

Hello, this is Wayne Rivers at The Family Business Institute. Thanks for tuning in. Please give us the benefit of your comments. We'd love to know what you're thinking, and click on our social media too if you will, and we appreciate that. Thank you!

This week I want to talk about a rock and roll band, and not just any rock and roll band, I want to talk about the Eagles. If you're my age, plus or minus a few years, you know the Eagles. Man, they were the biggest band of the 70s and early 80s.

My wife and I actually watched a Netflix documentary. It's called, The History of the Eagles. It's in two, two hour segments. It is four hours. It's a commitment to watch the whole thing. We've actually watched it twice. It really is fascinating, but I couldn't watch it, actually last night, without thinking about how eerily similar the trajectory of the Eagles' pathway was to the typical family business.

They started off, a bunch of guys who didn't know each other, and they were just struggling, each of them individually was just trying to carve out a little identity or a niche for himself in the music business. They were sick of being poor. They wanted to have enough money just to not be broke all the time. They really didn't have this ambition to be the next Rolling Stones or something. They just were trying to survive.

That's true of most of our family businesses if you think about to the founding days, it's a matter of survival before they achieve liftoff, and it might be five years before liftoff or it might be 15 or 20 years. We say around here, "It only took us 29 years to be an overnight success." Several of our family business clients have experienced that same thing. They had fits and starts and ups and downs.

The early years of the band and the individuals were just fraught with uncertainty, and then Linda Ronstadt helped them get together and they got their first taste of success, and they also simultaneously got their first taste of unrest. Isn't that ironic? When they're in survival mode, everybody's got their blinders on, and they're really paddling in the same direction, so to speak, and then the first taste of success, and they can "Whew," finally breathe a sigh of relief. They're not going to starve, at least for the next couple a years. That's when unrest began to assert itself.

I think that happens in our family companies too, that struggle for survival is very focusing. I know from my own personal experience when we started FBI, that when it's all about survival, everybody's very, very focused. Then when you do hit a little bit of a success plateau, sometimes it's a little harder to keep the wheels all going in the same direction.

So, the tension built. There were struggles for leadership and direction. There was some struggle about who was going to be the alpha leader, and who not so much. Who was really more of a role player, and who was really more of a superstar, that kind of thing. Just like a lot of our family businesses, they had a bad experience with advisors early on. They got screwed over in their first recording contract due to some poor advice, and they

didn't know where to turn to. They didn't want to spend money on lawyers and accountants and all that stuff. So, they didn't, and guess what? It came back to bite them in the end. There's a lesson in that for you.

What people see today ... This is 40 years ago when they started ... What people see today is one of history's most successful rock and roll bands, but it was almost always a touch and go situation. It was always fluid. Yeah, they reached ascending plateaus of success, but they were always just a few steps away from disaster and heartbreak, so very much like our family businesses.

One of the great lines of all time in music comes from Hotel California, "We're all just prisoners here of our own device," and that's true in our family business. We elect to be in them. We elect to work in them. We elect to work with our family members and the key executives. We make that choice, and if we're going to make that choice then, by gosh, we're going to have to work hard as a team and ultimately ... Believe it or not, it was the crazy nut Joe Walsh, that kind of brought that team together. He just wanted to know, Is it good for the band? Is this good for the band? Okay, this guy is going to make more money than me, but is it good for the band?

Some people couldn't get solid with that. That's a lesson also. If you can't be in line, if you can't be in personal alignment with the vision and direction of your family business, you're not doing anybody, least of all yourself, any favors by staying there. "We're all just prisoners here of our own device."

So, the lesson for me in all of this, watching this four hour documentary is whether it's a rock band or a construction company or a manufacturing company or whatever it happens to be, it all comes down to people. The Eagles' leadership made tough, tough, heart wrenching people decisions at certain inflection points that allowed them not only to survive, but to go to the next level, and that's my advice for you.

It's all about people. Focus on your people. If you've got people there that are not aligned with the vision and mission and direction of the company, and they're causing problems and dissension and all that, think about going out and recruiting the next superstar so that you can get to the next level in your family company.

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