

Hi, this is Wayne Rivers at The Family Business Institute. Thanks for tuning in. As always, click on our social media icons and click on the button below and please give us your comments, we'd like to know what you're thinking out there.

So, this week our blog is about "Deciding Not To Decide," which is sort of an epidemic among family businesses. So, I'm sitting in a meeting with a group of successful entrepreneurs, and I'm transitioning the group over to another very well qualified consultant, and one of the guys in the group knows the other consultant pretty well and he says, "Now, his consulting style is going to be really different from Wayne's, he's going to be a little more collegial and he's going to get more people into the meeting flow." And he said, "Wayne's consulting style is more like a ball-peen hammer between the eyes." Okay, I can't argue with that very much.

This is a ball-peen hammer blog, okay? Because this deciding not to decide, is an epidemic in family businesses. It really is. And it just holds so many people back. So, we see and hear this all the time from our clients and the frustration that they have is really amazing. And the fact that they won't do anything about it on so many occasions is also amazing.

So, they could be at any family business any time. It could be a crucial inflection point, at a, you know, big strategic decision, succession time, a new initiative which might mean opening a new office in a different state or something like that. And, they have this decision-making, they call it conscientious decision-making, which is really unanimous decision-making among family members and even key employees.

So, inevitably, whether you've got a group of 5 or 10 decision makers, there's going to be pushback from one or more. It usually just takes one other person and they pushback on this or that or some other aspect of the new initiative or the strategic decision. And they want more information, they descent into analysis paralysis or they say, "It's too expensive," or, "We don't have the right people," or, "We're too busy right now," or, "The timing's bad because taxes are due next month," or, "There's a big family wedding coming up at the end of the summer," or what have you. There's always an excuse for why we can't decide right now to decide on this initiative. Let's put it off, let's put it off.

I heard a guy say once, "Let's not be in a hurry to make a bad decision." And, you know, on analysis after he said about 10 times, I realized what he was saying was, "Let's not make a decision." And if you're not willing to make decisions in your family business, hang it up. Ball-peen hammer blog here, hang it up. I mean really, if you're not willing to make courageous decisions in the family businesses, just go ahead and descent into mediocrity, that's exactly what's going to happen.

It's all of this veto power, is almost always one person and the group could be 5, 10, it could be 30. One person can have veto power. And think about how limiting that is in your business. It paralyzes any change process that you may have on the horizon.

So, don't ever decide not to decide. When you see this happening in your family business, recognize it for what it is, and then I want you to do something radical, I want you to vote. Now, you think about that. In your family business, how many times have you really voted? Never for most of you? Never? If you're on the church board, if you're on the board of the bank, if you're on the board of the hospital, and so many of you are, so many of you volunteer your time and your effort on behalf of, you know, community organizations. Think about it, you always vote. If you're on the board of the country club, you always vote, you just do.

And, what's wrong with that in family businesses? I just don't understand why they won't use the power that's there in the bylaws somewhere to vote so that they don't get hamstrung and decide not to decide. You know, if it's a huge big decision, maybe it's a super majority vote, that's okay. But vote, by Gosh, find a way to break that logjam of indecisiveness and analysis paralysis, make a decision. Your family and your business will be better off for it. I can guarantee it.

This is Wayne Rivers at The Family Business Institute. Thank you.