



Successful Dysfunction

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Are you a part of a growing business? Guess what. You are on a path to dysfunction. It's bound to happen. It's an unexpected outcome of success. Growth is an ongoing process that forces us to continuously challenge ourselves to be better. What once worked when you were an organization of 20 typically doesn't work when you are an organization of 60. With growth comes the need to realign people, process and structure. But because dysfunction is a dirty word in today's society, we see way too many business leaders looking the other way rather than dealing with the tough stuff in front of them. We are creatures of habit after all. The more we resist, the harder we have to work to keep the wheels on the bus. The result? We become dysfunctional by avoiding diving into what needs to change. You know that mess in the closet that has been piling up for months? Well, it's not going anywhere. In fact, it's just getting bigger.

So why don't business leaders want to deal with the messiness in their organization? Let's face it, dealing with conflict is not on the top of the priority list for many. It's uncomfortable. Businesses are made up of people, and working through tough issues in any relationship can be challenging. And it's not always predictable. Entering into the unknown is scary and the stakes can be pretty high. Family businesses can take it to a whole new level. Not only do you have business relationships at stake, but family dynamics and history raise the stakes to a whole other level.

As family businesses move from the current state to the next generation, the success they once found may not work and typically requires change, including processes, ideas and relationships. Change during this generational transition can feel disrespectful, create pain in the family and typically is a topic that is avoided. Although the issues may not be talked about, the pain and hurt get acted out in the family and in the business, which can lead to a cycle of more hurt and pain.

So how do we get to the next phase of growth? Simple. Engage in the tough stuff by focusing on two simple things:

- 1) Openness
- 2) Accountability

We have worked with hundreds of organizations that struggle with getting out of a dysfunctional phase in their business because they are unable or unwilling to be open with one another. Without a culture of openness, you can't get the true, underlying problems on the table. This sounds simple, but it's hard to do. If you've had no uncomfortable conversations with your team this year, then you likely have a problem with openness.

Once the issues are on the table, then you can focus on accountability. We might not think it, but most employees love accountability. Leaders hate it and avoid it because it's tough to create. What happens in your business is what you tolerate. And what you tolerate is everything that is happening in your business *today*.