

Communication in the Family Business

“The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place.” -George Bernard Shaw

Phone calls. Emails. Text messages. Conference calls. Meetings. Video conferences. We are in constant communication, and yet so often we fail to effectively communicate. The problem can be acute in family businesses.

During one business family meeting, one family member announced that there would be no discussion of the difficult relational issues that were driving the family apart. The holidays were coming up, and he did not want a difficult conversation to affect holiday dinners. Wounds continued to deepen. Walls continued to build. Problems continued to grow. Months later, the family began the process to liquidate the company (at less than top value) so that each family member could go his or her own separate way.

In family businesses, the ability to communicate openly about issues critical to both the business and the family is essential for the health of both the family and the business. Some families do it well; too many families do not.

SKM Associates understands that communication within families is complex. There is no one-sized fits all solution. Appropriate structures and formalities – such as formal family meetings or a family council – can provide platforms to facilitate transparency and dialogue. Structures and formalities also provide defined roles and responsibilities to encourage accountability and understanding. Coaching and training on effective communication can provide the tools to help people communicate more effectively on their own. Personal interviews can unmask deeper issues that need to be addressed through improved communication.

SKM Associates is here to help. We want to get to know your family and your business. We want to help you foster effective communication so that you can thrive as a business and continue to enjoy holiday dinners together. We are just a phone call away. Or an email. Or a text message.

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