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CANADIAN AGRICULTURAL SAFETY ASSOCIATION
ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE DE SÉCURITÉ AGRICOLE

MAKING TRANSITIONS

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There are certain dreams and wishes we all have. Health, happiness, wealth. This is no different on the farm. The ideal farm is profitable, productive, and safe. When the time comes to pass down the farm we have worked for our entire lives, there can be feelings of trepidation and angst. Dad is afraid of losing control. Mom wants to move on but is concerned where the money will come from. Kids wonder how they can afford to buy and operate the farm. Dad is not ready to quit working. Mom wants to travel. Kids want to take control. Transition and succession planning can be a scary thought.

Maintaining relationships when a family business is involved in transitioning to the next generation can create unique challenges. Individual family members often have their own ideas of what a successful transition may look like. Along with these individual ideas comes individual agendas. There must be complete understanding on everyone's part of the goals and ideal outcomes of the transition and succession planning process. The absence of clear and understood goals will see people working towards their own agendas, resulting in conflict and lack of progress.



As in so many other areas of life, effective communication is essential in achieving mutual understanding and common goals. Conversations must begin well before the transition happens. These purposeful conversations will provide understanding and a solid basis towards a common goal that meets the expectations of all involved.

STRATEGIES

(BASED ON WORK DONE BY BACKSWATH MANAGEMENT INC.)

1. Have the conversation. Everyone talks, but are we really talking? Broaching difficult conversations can be challenging particularly if they involve significant emotions. Through effective communication people can address their deepest needs, wishes, and desires which leads to understanding and progress in the transition.
2. Set goals. It is important to set goals both as individuals and as a group. Be mindful that it is a good idea to separate family and business goals. Review and discuss goals, embrace common goals and work on coming together on differing goals.
3. Establish a vision. Decide and discuss what the future of the farm will look like. It can be beneficial to put the vision in a written statement - concise and to the point. The vision should encompass a comment about the values that form the basis of the business as well as what the business will be if it achieves its goals.
4. Accountability. As you work through the various components of your plan, make sure participants are held accountable for what is said and what is promised. Changing intentions in mid-stream will lead to disappointment, conflict, and, ultimately, disengagement and failure.

As you contemplate change in your life, work on the connections you have with your family. Change can be difficult, however if a plan has been established the change can be managed and provide for a future beneficial to all.



With an increase in the complexity of farming operations, the various vagaries of relationships, or high emotions, it can also be beneficial to involve professionals in the process. A professional has the experience to guide the process through potential challenges that can and will crop up.

ALWAYS REMEMBER:

1. You're worth it
2. Your family, friends, and community will benefit
3. Your farm will benefit
4. Your life will benefit