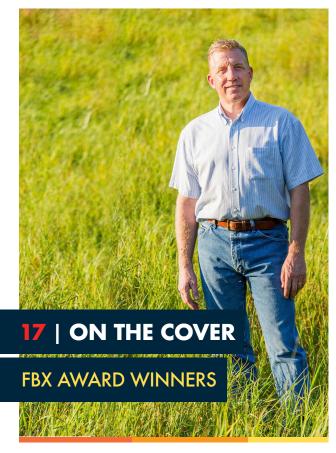
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ver the last 30 years, businesses have left the C Corporation formation behind and stampeded toward a pass-through entity option. The creation of LLCs (Limited Liability Companies), which gained popularity in the 1990s, avoid the dilemma of double taxation found with C Corporations. S Corporations, another type of flow-through entity, also escape double taxation. Both examples of pass-through entities subject business income to their individual owner's tax rates, allowing for a tax planning strategy that was previously out of reach.

The changes implemented in the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017 (TCJA) have turned many aspects of tax law as we knew it upside down. While top individual rates dropped by only about 3 percent, C Corporation rates post-TCJA dropped from about 35 percent to a shocking 21 percent flat tax. This begs the question, "should I convert to a C Corp?"

IT'S IMPORTANT TO EVALUATE **EACH COMPANY** ON AN INDIVIDUAL **BASIS AROUND** THAT COMPANY'S SPECIFIC FACTS AND CIRCUMSTANCES.





ONE OF THE MOST **EXCITING NEW DEDUCTIONS AVAILABLE UNDER TAX** REFORM IS THE QUALIFIED **BUSINESS INCOME** DEDUCTION.

As an advisor to family businesses, my answer has generally been no. That said, it's important to evaluate each company on an individual basis around that company's specific facts and circumstances.

Outside of the attractive new tax rate, C Corporations still carry the original disadvantage of double taxation. While the income held inside of the corporation will be taxed at the new low rates, any income taken out by the owners is still taxed at their individual rates.

As a family business owner, your company is likely your greatest asset and you require the income generated from it to live. With a C Corporation, you have two options to distribute profits to the owner, as dividends or salary. The advantage of a dividend is that it will likely only be taxed to the owner at qualified rates (15-20 percent) plus any applicable net investment income tax. However, it's not an ordinary business deduction, meaning it's also taxed at the corporate rate of 21 percent. This brings us back up to a combined tax of at least 36 percent.

Salaries are also used to compensate owners of a family business. Salaries are an ordinary business deduction, thereby avoiding the corporate income tax altogether. They are, however, subject to income tax rates of the individual owner, which cap out at 37 percent for individuals in 2018, plus additional payroll taxes assessed to both the employer and employee which are in excess of 16 percent for wages up to the 2018 FICA Limit of \$128,700.

It's still a great time to be a pass-through entity. One of the most exciting new deductions available under tax reform is the Qualified Business Income (QBI) deduction, which can yield a 20 percent deduction from qualifying business income. This opportunity only applies to pass-through entities such as an LLC or an S Corporation. This new QBI deduction appears to be an attempt at leveling the playing field with the 21 percent flat tax afforded to C Corporations. It's especially advantageous for manufacturing and other nonservice providing companies, but can also be applicable to small business service provid-

Ultimately, it's more important than ever to navigate tax reform and make sure you're getting the most out of the new laws. The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act has provided for \$1.5 trillion in tax savings. Knowledge in this area will guarantee you and your family business a slice of that pie. \Psi



BY DAVID PARADISE



David Paradise

Business succession is the transfer of assets, capital, contacts, power, skills, and authority from one generation of ownership to the next. Family business succession has the dual goals of preserving business wealth (including interests of key stakeholders, long-term employees and others) and the family. Because of this, every business needs a succession plan. It is the equivalent of a will or an estate plan for the business.

Succession planning in family businesses is complicated and difficult. Often, emotions, subjective criteria, and family history factor heavily in the deci-

sion making process about who gets what role in the family-held firm's succession process. By way of contrast, publicly-held companies face fewer emotionally charged issues, especially when they have strong advisors whose voices are heard and respected, sometimes via outside boards of directors, when it comes to succession planning. By and large, companies with a broad base of owners are mandated to use rational criteria in making business and profit-driven decisions.

CRITICAL TO CONTINUITY OF THE BUSINESS

The outcome of the succession process and how it is managed are critical to the continuity and the economic well being of both the family and its business. There are three typical outcomes to the succession process:

In the best of circumstances, a transfer of authority from one person or group to another is accomplished without any tension. Those involved understand and enthusiastically embrace the new power structure.

In another set of conditions, there are disagreements within the family and among key employees, suppliers and/or advisors surrounding the succession plans, but the disagreements are manageable. Conflict does not evolve into serious, irreversible hostilities.

The third typical outcome to the family business succession process is where the decision and the interested parties become embroiled in a whole range of family conflicts. When the assets involved are substantial, these succession crises make the industry headlines. These disasters make us cringe, but they are, unfortunately, common. Many of them are predictable and preventable, and critical to wealth and family preservation. The way to prevent conflicts is by developing a workable succession plan. The alternative may be a sale of the business.

COMMUNICATION IS KEY

The key to effective succession planning is communication. As in real estate, value depends on "location, location, location," succession planning requires "communication, communication, communication."

Because succession planning in family business is often very difficult emotionally, many families avoid the problem. Often families believe that talking about these problems will lead to conflict that is damaging to the family and the business.

In fact the reverse is true. Since the participants will have emotional reactions, the process must be monitored and addressed in a satisfactory manner so that the conflicts are managed and resolved.

When the level of trust by any of the parties is insufficient, negative reactions are bound to emerge. Reluctance of the older generation to give up control may be greeted by the second generation with disappointment and suspicion, and cynicism. On the other hand, because the aging process itself entails the loss of power, strength, and authority, the older generation may feel the transition of power is a loss of virility. For its part, the younger generation may feel that there is an emotional resistance to passing the torch to the next generation. The next generation may express its frustration and annoyance with the pace of change, doubting that success in gaining real, meaningful ownership will be achieved. And the other stakeholders will have their own particular reactions needing attention and resolution.

CONSTRUCTIVE FUNCTIONAL CONFRONTATION

One of the key determinants of a successful outcome is the quality of family functioning. How strong is the family? How have they solved problems in the past? Are there ghosts of unresolved conflicts lurking in the shadows? If old ghosts aren't unmasked and buried, they will continue to haunt the outcome of the succession plan.

Put differently, has the family acquired the ability to engage in "friendly confrontation?" Friendly confrontation is putting issues on the table in a friendly way instead of hiding them. This means all parties express feelings, wants, fears and ambivalence clearly and directly, with the goal of attaining improved outcomes.

EMOTIONAL FACTORS

Gender differences can also complicate the task of choosing a successor—for example, a family owned and operated auto body business where the work is physical and dirty and not the

traditional place for women. Some fathers, mothers, and brothers may not want the female member of the family to become the successor. Some may frame the issue in terms of "will men (employees, customers, owners) respect her?"

On the other hand, family business experts have long recognized that daughters enjoy certain advantages over their male siblings or cousins with respect to succession. Generational transitions from fathers to daughters are typically smoother than those involving sons. Women are more sensitive to their father's ego and less likely to engage in conflict or competition. Nonetheless, males and females need to address emotional factors in an appropriate respectful manner.

DEVELOPING A WORKABLE SUCCESSION

To address these issues a neutral facilitator skilled in the psychological and business change processes may be helpful in understanding the overt and covert issues and coaching stakeholders to address the unspoken but critical issues in a safe environment. Often such guided discussions and assisted explorations of alternative action steps brings the parties to a stable succession outcome. To be successful, one needs to address the issues that matter, including shared and non-shared interests. The neutral facilitator needs to work with business and family advisory professionals so that all stakeholders row in the same direction. The facilitator's role is to bring all entities together if this is at all possible. This is not always the case. Consequently there may be "sticky wickets" due to misalignment-non-shared values and conflicting goals as the various stakeholders row in opposition. Momentum toward positive outcomes will be missing.

ACTION STEPS TO ACHIEVE SUCCESSFUL RESOLUTION

Only when each party takes responsibility for its own part of the problem and helps solve its own contributions to the impasse can a difficult condition become a resolvable collaborative opportunity. In the end, the goal is not only to understand the other side's position, but also to come to a successful resolution that works well enough for the interested parties over the long haul. Finally, creating a reasonable succession plan when all key parties are capable of making ratio-

> nal and thoughtful decisions is important. Delaying such decisions past a certain point creates uncertainty and guess-work as to what "we might have wanted or done."

CONCLUSIONS

In summary, as noted at the beginning of this article, all family businesses need a succession plan. At times, selling is the best choice (for example, if there is no qualified successor, or if family conflict is too unmanageable) for preserving family wealth and family relationships. However, if there is a qualified successor and the differences among those parties are manageable, the communi-

cation process will be enhanced and the outcome can be very successful as it invigorates family and business. Trust, mutual respect, and recognition will be improved. Strong businesses will become stronger families. \Psi

David M. Paradise, Ph.D., is founder and owner of the Family Business Resource Center.

13 Prevalent Obstacles and Challenges

- 1. Poor expression of feelings and wants
- 2. Differences seen as liabilities rather than assets
- 3. Indirect communication
- 4. Entitlement
- 5. There isn't enough to go around
- 6. Financial information
- 7. Emotional experiences and expectations
- 8. Perceived histories
- 9. Blaming others and expecting them to change
- 10. Control
- 11. Lack of forgiveness
- 12. Lack of appreciation, recognition, and love
- 13. Reasonable dispute resolutions



Finding Harmony in **Family Business**

THE UNDERAPPRECIATED ADVANTAGE OF WORKING WITH DIFFERENCES

BY RIKK LARSEN AND JUDY SOCKOL







Judy Sockol

ll enterprising families experience conflict. In fact, how to handle conflict is consistently recognized as a top concern for family businesses. Conflict is NORMAL. It is a natural characteristic of the family, evolving when people's roles change and grow, overlap, clash, or are misunderstood. Staying strong as a family and a family business requires flexibility and constant renegotiation of roles, as well as an acceptance that dealing with conflict is just business as usual.

Learning how to effectively manage conflict provides a clear and powerful competitive advantage for the family enterprise. The secret of doing that well is this: Families must think systemically. Rather than trying to resolve isolated disputes as they arise, families must integrate ways of managing conflict into the very structure of the family business.

"We don't get harmony when everybody sings the same note. Only notes that are different can harmonize. The same is true with people."

WHAT A GROUP MAY

THINK OF AS "THE

PROBLEM" MAY ACTUALLY

BE THE RESULT OF AN

ARRAY OF ISSUES THAT

ALL CAME TOGETHER

OVER TIME TO FORM A

PERFECT STORM.

— STEVE GOODIER

THE UPSIDE OF CONFLICT (REALLY: THERE CAN BE AN UPSIDE)

The focus of our work as family business consultants is to understand and manage systemic conflict - not to eliminate it or permanently resolve individual disputes. In consulting engagements we walk alongside families as problem solvers, helping to design solutions that resolve business concerns and protect important continuing relationships. We also offer conflict management training for families to teach the skills needed for families to improve how they manage differences together in the future, to avoid destructive eruption of conflict when natural tensions surface.

Structural solutions and training do not eliminate conflict for good; they just make families better able to manage it well.

The truth is, well-managed conflict can actually be an asset to a company. Conflict, or differences, plays a valuable role in human endeavor and collaboration. Consider this:

- It is only through being challenged by conflict that we learn, grow, and advance as people, families, companies and soci-
- · Well-managed conflict can lead to new approaches, innovative strategies and resilience;
- · Integrating conflict management can lead to patterns of shared power, mutual respect, and proactive conversation and plan-
- When families learn to manage conflict in constructive ways, they can ensure the productivity and resilience of their firms for years to come.

THE DOWNSIDE OF AVOIDING CONFLICT

Avoiding or ignoring conflict over time can seriously impact a company's ability to function. For example:

- · Poorly managed conflict can lead to stagnant relationships or organizations and create rigidity that makes them vulnerable to stress or change;
- It's common for a slow erosion of family relationships, the development of grudges, feuds, wars and counter-productive behaviors to occur when passive conflict is allowed to fester;
- Organizations can miss valuable business opportunities when they are distracted or paralyzed by conflict;
- Ignoring or mismanaging conflict can waste valuable resources such as time, money, human capital and reputation.

MANAGING SYSTEMIC CONFLICT IS NOT DISPUTE RESOLUTION

In a family enterprise, each dispute generally is part of a larger conflict system, connected to and influenced by other disputes, personal relationships, individual temperaments and traditions. Dispute resolution tries to identify a specific problem and then come up with a solution, treating the "fight" as an isolated incident and failing to take into account the entire family system. In comparison, the use of a family-systems-based approach can allow one to approach conflict from a different perspective, often with less blame and emotional charge for those in dispute.

The bottom line: Dispute resolution and mediation are often ineffective approaches for managing systemic conflict over time in family business systems.

Systems thinking is the process of thinking not simply about what is observed in isolation ("the fight"), but about how that might be linked to other factors within a whole, integrated system. Nothing happens in a vacuum; all actions, goals, personalities and traditions can have ripple effects within the system. What a group may think of

> as "the problem" may actually be the result of an array of issues that all came together over time to form a perfect storm. The parties who are actually fighting may be expressing different sides of a conflict that involves many other

family members.

DIAGNOSING SYSTEMIC CONFLICT: TREAT THE "DISEASE," NOT JUST THE SYMPTOM

To better understand why a systems approach to conflict management is so crucial, imagine a doctor treating a patient's cough without considering that person's medical history, changes in lifestyle or health, or other ail-

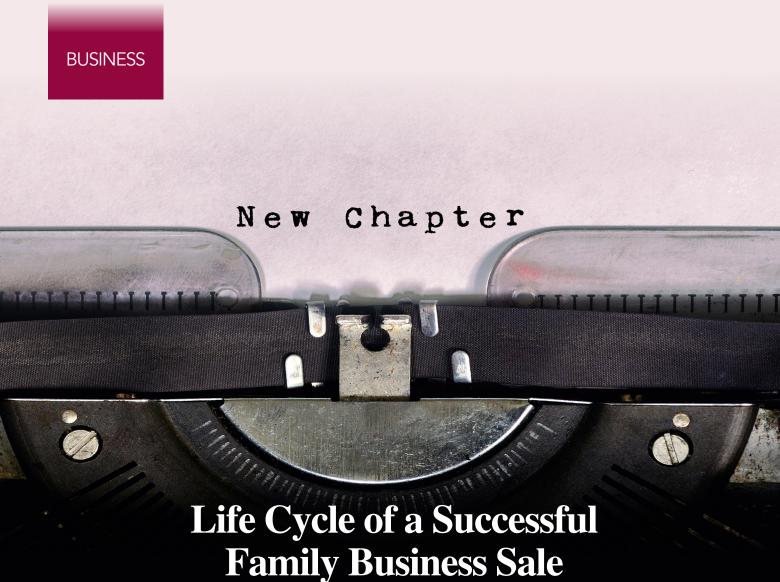
ments. If a doctor did this, they might not understand the contributing factors to the condition and miss the opportunity to diagnose a more serious problem that, if caught early, could be treated and managed over the long term.

By considering the patient's past and ongoing lifestyle, behavior and relationships, the doctor could gain valuable insight about whether the patient is able or likely to follow the prescribed protocol. Does the patient have the support he needs to follow doctor's orders? Is the patient surrounded by a peer group that encourages continued behavior that caused the illness or injury? This strategy of comprehensive assessment is similar to the systems methodology we advocate using with families in conflict.

Families and their advisors benefit when they understand that conflict is normal—and often beneficial— and that consideration for conflict should be integrated into the very structure of the enterprise. Families thrive when given ways to think beyond a current dispute, to understand the larger system behind the "fight," and to learn to use this challenge to grow and evolve.

Sound, ongoing conflict management offers a method to assess the important continuing relationships that exist in the family business system and how those relationships impact the causes of conflict and potential solutions to conflict. Embracing and managing systemic conflict empowers families to develop their own harmony out of dissonance, developing solutions that are robust, reliable, and have potential to be transformational. \psi

Rikk Larsen is Partner, and Judy Sockol is Senior Consultant at Continuity Family Business Consulting.



BY ANDREW MYERS

hen family business owners decide to sell their company, they embark on a once-in-a-generation event. Once the decision to sell is made, understanding the lifecycle of the impending deal can help reduce unease and achieve a successful transition.

TIMING

Family business owners may ideally want to pass the business to the next generation, but that is not always a feasible option. External factors sometimes precipitate the sale of a family business, such as the death of a family member, an extended market downturn or changes in the competitive landscape. Businesses

often withstand changes in circumstances and plan for succession deliberately. However, determining the best time to sell a business can be an elusive process.

Family business owners should consider the right time for the company, the market and the owners. If timing is optimal in all three areas, the sale should occur smoothly and at a good price. Two of three will usually lead to a good result. Fewer than two more frequently leads to a lower sales price, a longer process or both.

Many family business owners know instinctively when their company is ready to sell. Objective criteria include company characteristics that reduce risk and show upside potential. Stability

in personnel and customer base, positive trends in sales and profits, and the absence of litigation and audits all reflect favorable timing for a company sale.

Optimal market timing can be challenging to anticipate, as markets come in and out of favor, sometimes very quickly. The market for smaller companies in digital advertising was very hot for about 18 months and then became very cold. Some industries stay "in favor" or "out of favor" for longer periods. Some move with the business cycle, others with technological advances. Market cycles can impact business valuations and time required to complete a transaction. Selling near the top, but not at the top, of the market cycle is usually optimal for a family business sale.

Determining the best timing for a sale may require considering the objectives of many family members involved in the business. Some may be only owners. Some will be both owners and employees. Others may be only employees. Each may assign a different weight to different objectives, such as selling at the highest price, preserving the business and maintaining family members as employees.

Often, the controlling family members simply determine they no longer have the desire or capability to continue to operate and grow the business.

Therefore, the timing is right for the family when the majority owners desire to transition the business to a new owner, and there is a broad, if not universal, acceptance to move ahead, even from those who may have initially opposed the transition.

Once the decision is made to proceed with a sale, a deal can reasonably be completed within 270 days. Completion time varies depending, in part, on how prepared the business is before it starts the process, how diligent business leaders are during the process, the type of buyer, and buyer's motivation.

Before commencing the process in earnest, it would be a healthy exercise for the family to imagine life without the business. Take a moment to consider plans to pursue hobbies, travel, charitable and other interests, and family life. Around this time, the family should also engage in discussions with tax and estate lawyers and investment professionals to consider pre-deal tax and financial planning.

PREPARING - PHASE 1

If a family business is not prepared for the sale process, pre-transaction planning could begin 1-4 years in advance of going to market. Long-term advance preparation may include upgrading policies and procedures, nurturing a layer of management competent to run the business if the family owners depart post-transaction, and completing business investments. Otherwise, Phase 1 can take as little as 90 days.

A. Get organized. The sales process will involve teams of lawyers and consultants reviewing books, records, contracts, business processes, technologies, employment practices, insurance contracts, permits, authorizations, and financial information, among

HAVING A STRONG LEGAL AND ACCOUNTING TEAM IS CRITICAL TO COMPLETE THE SUCCESSION PROCESS SUCCESSFULLY.

other things. Therefore, business files should be complete and organized, so they can be uploaded to a virtual data room. Maintaining orderly records builds credibility and saves valuable time, both of which are critical throughout the sales process.

B. Find the right banker. Business owners should select their investment banker and negotiate the relationship terms carefully. Bankers may have different areas of specialization or experience within a market. Biggest is not always best. The family owners should communicate their objectives to the banker honestly, be it getting the highest offer, continuing the business or hiring family members.

Most bankers will help write a "deal book" that professionally highlights the business strengths, and will then orchestrate an auction process to elicit the best offers. A good banker will stay involved throughout the process to help smooth out business issues as they arise, serve when needed as an owner's proxy in business negotiations and help drive the deal to completion, always putting the client's needs first.

C. Round out your professional team. Having a strong legal and accounting team is critical to complete the succession process successfully. General practice lawyers, or even corporate lawyers unfamiliar with market terms, will not serve a business well during the process. You should engage someone familiar with the M&A market and process, who can anticipate issues and work with a sense of urgency to bring the deal to a successful conclusion.

D. Consider engaging third-party experts to provide supporting reports. Depending on the nature of the family business, buyers will often engage third parties to assist in the due diligence process, which can delay the process. If the family owners obtain third-party assessments in advance, they may increase the number of bids, potentially increase the bid amounts and speed the

process. Reports could include a quality of earnings or market analysis or environmental assessments. Sometimes, a seller can persuade a buyer to use reports the seller makes available if they are from reputable, independent parties. This also gives the family influence over the scope of the reports.

E. Consider the business's key competitive factors. Every business relies on specific factors to give it a competitive edge. It may be one or more supplier or customer relationships, protection of intellectual property or management employees required for a successful transition. Guaranteeing that these competitive elements remain post-transition reduces the buyer's risk. This may mean ensuring relationships are stable, contracts are signed or renewed, reasonable measures have been taken to protect intellectual property, or retention bonuses and/or post-employment restrictive covenants are in place for key personnel.

F. Get a preliminary tax assessment and consider the optimal deal structure. Different deal structures may have vastly different after-tax outcomes. Non-tax factors may exist, which the deal structure will impact, such as legal requirements for third-party consents to assign contracts, permits, or authorizations. Such consents may be required for an asset sale, but not for a stock sale or merger. Business owners should understand basics of different deal structures before they embark on the next phase.

SOLICITING - PHASE 2

This phase begins once the banker is selected.

A. Preparing the book. Investment bankers will prepare an investment thesis in the form of an offering document based on information the business provides. The offering document will highlight the positive business attributes and acknowledge competition and competitive elements. A critical component of the offering document

will be a financial package, including the business's historical and estimated earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation, and amortization (EBITDA), as adjusted to eliminate non-recurring costs and expenses, including expenses that will decrease or terminate post-transaction. Buyers will often value a business based on a multiple of "adjusted" EBITDA, so these adjustments must be well considered, presented clearly, and defensible.

B. Conducting meetings. Once the field of bidders is whittled down, potential buyers will want to meet the principal family owners and other management team members, particularly if family owners intend to depart post-transaction. Having a succinct, good pitch, supported by professional materials and a knowledgeable, confident, yet open-minded and well-rounded team will entice strong, final bids. Often, buyers will require, as a condition to close, that nonfamily, management members attending such meetings remain employed at the business post-transaction and execute employment agreements with the new owner. This can put stress on the transaction, as the employee who feels loyalty to the family now must negotiate his or her future employment terms as a condition to closing. Nonetheless, this is required in most transactions if the family owners intend to depart. Indeed, in such circumstances, it will be critical to have developed a capable management team if likely buyers intend for the business to remain operationally independent post-transaction.

C. Negotiating the Letter of Intent. Letters of Intent (LOI) will broadly contain two categories of provisions - binding and non-binding. Non-binding provisions will include a description of the deal structure and economic terms. Binding provisions will include a confidentiality clause and an exclusivity period during which the family business owners agree not to solicit any other buyer for a period of time (usually a

THE IMPORTANCE OF MAINTAINING A HEALTHY BUSINESS DURING THE SALES PROCESS CANNOT BE OVERSTATED.

minimum of 90 days), to allow the transaction agreements to be negotiated and signed.

LOIs that only include a price and general conditions may indicate a buyer has not fully considered the transaction and wants to quickly tie up the seller, in order to negotiate favorable terms during the exclusivity period. Although non-binding terms are subject to change, it can be hard to justify a change to a term specified in the LOI. Therefore. care should be given to the LOI, with legal counsel involved.

More detailed LOIs tend to shorten the road to close. Although not every detail should be determined at this stage, the LOI should include sufficient detail to ensure the owners understand the structure, price, and material terms, as well as buyer's funding requirements and other transitional matters.

At the end of Phase 2, the family owners should be reasonably comfortable with the buyer and their ability to consummate the transaction, and should understand, the buyer's plans for the future of the business.

CLOSING - PHASE 3

This is perhaps the most difficult and stressful part of the process for owners. It is also one in which buyers and sellers interests diverge. After the LOI is signed, the seller has an interest to close as quickly as possible, whereas the buyer wants to ensure it avoids any mistakes and will, therefore, proceed with caution and deliberation, as its lawyers and experts become more involved.

A. Maintaining secrecy. Knowledge of a pending transaction can cause angst within an organization, because employees may

feel uncertainty about their jobs and the new owners. Delays tend to increase unease. For these reasons, most sellers will try to keep the transaction confidential until the last moments (often a day before or the day of the closing).

B. Keeping an eye on the ball. Nothing can sour a deal like a drop in sales. Management can under-estimate the time and attention required to sell a family business. Having a good banker and professional team in place will help, but business owners must ensure the company meets sales objectives, keeps customers happy, maintains quality, and avoids accidents. The importance of maintaining a healthy business during the sales process cannot be overstated.

C. Maintaining deal momentum. Keeping deal momentum moving forward at a reasonable pace is a critical factor to a successful sale. This means having both the internal and external resources to respond to the buyer's due diligence requests, being available to resolve business issues as they arise, and engaging experienced professionals who can drive the deal to closure. Having access to the buyer at multiple levels, either directly or through the broker, to move the deal forward as business issues arise can help significantly.

The stakes are high in any business sale. Selling a family business involves both emotional and financial consequences, and being prepared is critical to ease some of the uncertainty as you transition your business and establish a legacy. ₩

Andrew Myers is a partner in the Business Law practice at Davis, Malm & D'Agostine.

LOIs THAT ONLY INCLUDE A PRICE AND GENERAL CONDITIONS MAY INDICATE A BUYER HAS NOT FULLY CONSIDERED THE TRANSACTION AND WANTS TO QUICKLY TIE UP THE SELLER.





Never Forget How to Cut Stone

FIFTH GENERATION BUSINESS BRINGS **NEW AND OLD IDEAS TOGETHER**

BY KAITLYN KEEGAN

The story of the quarries is a story that begins - and continues today - with family. From two families working alongside each other to one taking on the other when no generation was there to pick it up, the Plymouth and Bates Brothers quarries are a lesson to others in keeping family businesses "rock solid."

In the early 1900s Russell and Earle Bates, along with their father Gustave, began Bates Brothers Seam Face Granite Co. They began to quarry granite along the Hingham-Weymouth line in Massachusetts. Next door to them in 1915, Plymouth Quarries was established by the Devine family. Another quarry, J.F. Price Co. was also adjacent and operated by the Price family producing sand, crushed stone and aggregate.

It was a circle of family businesses all revolving around stone. The businesses worked together and supported one another as the years went on.

In 1953, Bates Brothers took on the next generation when Russell's daughter, Mary, and her husband, James E. Bristol Jr. - affectionately known as Jim - joined. A few years later in 1968 they expanded the quarry business and acquired J.F. Price.

For years, Jim Bristol manned the business, quarrying Weymouth granite for both dimensional building stone and crushed aggregate. Product lines expanded along with the family involved. Jim Bristol welcomed his sons and daughter, David, Jimmy and Janet, into the mix.

Jim Bristol was lucky when his children wanted to join the business. He had someone to come in and grow the business and knew when it was time, there would be someone to transition the business to. The Devine family of Plymouth Quarries was not so lucky.

"This was originally made up of 10-15 different family-owned businesses," David Bristol said of the stone quarrying business in Massachusetts. "One by one they dissolved until we were the last two standing. We had visions [of acquiring Plymouth], but they approached us. It was the logical choice to do it and work together."

Some family members knew from birth that they would continue the business.

"I worked there at the age of 10," David Bristol said. "I developed a strange love for the stone and doing what we do. It's just something that's in your blood and you enjoy doing it."

Others know they will not pick it up and others fall into it like Heather Quintal, Jim Bristol's granddaughter.

"It wasn't on my radar to be honest," Quintal said. "I worked in the office during college and waitressed at night. I loved the stone and it was so fun to talk about."

But the family business wasn't what she went to school for. After graduating college

with an accounting and finance degree, Quintal landed a job at Pricewaterhouse Coopers. However soon after Quintal got the news that no one ever wants to hear she had cancer.

"My uncles sat me down and said maybe you want to stay and work [at the family business]," Quintal said. "I could do all the different pieces of the puzzle and it inspired me to stay."

Quintal was the fifth generation to join the quarry business since the creation of Bates Brothers. However, with that fifth generation entering came new ideas and ways to grow the quarry that Jim Bristol would not have encountered.

"My current vision for the quarries is for it to become a design center, with classes and offerings that teach about how to run a business, how to estimate jobs, how to install new products, how to incorporate design, etc.," Quintal said. "Someday we may offer cabinets and different counter options...or maybe even a gift shop to allow this next generation coming up to fulfill their creative side."

One of the things she said she wants to continue in the business is its focus on every client.

"My grandfather will spend the same amount of time with a person building Boston College and someone doing a tiny project in their backyard. It's a mentality he



brought in and keeps going," Quintal said.

To older generations, the kind of change Quintal is looking to make would be a shock to the system. However, Quintal said her grandfather has fully supported change in the family business and that it is one of the reasons they have stayed successful.

"My grandfather is the epitome of a humble man," Quintal said. "When we started to expand, he sat down in a meeting and said 'never forget how to cut stone.' He's been through so many recessions and he sees when all else fails, you have this. People

need these products."

David Bristol agreed.

"If it's something crazy we might question it, but Dad never said no to any of the ideas. We look at what the business was and the [Bates brothers] wouldn't even recognize it," David Bristol said. The next generation, he said, has to have freedom to make their own decisions. "Never say no to things just because it's change. We support [the younger generation] instead of standing against them."

Quintal said learning from her grand-

father has been a benefit, not a deterrent. "He's very wise. He has this very cool perspective that history repeats itself and that we have to be wary of this."

While Quintal has joined in on the stone business, her brother and cousins have taken on other pieces of the family business at the Weathervane Golf Club and the Weathervane Construction Co.

"It's fun to watch the different dynamics and how well we all work together, but there's a struggle too," Quintal said. "We have Thanksgiving dinner and we try not



Dave Bristol

to talk about work all of the time. We do a pretty good job of keeping work separate so no one feels left out."

"Working side by side can be a difficult way to work," David Bristol added. "We get enough space to get along. Our roles are also well-defined in the family as to who does what and that helps keep the tension down. Everyone knows where they stand."



Jim Bristol

That balance of keeping personal life and work in the family businesses separate is key to communicating, they both said. The other challenge, Quintal said, is approaching the topic when one person has done something wrong.

"If there's something brutally wrong, it's hard to approach that topic," Quintal said. "My grandfather does a good job of laying "THE BEST THING YOU CAN DO IN A FAMILY **BUSINESS IS TO EXPERIENCE."**

down the law."

Going forward she said she hopes there will be a sixth generation, but - as the fifth generation currently has no children - it is something for the family to keep an eye on.

"The best thing you can do in a family business is to get outside experience," Quintal said of expanding beyond the family. "Our goal is to make sure there's room for a sixth generation and hopefully there's interest." Ψ

Kaitlyn Keegan is the managing editor of New England Family Business magazine.



2018 FBX Family Business Award Recipients

We applaud all FBX **Award Recipients!**



FAMILY BUSINESS EXCHANGE 2018 AWARD WINNERS

Fifteen family businesses from New England were honored with this year's New England Family Business Exchange Awards. After receiving your nominations, these family-run enterprises were chosen for their innovation, community involvement, commitment to employees, longevity and overall success.

Acella Construction Pembroke, MA



ANTHONY DIRUBBO

either Anthony Dirubbo or his brother, Dave, had business experience when they launched their own company doing home improvement in the middle of college. Even though that company did not last past college life, the brothers found themselves once again working together after Dave founded Acella Construction in 2003.

Acella specializes in building and renovating facilities for academic institutions, nonprofit groups, commercial developers, hospitality, retail and interior projects.

"We are very different people and do different things in the business," Anthony said of working with his brother. "Most of the items we may not agree on work out pretty seamlessly. We don't want to get our mother involved!"

Dave is president of the company while Anthony is vice president of operations.

"We don't cross paths a ton. He gives me his directive and I follow through with some adjustment. If we don't agree, we compromise," Anthony said.

It took a few years for the brothers to work that out, though.

"I enjoy doing what I do and I enjoy doing it with my brother."

"It took us about four to five years to work out where the line was drawn where he left off and I picked up. As the company grew, it became easier," he said.

Living in the same town with children who hang out, the brothers didn't get a lot of time apart. When they started working together at Acella, Anthony said they went out of their way to not talk business

"Now we can talk about it a little bit and know what not to talk about." he said.

One of the keys to the Dirubbos' success as a company, Anthony said, was that both of them are on the same page when it comes to staying positive and putting family first.

"We trust in one another's ability," he said. "And criticism needs to be sort of positive. We don't have a lot of ego issues."

As far as the future of Acella, Anthony says the brothers are not encouraging their kids - who are still young - to join the business. Currently he's not too worried.

"Call me back in 10 years and I'll tell you where I'm at," Anthony quipped.

For now he's happy just being in business with his brother.

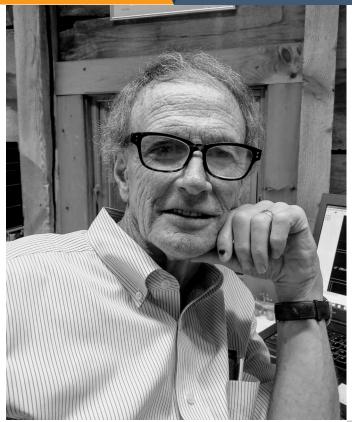
"I enjoy doing what I do and I enjoy doing it with my brother."



DAVE DIRUBBO

USINESS EXCHANGE 2018 AWARD WINNERS

Axiom Architects Hanover, MA



JIM KELLIHER

im Kelliher had almost given up on his business when his son, Jamie, stepped up to the plate. After starting Axiom Architects in 1978, Jim had gone from eight employees to three. He had put off buying a new computer system since why would he invest five figures into a system if he was just going to close down.

Then Jamie came on board.

"I was really quite surprised," Jim said of Jamie wanting to join Axiom. "He had gone off and his path took him to Phoenix and then to Massachusetts. I believed he was never coming back."

"Certain aspects of personal life and professional life brought me back to the area," Jamie said. "The idea of knowing how much there was to learn from the family business and knowing how successful Jim had been through the years, I felt there was a great opportunity. I felt it was somewhat important for me to come and learn everything that [Jim] had to pass on with how to run the business and how to make a living doing architecture on a smaller scale."

Jamie said something that helped the transition is that he came into the family business later in life.

"It represents that, it was a decision that made sense for me rather than what I was expected to do," he said. "I came in actively ready to put in the work rather than expected to be here. I brought in my different experiences to help make the company a little more rounded."

After Jamie joined Axiom, the business jumped back into action. With a new computer system in place and the Axiom crew back up to five employees, the firm is going strong.

"The focus of our company has started to change based on

the work available in our area," Jamie said. "We are finding we are taking on a lot more commercial projects."

Jamie has been working at Axiom for two years now and the biggest thing he has had to learn is the operations side of the

"No one gives an architect a business course. It doesn't prepare you [for running your own business]," Jim said. "I didn't make any real money for the first eight to 10 years."

"Whether it's architecture or any small business, a lot of general business management things come up and take a lot of knowledge and understanding," Jamie said. "I'm grateful to have someone like [Jim] to show me how to be successful."

Working together as father and son has come easily to the two especially as Jim begins to take a step back from the business.

"It eases the pressure off as he takes over and we're starting to look at succession now," Jim said. "I'm taking more time off than I used to and it's nice to see him designing better than I am now."

When it comes to meeting with clients, the two use their age difference and experiences as a benefit.

"We go together and I shut up if I realize I'm in a different generation. It's interesting watching it roll through another generation of clients as well," Jim said.

Although don't count Jim out just yet. He said he's determined to stay working and doing more relaxed design work as he lets Jamie handle the big stuff.



JAIME KELLIHER

The Country Butcher At Spring Meadow Farm, Tolland, CT

utchering runs in Steve Boyer's blood and now his triplet sons have joined the business.

Before Steve opened The Country Butcher in 1989 in Ellington, he was going farm to farm with his father, slaughtering and processing animals. Once he married his wife, Kathy, in 1988, he realized going farm to farm was not the direction he wanted to go in and opened up shop.

"Very early on we realized the potential was there," Steve said. "We added onto the building three times while we were in Ellington."

In 2006, Steve and Kathy made the decision to return to their hometown farm in Tolland. The building boom had caused the town to grow and what had been a very small, colonial town now had a lot more people to serve. The two quickly went to work building a new farm store, butcher shop and processing plant on their 80-acre farm.

Since returning to Tolland, Steve said the biggest change in the business has been the farm-to-table movement in the last 8-10 years.

"People really care about where their food comes from," he said. "They like to know that the products we make are made right here. In some places, distribution is from another state or country, our distribution is 20 feet away from the back of the processing area to the counters out front."

Another factor Steve said has helped their success is their connection to their customers.

"They like to know the person," he said. "They make a connection and become the greatest customers. They are so loyal and supportive."

The couple's triplet boys – Nicholas, Benjamin and Alex – are all involved in the business in some way. Nicholas and Benjamin recently graduated from the Culinary Institute of America and Alex is finishing a degree in communications and marketing at Eastern State Connecticut University.

"Our son Nicholas is the most processing and production minded. He's very good with the farm work we do," Steve said. "Benjamin is also a chef and very good on the catering side of the business."

Along with the retail shop, The Country Butcher has expanded to catering. They operate Country Catering, which includes pig roasts and barbeques, and Black Tie Catering, which hosts high-end catering events and cocktail parties.

Steve said he is lucky that his sons have taken interest in the business because the biggest challenge in the industry is good help.

"It's kind of a joke in the family that we couldn't get good help so we had triplets," Steve said. "It also allows you to have someone who is passionate about the business. Our kids are passionate because this is their life. They have grown up in this business atmosphere."

One of the most misunderstood things about owning a family business, Steve said, is how it becomes part of your family.

"Everything revolves around it," he said. "The holiday time for us with our family is very difficult. Part of the celebration is food."

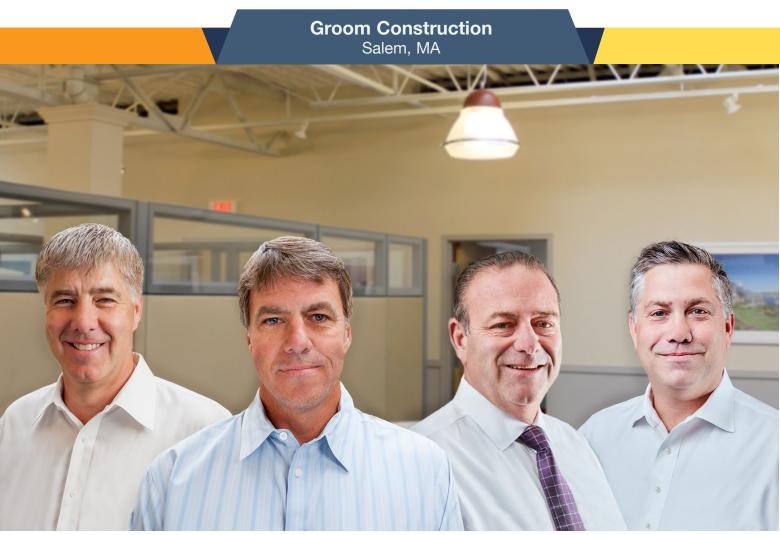
To counter that, Steve said the Boyers take Sundays off as a time for faith and family. They also work a tremendous amount of hours before and during the holiday, close the day after and recharge and rest

As far as the future of The Country Butcher, Steve said they are in the beginning stages of considering a succession plan. He said he hopes all three sons stay involved with the two as chefs and Alex as a marketer.

"If their heart isn't in it, it's not going to work," he said. "I won't force them into it."

For now, Steve said he is blessed to have his family by his side and is enthusiastic for the future.





DAVE GROOM, TOM GROOM, SCOTT FAULKNER, DWIGHT GROOM

efore the Groom brothers went into business together, they had already learned what not to do after their father's failed family business.

Their father had been in a long line of succession running Thomas Groom and Company, a world-renowned book binderv that dated back to 1833. However, by the time his generation had come around, he was the only family member still actively involved in the business with three sisters and a cousin as absentee owners.

"They never had a plan on how to deal with [multiple owners]," Dave Groom explained. "It caused an enormous fallout and a lot of strife in the family. The business eventually went bankrupt. That strain also led to a lot of serious health problems. I'm glad it's gone."

Another thing the brothers learned was to always have a plan on when it's time to leave the family business.

"In one case, one of my dad's uncles refused to retire and died at age 97. The lesson learned was there's a time to step aside, but before you do, have a good plan in place and spend years onboarding capable managers and replacements."

After their father's business went bankrupt,

the boys had to find their own way to pay their college tuitions. To get through college, Dave and Tom Groom painted houses. They turned that into a home improvement and house painting company in 1983 and Groom Construction was born. Since then the company has taken off in the areas of upscale residential construction, retail construction and special projects, and regional commercial construction.

Their third brother, Dwight, joined Groom in late 1990s and the brothers even developed a fourth non-blood related brother, Scott Faulkner.

"I like the freedom and flexibility and the challenge of being self-employed," Dave said. "We've now built a business that is rapidly approaching \$100 million in revenues.'

Dave credits that success to the brothers' abilities to diversify the business portfolio. Each brother heads a different sector of the business.

Working with his brothers has its challenges.

"Sometimes we lock horns and always manage to work it out," Dave said. "We're not always on the same page in terms of where

we want to take the business and how we want to take it there. But we still manage to have Thanksgiving and Christmas together."

The brothers have found a sort of "peacekeeper" with Scott, Dave explained, and he helps provide balance among the brothers.

Striking the balance between family time and work time does blur, he said.

"It seems that the topic of work will more often than not come up, but we try to avoid it on holidays."

In regard to succession, Dave said they aren't in a rush and won't push their children into it.

"With our father's business turning into a really bad situation, we learned a lot from that. It makes me a little bit hesitant to bring my own children into it because of multiple ownership. Even planning the future of our lake house: all of a sudden there are nine children between the three brothers."

Dave stressed that there is no right answer for succession plans.

"It may be easiest to sell your business, but it's a highly charged emotional situation. It's hard to give up. It's your legacy," he said.

Office Gallery International Norwood, MA



HILARY TROIA

ilary and Michael Troia were not the first family to own Office Gallery International and they might not be the

Michael Troia first joined Office Gallery 24 years ago when it was owned by the Wlukas family. It was not long after that Hilary was also hired at the business. Before the couple knew it, they were signing paperwork in 2016 to own it.

"We originally anticipated taking over the business in 2007," Mike said. "We went through a terrible time with the recession and had to change gears. We thought maybe this wasn't going to happen and maybe we wouldn't be able to do this particular business. But we knew in our hearts this was the business we wanted to be in."

Having met working together in 1992 at Macy's, the pair was ready for the challenge.

"I don't know how many spouses could do it and do it well," Hilary said. "We're so used to it and we have great communication skills. We know when to shut it down when we get home."

The couple established time at the end of the day to debrief for an hour so that the work issues did not interfere with their homelife.

"We carve out a little bit of time especially early in the evening to wrap up the day in the office," Michael said. "What came up? Anything critical? If not, maybe we deal with it first thing in the morning. Put work to bed and move on to our normal life."

That time combined with clear responsibilities is what the Troias say is the key to their success working side by side.

"There's a different level of commitment when it's your family," Hilary said. "Everything is tied together. It becomes part of you."

The Troias never lost the legacy of the Wlukas in their work

though. The Wlukases' niece, Jordana, is still with the business as director of operations.

"She's the cog that keeps everything rolling around," Hilary said of Jordana. "It was a natural, easy transition and we are all really good friends."

The couple has also began to put their own spin on the business. In particular, they have added more design planning services.

"For years, it was more or less a commodity business selling desks and chairs," Hilary said. "We are starting to use visual CAD and space planning versus graph paper and cutting out desks to give a floor plan. Now it's more of an office furniture design firm and a one-stop shop."

As far as a plan for succession goes, the Troias said they would love another family to take it over if the opportunity presented itself.

"We have a son entering college and I'm not sure it's in the stars for him," Hilary said. "So my hope is another family does run the business when we're ready to pass the baton."

"It's going to have to be the right family," Michael stressed. "I don't think everybody is designed to work together day in and day out. My mom and dad would never have been able to do that. It's a matter of finding the right individuals and understanding of what goes into it."

Their best advice to other family businesses? "Laugh like hell every single day."



MICHAEL TROIA

Peabody Properties Braintree, MA



KAREN FISH-WILL

he sister team behind Peabody Properties stepped into large shoes when they took over from their father, Edward Fish. Before then, Melissa Fish Crane and Karen Fish-Will hadn't considered taking the reins.

"Years ago, it was expected that the men in the family would assume leadership of the company," Karen said. "As was typically the case back then, this was due largely in part to the long-held generational perspectives that the 'men would run the business.'"

The sisters weren't afraid to get their feet wet and get the hands-on experience of being in the industry.

"I took immense pride working for my family. It always meant so much more than just a paycheck - it was a career," Karen said. "The passion I cultivated in myself wasn't something I learned in a textbook or classroom, but at loud, dirt-and-grime covered construction sites and with hands-on experience."

After their father passed away, the sisters were thrust into leading the property management company, tasked with carrying on Ed's legacy. Since then they have worked to evolve and grow Peabody Properties.

"Over the coming decades, our primary objective is to develop and maintain steady, thoughtful growth with an emphasis on the cultivation of high employee engagement, wellness and enhanced work/life balance practices," Melissa said.

"No business discussions at the dinner table!"

Keeping the Peabody Properties mission and value strong is something Karen also agreed is of the upmost importance.

"In addition, we believe that when all team members have a shared understanding of our mission and an awareness of each other's goals and objectives, the result is not just organizational growth and achievement, but a collective sense of accomplishment and success," she said.

Taking over the family business wasn't always easy.

"All families have their trying moments and ours is certainly not different." Melissa said. "Even though there may be times when Karen and I disagree with each other it is also the sense of deep, mutual respect and love we have for each other, that will always help us preserve a sense of cohesion and balance."

Karen cited communication as one of the most difficult things about working with family.

"Whether it's trying to share a perspective or idea that is new or unconventional - you need to be prepared that there will likely be differing opinions or outright disagreement. Over time and through experience, I've learned that those objections can be overcome through preparation."

As the years go by at the helm of the company, it did get easier, Melissa said.

"Now years later and with a greatly developed sense for the hard work it took to build this organization from the ground up, I have a true appreciation for and understanding of my responsibility to preserve and continue the legacy our father left behind," she said.

One rule the sisters have placed to keep business separate from family?

"No business discussions at the dinner table!" Karen said.



MELISSA FISH CRANE

Peerless Precision Westfield, MA



KRISTIN CARLSON

ristin Carlson stepped into big footsteps when she took over Peerless Precision Inc. along with her mother Debbie Maier, after her father, Larry Maier, passed away. What made taking over the business just that much more difficult for Kristin was the fact that it is an aerospace manufacturing company-an industry that doesn't often see women in charge.

Along with her mother, Kristin has grown Peerless exponentially and excelled as an innovative, charismatic leader.

"I started out sweeping floors and cutting materials on a saw when I was 15," Kristin said. "Back then it was just a job. It got me work experience and taught me work ethic and gave me the values I have today."

It was always her dad's plan for her to take over, Kristin said, but that just made her not want to do it.

To prove that point, Kristin got what she called a "real job" at CVS at age 16 and worked for a bank during college. On weekends she would work shipping and receiving at Peerless, but it was always in the background.

"At 21 years old, I needed to get out and find out who I was. I moved to San Diego for eight years with my boyfriend. I had a gig as a warehouse manager then a buyer for a fire alarm contractor," Kristin said. In 2012, Kristen came back into the family business

"Trusting my instincts has always moved me in the right direction."

when her father passed. "Ultimately I made the decision for myself. Dad was always right and knew what I was going to be good at."

Coming back into the business wasn't easy. Kristin said she felt she had to work twice as hard as any of the men in the business to gain the respect of employees, colleagues and customers.

"I was the silly little girl who didn't know what she was doing. I proved them all wrong, but it was earned," she said. "I had to prove to everyone that I did in fact know what I was doing or that I would learn it."

She has come this far because, Kristin said, she's trusted her

"While some people will tell you the heart or gut can lead you in the wrong direction, trusting my instincts has always moved me in the right direction."

As far as being a family business and the challenges it brings, Kristin said it's not that much different than any other small

"We are competing with larger companies who usually have more financial backing who can offer a higher salary to their employees," she said. "What we try to do is leverage that with how we treat everyone like family. It reflects in the retention in our employees."

"If he could only see me now," Kristin said of her dad. "I would have already blown him out of the water. Since coming back in 2012, we have doubled our annual sales and continue to grow that by diversifying industries and customers. We are bringing into fruition his dream of expanding the company."



DEBBIE MAIER

BUSINESS EXCHANGE 2018 AWARD WINNERS

Robert Charles Photography East Longmeadow, MA



ED AND ROBERT ZEMBA

ver 30 years ago, Robert C. Zemba founded Robert Charles Photography. He never knew his sons would carry on the business and grow it to be the premiere photography studio it is today.

"Both my brother Robert and I went out and tried some different things first," Ed Zemba said. "Right around our early 20s, both of us decided to check out the family business a little bit."

The younger Robert had pursued photography and Ed was more on the business and entrepreneur side. Together they made a good team.

"To our father's credit, he did not force us into anything in particular," Ed said. "He was open to us finding what, within the family business, spoke to us as individuals."

One of the things Ed credits with the business' success is his father's openness to input and new ideas. In 2001, the studio was one of the first to adopt full digital photography.

"That meant getting really friendly with our local banks and taking out a significant loan in order to buy all the computer power that was needed and the cameras," Ed said of the switch to digital. "Back then it was when a lot of folks in our industry thought film and

digital would go side-by-side for 50 years. My brother and I led the charge and our father stood right there with us."

However, family businesses come with their own set of challenges.

"With a family business, you get additional emotional ties that go with 'spirited meetings," Ed said. "Everyone comes with their opinions and feels strongly. The key is to try and listen to each other and find compromise."

Ed said the best solution to a problem typically comes from when a piece of everyone's input is included.

"You want to say 'this is my position, this is the right way,' but then you look at it and realize he had a really good point there," Ed said. "What makes us different makes us stronger."

The idea of celebrating differences is also strong in the brothers' other organization, a nonprofit called Unify Against Bullying. They launched the organization in 2016 after realizing there was no anti-bullying group in Western Massachusetts and were told they

lived in a "non-serviceable" area by national charities.

From fashion shows to selfies that have circulated around the world, Unify Against Bullying has become a big part of how the Zemba brothers give back to the community that has supported them.

As far as the future of Robert Charles Photography, Ed said there are no specific plans at this time.

"We don't want our kids to feel pushed into it. It's something that comes from our kids and what they want," he said. Even with a third generation not yet in sight, the brothers said they will ensure the studio stays up-todate on its technology. The studio has started offering 360 Media as part of their services. 360 Media provides full 360 degrees of visual images.

"It's opened up some incredible opportunities for our business," Ed said. "Not many folks in this area are offering that service. We are continuing what our father started and having that eye for what's next."

"What makes us different makes us stronger."

Rogers and Gray Insurance Kingston, MA



MIKE ROBINSON

rothers Mike and Dave Robinson took over the reins of Rogers & Grav Insurance in 2015 from their father. Chuck Robinson. Since then the company has taken off, winning numerous best workplace awards and contributing thousands to nonprofits.

Growing up though, coming into the family business wasn't a discussion until after college.

"The family business really wasn't your typical family business," Dave said. "[Our father] didn't talk about work. He left work at

Instead, both Dave and Mike agreed, Chuck encouraged them to travel and find a career and then come into the business if it became an option that made sense for them.

"What it did for us was allow us to pave our own path rather than paving it for us. We learned about the outside world before coming into the family business," Dave said. "It was not a silver spoon situation. You had to earn it and work up through the ranks."

Mike and Dave worked for Rogers & Gray for 10 years before taking it over. Mike is now chairman of the board and Dave is president and CEO.

One of the turning points for working together, the brothers said, was when they went out to Chicago to formalize plans for the transition. Chuck, Dave and Mike had spent several years developing and implementing a successful succession plan for taking over the operations, the leadership roles, the economics of the transfer of the company, Chuck's retirement needs, and estate planning issues.

"We started to see eye-to-eye as a family business and not as brothers," Dave said of the transition. "It was the biggest struggle and the greatest accomplishment."

One of the most important things, Mike said, was that they never called Chuck "Dad" in the office.

"Even after his retirement, it was a transition to call him Dad. If he's referenced within the business, he's still Chuck," Mike said.

The spirit of the family business and building a family-centric culture for clients and employees had been something fostered by Chuck that the brothers encourage to this day.

"It adds an element of accountability and strengthens and modernizes the overall operation," Dave said.

One of the biggest challenges of working together, Dave said, is setting specific roles and responsibilities.

"In our industry, there are a lot of family businesses. You find one sibling often brings more value than the other," Mike said. "Dave and I feel that through our different strengths and weaknesses, we bring value to the business. It's brought competition, but it's brought success too."

Instead of worrying about expanding to the next generation, the brothers said they are focused on building the team around other people rather than just family.

"We have recruited and brought on a really strong senior management team," Mike said. "We're part of it, but we want to empower that team along with us to take the company to the next level."

"In the family business realm, so many settle or sustain," Dave said. "We are thriving and growing and are executing on our vision for the company and carrying it far past."



DAVE ROBINSON

BUSINESS EXCHANGE 2018 AWARD WINNERS

Tech Advisors Medfield, MA

wins Konrad and Kevin Martin didn't only just grow up together, they also went into business with

Both CPAs, the twins were working at the same firm when they began their own sector of tech consulting for CPAs. Before they knew it, they were purchasing the tech consulting sector from the CPA firm and branched off on their own.

Tech Advisors provides comprehensive IT support and tailored services to manage, protect and improve a business's network.

While Konrad is the business developer and more outgoing, Kevin is on the technical side with the computers, network and software.

"Yes we're brothers, but from birth we've been very different people," Konrad said. "Because of that, it works out well in the family business. He doesn't want to do what I do and I certainly don't want to do what he does."

To help with their work separation, Konrad and Kevin's offices are on complete opposite sides of the building.

"I'm over by sales and marketing and he's by the help desk and field technicians," Konrad said. "But we do set a 45 minute meeting every day to meet and talk about issues, brainstorm and make sure the two sides are talking."

Konrad said those short meetings have been a key to their success working together.

"We realized after we started to grow, if we didn't have those daily conversations, then we were losing some of the synergy that was keeping us on the edge of doing good business for our clients," he said.

Part of that growth has been the company's cloud capabilities which will now be expanding from all of New England into New York.

"Cloud is a very safe place to be," Konrad said. "The pricing has come down to where it's palatable for fivemember firms or 70-member firms."

As far as the future of Tech Advisors. Kevin's son Patrick is a full-time college student studying to be a programmer.

"He wrote one of our programs and he likes the business concept. He's getting his feet wet in what we do," Konrad said.

For now though, the brothers are just happy to be working together.

"It's one of the biggest and proudest things in my life," Konrad said. "We offer very different aspects to this company and it helps us be successful now and into the future."



KONRAD AND KEVIN MARTIN

For now though, the brothers are just happy to be working together. "It's one of the biggest and proudest things in my life."

- KONRAD MARTIN

The Federal Restaurant Group Agawam, MA



RALPH SANTANIELLO AND MICHAEL PRESNAL

alph Santaniello, Tina Presnal and Michael Presnal all had family business experience before the brother, sister and brother-in-law trio decided to open The Federal Restaurant.

"My mother and her brother had a restaurant together; a family pizza shop. It was a classic red sauce joint," Ralph said. "I didn't see a spot for me to do my own thing. I wanted to do something on my own and get more into fine dinina."

Ralph had known Mike since he was 11 years old so the decision to open a business with him was very easy.

Ralph was 25 and Mike was 30 when they opened up the historic Federal restaurant with Mike as executive chef, Tina running the front of the house, and Ralph on the business end doing a little bit of both and with a background as a bartender.

"We opened it really young and we were stupid enough to think we knew everything," Ralph said. "When we first opened, we had serious challenges."

Those challenges, he explained, ranged

from not being as busy as they thought they would be, financial challenges, the concept didn't go over well on opening and the building itself posed an obstacle since it was so historic.

Built by Samuel Converse in 1862, the building became home to the Federal Hill Club in 1936 and was a restaurant for 50 years before Ralph, Mike, and Tina took it over.

"The biggest challenge was we needed to grow up a little bit. We were tested early on," Ralph said. "We were going to have arguments, but we've always been able to have a drink at the end of a night together and let things go and compromise."

Although it took some trial and error, the team behind The Federal did find their footing and the family has come together.

"It's a true family business," he said. "My mother is here once a week and helps us. My father goes out everyday to get produce. I wouldn't trade it for anything else.'

One of the restaurant's crowning achievements, Ralph said, is the fact they have been in business for 16 years in one of the toughest industries.

"We have carved out a small career for us doing what we love and we still are a very close family," Ralph said.

During the holidays, Ralph said it is difficult for the family to separate work and play.

"People will say at Christmas Eve they're not going to talk about business, but there's no way," he said. "You're going to. We found a way to talk about it and also not to. It's not the only thing we talk about. It wasn't always easy. We had a lot of arguments at first during family dinners and managed to find a balance."

Looking toward the future, Ralph said he isn't in a rush worrying about the next generation.

"Our oldest is my niece who is a freshman in high school. We constantly tell them we don't want them involved. I'm still young at 42 and we have been here for 16 years and at Vinted in Connecticut for six years. Right now I'm just looking at the next 10 to 15 years, but we will see. One thing I've learned is you never know," Ralph said.

"The biggest challenge was we needed to grow up a little bit. We were tested early on."

BUSINESS EXCHANGE 2018 AWARD WINNERS



ADDITIONAL WINNERS

Tuscan Brands of Salem, NH

Immigrants from Sicily, Joe Faro Sr. and Rose Faro set out to bring quality Italian food to American. Joe Faro Sr. purchased abandoned buildings as he began his companies and turned them around. He began with Joseph's Bakery and expanded into Joseph's Pasta and MultiGrain. His son, Joe Faro Jr., took over Joseph's Pasta and Gourmet Sauces. The company supports nearly 400 jobs. The family also owns an artisan bakery, which is one of the largest commercial bakeries in the country and employs primarily immigrants. They then expanded into New Hampshire where they own multiple full-service restaurants with attached Italian marketplaces. The family is now looking to the future as the next generation is in college and will soon enter the family business.

Kloter Farms of Ellington, CT

The Kloter family have weathered it all. The business began in 1980 as a small family farm selling hay and shavings for horses. The business soon evolved into the cart and harness business. By the early 1980s, the business began selling sheds, gazebos and swing sets. In 2011, the family was tested after a fire destroyed their location in Ellington, Connecticut. Peter Welti and Dave Schneider came together to rebuild and come back better than ever.

Travel Kuz of Gil, MA

In 1921, Jacob Kuzmeskus began transporting children to school via horse-drawn wagons and sleighs. A few years later, Jacob purchased a truck and the business began to grow. Generations and generations later, what became known as J.M. Kuzmeskus Inc. or Travel Kuz now services school bus contracts all over Massachusetts and operates a fleet of motorcoaches.

Forastiere Family Funeral & Cremation Of East Longmeadow, MA

Forastiere Family Funeral & Cremation dates back to the early 1900s. Since then multiple generations have joined the family to grow the funeral home to four locations throughout Western Massachusetts. Throughout the years Forastiere has led the way in innovative services including being the first to be styled in uplifting tones, the first bereavement counseling program in New England and the first and only formal chapel. Each generation has worked to place their stamp on the business and the Forastiere family keeps their family values close as they help other families say goodbye to their loved ones. Ψ

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