

FAMILY SUCCESSION AND RELATED ISSUES

Reflections and questions to stimulate your thinking...

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The mechanics of the succession process will need to be provided by professional accountants, solicitors etc and in one sense the provision of this input may be straight forward. Often the more difficult issue is the family dynamic and the reticence to engage in meaningful dialogue at an early stage. Family tensions, inter-family relationships and difficulties in communication within family can lead to inertia on this most vital of issues. Consequently, this issue, so crucial to the future of the family and business, can be shelved which may lead to further tension and family division.

Where possible it can be helpful to encourage or in some cases facilitate this dialogue and listed below are a series of questions that may prove helpful in this context. The timing and selection of questions and to who they are directed will be a matter of judgment in each situation.

- Are you still clear on the reasons you are in business - what are your main motivators? e.g. make a living, feed the nation, create wealth, protect the environment, a sense of achievement, peer recognition, to pass something on to next generation etc?
- To what extent are various members of the family motivated by different objectives? - to what extent do their priorities differ?
- Is your family dynamic such that these issues including succession can be talked about in an open and honest way?
- At what stage in the cycle of a family business should there be an open dialogue on succession? has this or will this happen in your case?
- As a family does the business draw you closer together or increase inter-personal tensions?
- Are you comfortable with your place in the family business now? Are you aware of any feelings of resentment? (you or other family members)
- Are you confident that each member of your family can and will express openly and honestly their aspirations re the future of the business?
- Where there are immediate family members not involved directly in the business are, they able to express their views about the longer term and the implications of wills etc?
- Has your family considered engaging a facilitator to ensure open discussion on these matters?
- How do you assess the business in terms of 'fitness for purpose' in this post Brexit world? Are there likely to be implications for the business and the family as you adjust to the new structure for agricultural policy?
- If you were not involved in the family business what would you be doing?
- Have any of these questions caused you a measure of unease?
- What should be your next steps regarding this process?