

C.H.A.L.L.E.N.G.E.S.[®]

Working with Families in Business to Achieve their Personnel and Business Objectives

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“And so, my fellow Americans; ask not what your country can do for you – ask what you can do for your country. My fellow citizens of the world: ask not what America will do for you, but what together we can do for the freedom of man.” John F. Kennedy (1917 – 1963)

Rule #9 – Let your family members really know who you are and take the time to know who they really are as well.

How well do we really know our family members as adults with dreams, goals and fears? Have we ever really taken the time to get to know family members in deeper ways than just as a family unit? Surprisingly, the answer for most of us is “no.” Most of us continue to live with the perceptions and judgments we formed about one another when we were “kids” and lived with our parents. It is those mental pictures of our brothers, sisters, parents and other family members that we bring with us into adulthood.

Why would our “mental pictures” of our family members change? Because we have changed! How many times have you been in a family situation where you actually find yourself being treated as if you were still twelve years old? You are a different person today. You are a grown-up and you would like to be treated as one. The same is true of your other family members.

In our lives we go through a variety of growth stages. In a way, we become different people as we have new experiences, gain knowledge and mature. Growing up, graduating from high school or college, having a variety of jobs or positions, getting married and having kids are all factors that make us quite different than who we may have been as children.

What do we have to do to improve our knowledge of one another? Like everything else in life it begins with commitment. Commitment to admit that we don’t know each other as well as we think we do and take the time needed to really get to know our family members on more of a personal level.

Beginning to move to a new relationship level with family members is not easy. It must begin with each of us lowering our wall of “self-defense” and allow ourselves to be vulnerable to others. We have to make

the first move. We have to be willing to share our dreams, goals and fears. We also have to be patient enough to allow others to tell us about themselves. Do we have the patience for that type of communication? Our love of family should allow us to have it. The sharing and learning about one another can begin by discussing stories of the past and bringing family members up to date from a definite period of time in the past. Tell a story. Include your feelings, fears and joys. They will all help other family members understand you better.

By sharing this personal “growth information” individual family members can become closer to one another. This sharing of information will be a key element in building trust. Trust in a family and in a family business is essential to family business growth. Can you trust a person you don’t really know? Can you really believe their motives are in the best interest of everyone in the family?

We have worked with families who have made individual sharing a part of their group meetings. Each family member actually gives a presentation of their life and opens up to how they have grown as a person. Experiences, good and bad are shared. Some families prefer to do this as a rotating meeting one on one instead of in a group presentation. The most important thing is to start. It is amazing when we consider the amount of time we spend on our businesses or on our favorite hobby and how little time we spend on our family relationships.

Is it time for you and your family to spend a little more time on one another? If you are looking for a way to start and need a process to keep in working, give us a call. We are here to help.

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