

"Creating Trust in the Family Business"

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Family Businesses are everywhere in our world. Over 90 percent of the businesses in the United States are family owned. Family Businesses generate half of the gross national product, and employ half the work force in this country. These businesses have one important issue in common: the potential for conflict between family interests and business interests.

How should families in business together resolve these conflicts and build trust in the family business system? The best way to build trust is to build healthy communication between family members.

Family members have been communicating in similar patterns with each other for years, often since childhood. Have you ever noticed how grown adults can act like children when they get around siblings or parents? The same is true of parents, who may suddenly behave differently with their grown children than they do with other adults.

Trust is built in families when healthy, direct communication takes place between family members. The first step toward healthy communication is for families to get together and learn how to listen to each other. Reflective or active listening skills can be taught to family groups and practiced.

Another skill that can be taught and practiced is direct communication. When we are able to tell our family members exactly how we feel and what we need, it is more likely that we will have our needs met. Direct communication is scary, but it is worth the risk.

Trust is the outcome of listening, direct communication and understanding between family members.

For more information on how to build trust between family members who are involved in a family business, please read the article "Creating a Family Council" found on this website.

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