

Hi, this is Wayne Rivers at The Family Business Institute.

We get questions. People email with questions and I'm not a very good typist so I usually send them a short answer. They're not asking for us to come and they don't want to spend money with us. Most of these are fairly small businesses. They just want a quick solution to a quick question. For the next couple of weeks, let me give you an idea of some of these questions that we get and also some of the answers.

Here's one. I won't mention any names, or locations, or anything like that, but here's a question. Our daughter is about to become our store's general manager. Remember those words "about to become." That's the good news. The bad news is she's going through a divorce that will soon disrupt her life in many ways. One concern that affects the store is childcare. This happens to be a retailer. She is hinting, remember that word, too, she is hinting to my wife and I that she's not going to always be able to put in the hours because of her children. Part of me understands this. They're my grandchildren for gosh sake. But I also need to think about the store as well as the perception that we're not offering the same flexibility to other workers, some who've been around a lot longer than my daughter. How do we handle this?

Well, I wrote back within a very few minutes. In case you haven't watched our blogs or read our articles before, we at The Family Business Institute believe in tough love. We don't pull a lot of punches. The first thing I say is, "What do you mean she's about to become the general manager? You're standing on the surface of the moon observing this from 240,000 miles away. Are you kidding me? About to become. Don't you have some say-so over this? Could you not adjust the timing? You're not a passive participant. You're an active participant in this."

Look, people going through divorce are not themselves. Our psychologist Dr. Mike Lyons says that you shouldn't make any big life decisions within two years after completing a divorce. I know that's not always practical for people in business. But, for gosh sake, get her some distance. She is not going to be herself going through this divorce. She's got three things going on. She's got her own personal emotional survival to worry about. The second thing is she's got children or at least one child to worry about. And, the third thing, and it's a distant third, is the family store. Keep in mind she is not going to be herself. The second thing is I said, "She's not hinting about childcare. She's telling you loud and clear she's going to have a hell of a hard time managing, juggling priorities while she's going through this divorce."

My suggestion was either you, mom and dad, mom or dad for that matter, stay as the manager for the next year or two or three if you can manage it. If you can't manage that, go out and find a competent bridge manager that could fill in for a couple of years until your daughter is really ready emotionally, financially, etc. to be able to step into the general manager role.

In this case, I think the mistake they're making is they're trying to solve family needs with business resources. In other words, I'm going to have childcare at the business or the business is going to pay for my daughter's childcare or the business is going to adopt new flexibility rules so my daughter can have what she needs while all the other employees operate under a different set of rules. That's a deal killer by the way. If you have one

set of rules for your family members and one set of rules for nonfamily members in your business, you have probably done as much as any human being could do to destroy morale in your organization. Family members need to have the same boundaries that nonfamily members have. Again, tough love but from our heart. Don't make the mistake we've seen so many people make. Keep the boundaries between your family needs and your business needs distinct. A famous philosopher you may know said, "A man can't serve two masters." That is good advice.

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