



Enterprising Rural Families™

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This newsletter is an instrument of the *Enterprising Rural Families: Making It Work* program of the University of Wyoming Cooperative Extension Service. For further information concerning the *Enterprising Rural Families* program or on-line course contact information@eRuralFamilies.org or go to <http://eRuralFamilies.org/>.

TIP OF THE MONTH:

WRITING ADS

- Keep sentences short and to the point
- Describe products accurately and completely
- Use creative touches carefully
- List primary phone & fax numbers, web address, store location, hours of operation, other contact information
- Be honest—don't over inflate
- Stick to the facts
- Use testimonials and photos, but get permission first
- Tell the customer what the benefits are to him/her—save work? cost efficient? enhance lifestyle?
- Catchy, but not silly, headlines
- Crispily-written copy
- Great photos
- Eye-catching art work
- Creative slogans
- All essential information
- What the buyer really wants is for you to tell him or her why they should purchase your product
- Put yourself in the buyer's place

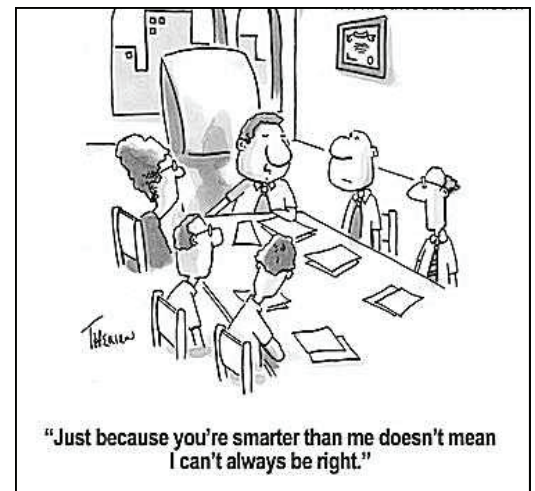
Slugging it out is no Way to Solve a Business Disagreement

Running a business is difficult in the best of times, and especially if it's a family business. Family and business roles are easily confused. Words are misinterpreted. Tempers can flare.

Breeding Grounds for Family Feuds

Families sometimes find themselves embroiled in bitter disputes—or harboring deep unspoken resentments. The causes are as varied as the business itself. Maybe someone's habit of leaving the fuel tank empty drives you bats. Perhaps you begrudge another family member's shorter work day. Or you're mad because your parents do the books and refuse to let you see them.

Regardless of the cause, unless disagreements are resolved promptly, they erode family relations and maybe even the financial health of your business. But suppose you've tried everything you can think of and are still deadlocked—what's the next move? “Stop. Stand to one side,” advises Lorne Owen, former Canadian ag. ministry farm management specialist and co-author of *Enterprising Rural Families: Making it Work*. “Analyze what's going on. Make sure you're not engaged in a power struggle or fighting with the past.”



Families often get mired in old issues, explains Owen. Disagreements may have their roots in past events, resentment, one-upmanship, guilt, control, jealousy and unmet needs. Maybe a sibling isn't so much upset by your work habits as by the fact that as kids you had a horse and she didn't. Sometimes, too, the stated issue is a front for some other frustration. A wife complains that her husband is always late for meals; he counters that she's nagging. In reality, she may simply want him to say he notices and appreciates her efforts, and vice versa.

If “old garbage” or “emotional baggage” is getting in the way of harmonious relationships, Owen suggests find out how the people you work and live with REALLY feel; what's bugging them; why they're hurt. Owen lists four primary causes of conflict: people feel unappreciated or misunderstood, unjustly treated, powerless, or frustrated because family and business roles seem all mixed up. Look at family roles and expectations. Family members often get locked into roles—“the strong, silent dad;” “the sounding board mom;” “the rebellious child.” They're immobilized by family values and expectations.



Be Willing to Negotiate

Don't make the mistake of taking a position and putting all your energy into advancing or defending it. Positional arguing is inefficient. Seldom does it produce the wisest possible solution. At best, you get a compromise. "Be willing to let go," says Owen. "Don't get married to a position. But also avoid limiting yourself to meet-you-in-the-middle compromises. Instead of bickering over how to split the pie, look for ways to enlarge the pie, or bake a whole new one."

Negotiating has Four Phases

- **Talk.** Tell each other what you want and why. Focus on goals and wishes, not positions. Chances are you'll discover you have more in common than in conflict. Be blunt but thorough in stating your wishes.
- **Brainstorm—together.** Dream up all the solutions you can think of. Be creative and suspend judgment; don't debate an idea's feasibility. Look for areas of mutual interest and gain.
- **Be objective.** If you can't reach an immediate resolution, decide what criteria to use in resolving your dispute. Criteria might include precedents; experts' opinions; scientific studies; industry standards; the going price or the best price; or what's equitable, traditional, or fits community standards.
- **Reach a decision**—and put the disagreement behind you. Have each person summarize his or her understanding of the deal just struck and who is responsible for what. This reduces the risk of further dissension.

A good agreement is one that resolves the matter wisely, efficiently, and amicably. Never forget that in a family setting, your relationship with the person you're arguing with is far, far more important than the cause of your disagreement or the outcome of your negotiations.

Edited by Randy R. Weigel, Professor and University of Wyoming Extension Specialist.

Reference: *Country Guide*, June/July 1995



- Resolve disagreements promptly
- Don't put all your energies into arguing your position
- Be willing to negotiate. Keeping in mind ...
- Talk. Brainstorm together. Be objective. Reach a decision.



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