

Challenges with Succession

Dick Wittman, CEO-Dad
Cori Wittman, HR/CFO-in-training-Daughter

The BRAT List

- ▶ DAD: "Try searching the court repository [for this new potential hire]"
- ▶ CORI: "Already did - cleaner than your record (already checked that too!)"
- ▶ DAD: "...how do you spell the word, BRAT?"
- ▶ CORI: "C.O.R.I."

- ▶ **MORAL:** Lots of give and take in transition process
 - ▶ Need to give license to successors to call you out
 - ▶ Also need to set boundaries on expectations concerning professionalism

BEFORE the Transition

Create Climate for Potential Successors

- ▶ Communicate clearly established policies for employment
 - ▶ Family Employment Policy
- ▶ Engage in discussion of alternative career development paths
 - ▶ College/technical school -> agronomy, vet science, finance/marketing, diesel tech
 - ▶ Apprenticeship/career off-farm -> Farm Credit, trade associations, ranch-hand, Peace Corps
- ▶ Determine compatibility - personality inventories
 - ▶ Strengths Finder 2.0 (before college, after college)
 - ▶ DISC

Challenges

- ▶ Respect need for successors to develop their own processes, but set rules on how and when.
 - ▶ Our rule: follow SOPs already in place first
 - ▶ If have suggestions to improve, build on what already works
- ▶ Manage the feeling of inadequacy... "I just don't know anything"
 - ▶ Review job duties regularly
 - ▶ Mark progress on transitioning responsibilities (see CEO job role)
 - ▶ Discuss obstacles and learning paths needed to get to finish line
- ▶ Budget quality time for mentoring discussions
 - ▶ Mentoring complex tasks when only have few minutes or pre-occupied with other priorities NOT effective
 - ▶ Set up blocks of time: clear agenda and commit unfettered mental focus

Challenges (cont'd)

- ▶ Maintain a professional tone when dealing with conflict
 - ▶ Tempting to switch from manager - employee to father - daughter dynamic
 - ▶ Avoid "parenting" and focus on "managing"
 - ▶ Works both ways...Cori has had to call me out at times ... and I've had to call her out when we weren't living up to this expectation
- ▶ Don't rush the decision on who the next leader will be
 - ▶ Tempting to push this early
 - ▶ Give potential successors some time to show strengths and prove their credibility
 - ▶ If successors earns respect of others first, easier than "anoint and defend"

Audience Experiences?

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