

Hello. This is Wayne Rivers at the Family Business Institute. Thanks for tuning in. As always, we want to hear your comments. Please click the link below and let us know what you're thinking and if there are other ideas that you have for how to make the blog better, more interesting, new topics, etc., please let us know that too.

This week I want to talk about whether or not you really, really want the two things that all family business owners say they want. First, a bit of a book review. The Subtle Art of Not Giving A, you know what, by Mark Manson. It's a great book. I read it on the airplane a few weeks ago and I really liked it. Mark has a blog that he does and really some very interesting and counterintuitive ways of thinking that he brings to. He's a younger guy. I would say the book is good for family business owners, but it's probably better for your kids. I actually bought two additional copies for my children, hoping they'd read it. It sounds very sarcastic and edgy and millennial, but the guy makes really terrific points if you can get by the language. Just ignore it.

Anyway, he talks in the book about a recurring fantasy he had when he was a really young guy from his teens through his twenties. He wanted to be a rock musician, a guitar player in particular. He was in love with the idea. He'd hear a song on the radio. He was like, "I could play that song better." And he's in love with the idea of being on stage and having 20,000 people cheering for him and watching his every move and all that kind of stuff. He started to think, "What do I need to do to get up on that stage? Well, I need to practice. I need to buy equipment. I need to do this. A, B, C, D, E."

And nothing ever happened. He never really did anything about it. He played the guitar, but he didn't practice, he wasn't diligent. He didn't go out and get all the equipment. He didn't get into a band with other guys. His self-realization was that, "He was in love with the result, but he wasn't in love with the process." He wasn't willing to do the heavy lifting that it took to be some famous rock star.

When we talk to family businesses around the world, there are two things that are universal among them. They say they want a prosperous business and a harmonious family. Some say it in reverse order, doesn't matter. Harmony in the family, prosperity in the business. In most cases, in almost all cases, they're willing to work really, really, really hard in the business. Inhuman hours, inhuman effort, just a focus and diligence that just goes above and beyond. The family, they say they want harmony in the family. They want closeness, they want effective communication. Are they willing to work for that? Not so much. We find, not so much. The family stuff is more emotionally charged. It creates vulnerabilities, fear of vulnerabilities in people. I understand that, but they just don't seem like they're willing to work as hard on the family harmony. Maybe they think that's just because that's a given, because they're a blood family and they love each other. But who knows.

We have been dealing with a fractious family that is really super dysfunctional. They are focused on who said what five years ago, who did what to whom, always looking to assess blame and point fingers. Nobody's looking about the future, looking out for the future of the business. It's all, "This happened back then and somebody needs to make it right." Who gives a crap? I don't want to go here but who gives a crap what happened five years? There's not a blessed thing on Earth that they can do about that. Somebody has got to begin to look forward.

My conclusion about this particular family and dozens and dozens of others that we've worked with over the years is, they're in love with the result, the prosperous business and a harmonious family, but they're really not in love with the process. If you're not willing to work for, if you're not willing to work on your business and on your family, do you really want it? I encourage you to be really brutally honest with yourself and your other family members and make a decision, by gosh. Do you really want to work for the harmony in your family? If you do, there are avenues out there for you. If you don't, by God, just be honest and say so and work on the business and at least you'll have that piece of the equation and you'll be better off as a result.

This is Wayne Rivers at the Family Business Institute. We welcome your comments. Thank you.