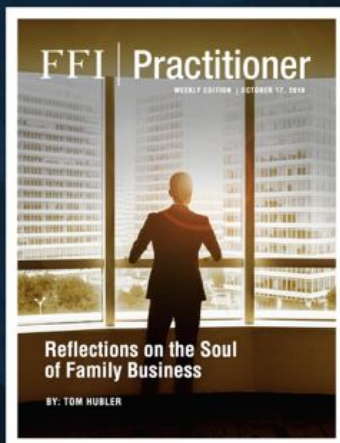


Reflections on the Soul of Family Business

WEEKLY EDITION • OCTOBER 17, 2018



From FFI Practitioner

Thank you to this week's contributor, Tom Hubler, for reflecting on his more than thirty-five years as a family business consultant and sharing some valuable insights he's gained during that time. We hope you enjoy reading about Tom's experience and learning about what he refers to as the "soul" of family businesses.

When people ask me how I got into family business consulting there are two answers I give. The official one is that I was a professional therapist who grew interested in the challenges families faced in running a business together while maintaining their essential family relationships – of father to daughter, mother to son, grandfather to grandson, and so on.

SIDEBAR



The Soul of Family Business: A practical guide to family business success and a loving family

by Tom Hubler

Using case studies from his more than thirty-five-years as a family business consultant, Tom Hubler takes readers on a journey through the heart and soul of family business.

[READ MORE](#)

The unofficial answer is that I started as an unpaid volunteer therapist in my own family at age seven. Because my family was troubled, I became a mediator almost as soon as I could talk. Even since then, I've been on a quest to create happy families, starting with my own. I've simply professionalized it and made a career of it.

But as I've gotten more deeply involved in my work with families and their businesses, it has been like peeling back an onion to reach the essential root of both the family and its business – something I call the “soul” of family business.

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, “soul” is defined as the essence or embodiment of something, whether it is a person or quality, such as “the soul of discretion,” (which, by the way, is a useful quality to have in a family business!).

For many years I have been talking about “soul” in individual sessions with my client families, in speeches, and in the many articles I've written for business publications. Increasingly, I've incorporated the concept into my family business consulting work with more than 500 families over the past three decades. I've explained it and helped others to understand it, sometimes across seemingly large generational divides. Joyfully, I have experienced firsthand the rewards that come from its expression within a family-owned business.

The soul of a business has to do with a family's values, love, and their heritage. It has to do with everything that has happened in the family, both the good and bad things alike, that creates the essence of who they are. I like to call this their “secret sauce” that makes them unique and fuels their success. That secret sauce is what families need to bottle because it's what differentiates them from all other businesses, family-owned and not.

This lifelong exploration has led me to look at the topic of soul through a different lens. For example:

- How does love factor in?
- What is the impact of the lifecycle inherent in a family business, from learning the business, doing the business, and teaching the business to letting go of the business?
- How, and how much, do the highly developed skills at doing the business impact the entrepreneur's self-image?
- When conflicts erupt as the younger generation begins to do the business while the entrepreneur is letting go, how can various mindfulness and forgiveness practices facilitate each phase?

“BECAUSE MY FAMILY WAS TROUBLED, I BECAME A MEDIATOR ALMOST AS SOON AS I COULD TALK. EVEN SINCE THEN, I’VE BEEN ON A QUEST TO CREATE HAPPY FAMILIES, STARTING WITH MY OWN. I’VE SIMPLY PROFESSIONALIZED IT AND MADE A CAREER OF IT.”

As I reflect on the soul of family business, I have thoughts to help professionals who work with family-owned firms be more effective with their family business clients. My emphasis is on shedding light on issues and eliminating the shadows that derail family-owned enterprises.

As I round the corner into the endgame of my life, I am happy to share what I’ve learned with others. It’s my hope that it will help members of family businesses appreciate their uniqueness. And, it’s my hope that it will help prevent an unspoken issue – a mere speck of dust – from derailing an entire family and their business.

Because when all is said and done, it has been my honor and privilege to work with some of the most amazing people – families – who have created enterprises that not only support their families, but others’ families as well, and make the world a better place.

About the contributor



Tom Hubler, FFI founding member and Fellow, is the owner of Hubler for Family Business, Inc. He helps families develop a shared vision for the family and for the business; identify individual talents; tackle unspoken issues; and create individual and organizational strategies to ensure a personally and financially rewarding business. Tom can be reached at tomh@thehublergroup.com.

About Hubler for Family Business, Inc

Hubler for Business Families, Inc. helps family businesses manage the boundary between their business/financial concerns and family relationships.

Related Articles

If you enjoyed this article, view the related articles that discuss the importance of creating rites of passage for next gen family business members and the inception and impact of the three-circle model on the field.



“Celebrating the 40th Anniversary of the Three-Circle Model: An interview with John Davis” by Pramodita Sharma



“In the Land of Giants: Redefining Rites of Passage” by Jamie Weiner