

Hi, this is Wayne Rivers at The Family Business Institute. A couple of quick housekeeping things and then I'll get into the substance of our blog this week. The first thing is we are looking for business development and sales talent. We are prepared to grow. We have amazing opportunities in 2017, and we're looking for some people that can help us supercharge our growth and lead our business development effort. If you know anybody, if you have any friends, relatives, please by all means have them send a resume to me, Wayne Rivers, writers@familybusinessinstitute.com. Thanks for that.

The second thing is, if you are a commercial contractor, especially a highway heavy contractor or a builder, be on the lookout starting Monday next week. There's some announcements that are coming out that are specific to the commercial construction industry so please keep your eyes peeled for that.

Okay, so this week what I want to talk about is preconceived notions. What got me thinking about this was I'm reading a book about Genghis Khan. What do you think about when you think about Genghis Khan and his place in history and all that? Well he was a rapacious, murderous thug who basically just raped and pillaged his way across Asia and Europe in the twelfth century. Well, based on what's in this book, that's completely wrong.

Genghis Khan ruled for a period of years, and he was such a dynamic leader and, frankly, created a family business ruling dynasty. His business kept growing. His empire kept growing for 150 years after his death. That says something about his vision and his capabilities. Even until 1920, now this guy lived in the twelfth century, even until 1920 one of his descendants still sat on the throne in one of the regions in Russia that was actually taken over by the communists right after the 1917 revolution. The Mongols controlled 11 to 12 million contiguous square miles of territory. That's bigger than the entire continent of North America.

They were traders. They facilitated trade. They were prodigious bridge builders. Built more bridges than anybody in history, primarily for the reason of facilitating trade. They believed in religious freedom. They built churches for Christians. They built mosques for Muslims. They built temples for Hindu. They didn't care. They understood religion was a force for good in the world, and they wanted to facilitate that. They believed in universal education, and they created a system for free schooling for young children. They believed in international law. They normalized international law across much of their region. They believed in a common currency, and created a common currency for their region. They standardized all these calendars that existed in the ancient world so that they could, again, facilitate trade. Really, they changed the world in lots of ways.

So, you've got this preconceived notion of a bunch of barbarian savages that just rape and pillage. Then you've got the reality. Sure, they were war fighters, no doubt about it, but once they conquered a territory they began to civilize it very quickly. They were a civilizing force to improve the lot of life for lots of people back in the day. He was basically a business-building genius.

What has that got to do with your family business? All right? Preconceived notions, we think we know stuff about Genghis Khan and the Mongols. Turns out what we think we know isn't exactly accurate. I have to say this tends to be true in lots and lots of family business situations. I can't tell you how many times I've talked to people

on the phone or sat across the desk and they say, "The way it is in my family business is A, B, and C." Then they invite us to dig a little deeper and we find out that yeah, there's a little bit of A, a little bit of C, but there's also a lot of X, Y, and Z going on.

The way I used to say it to people is, "What you think you've got is not at all what you've got. Furthermore, from what you're telling me, and the rest of the people in your family are telling me, it's not what you want." We have these preconceived notions of how we area as leaders, how our family business is, how our families think about us, how our employees think about us. I'm just here to tell you many, many times those preconceived notions are dead wrong.

So, what do you do about it? Well, one of our clients inquired recently about doing some 360 evaluations, which are a terrific thing for taking off your blinders and helping you see the truth through other peoples' eyes. But, I think really to get beyond these preconceived notions, which tend to be incorrect, there are three things you need to stop doing.

The first thing is you need to stop doing. You need to stop doing tasks yourself and start teaching and mentoring other people to be able to do those tasks. Chances are that even though you're very good at something, because as the leader your time is very fragmented, you can't spend 40 hours a week on any one thing. You're an hour here, two hours there at best. Your attention is continuously diverted. If you have basically competent people that can focus for 40 hours on one thing, no matter how good you are, with that kind of focus that person is going to produce more than you could produce. Okay? So, stop doing and start teaching.

Stop telling. Stop telling people how to do things. Start telling them what you want done. Start asking questions. Could we do this or could we do that, and charge those people. Hold them accountable for producing the result that you want. Do you really care how they do something? Step A, step B, step C? There's a lot of ways to skin a cat, so stop telling people how to do things. Tell them what you want done, and get the heck out of their way, and let them do it.

Then finally, stop talking all the time and start listening. When our psychologist Dr. Mike Lyons came aboard 12 years ago, 13 years ago now, after six months I said, "Dr. Mike, what do you observe about Family Business leaders that's different from leaders that are in the corporate world or people that you observed in your psychology practice?" He said, "Gosh, they just talk all the time." Well, if you're talking, you're not listening. Okay?

I know you've been successful. I know you've built a nice business. I know you've risen to a position of authority and leadership in your community. That's fine, but at some point, you've got to stop talking all the time and start listening. If you're going to do what Genghis Khan did, and you're going to continue to grow your empire for 150 years after your death, you're going to have to start listening to other people and allowing them to have input and opinion on how things should be in the family business.

Things that we can learn from Genghis Khan and things that you should know about having preconceived notions. Wayne Rivers at The Family Business Institute. Thanks very much.