

# HONESTY, INTEGRITY are key to leadership

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**FAMILY BUSINESSES FAIL DUE TO PERSONALITIES, SO YOU NEED TO FIGURE OUT WHO SHOULD BE IN THE BUSINESS AND WHO SHOULDN'T AND HOW TO HANDLE BOTH TYPES OF RELATIONSHIPS.**

**Generation of family ownership:** Third. My grandfather founded our construction company in 1925. My uncle took over next. His son, my cousin, is vice chairman and treasurer.

**Annual revenues:** \$400 million.

**Number of employees:** 200.

**First job at this company:** I worked summers and weekends in high school helping my mother with the bids on jobs and delivering payroll, plans and specs, for example. I also worked as a laborer on weekends in high school and college. I worked full-time in that position after graduating, and after a few years I moved up and out of the field.

**At what age?** I joined the company at 21.

**Most memorable thing I learned from my uncle:** Honesty, integrity and treating people with respect — not only our clients and subcontractors, but our employees.

**Best thing about this job:** I like to build both buildings and people's careers. I've enjoyed watching people change

and develop into success stories that they probably didn't see.

**Our greatest success:** The amount of repeat business we do. We have a facility where we have worked for 40 years that has gone through six owners who have always seen the value in working with us.

**Best advice I ever got:** Don't dodge the hard issues. Embrace them and be forthcoming — whether to your clients, your vendors or your employees.

**Quote from our company's mission statement:** Our guiding principles from this statement are accountability and ownership.

**On my wall:** My wife's artwork.

**One of my greatest accomplishments:** Most family businesses don't make it to the third generation, and we did. We've grown the business dramatically and become closer as a family.

**Advice for other family business leaders:** I've seen family businesses succeed and fail. They fail due to personalities, so you need to figure

out who should be in the business and who shouldn't and how to handle both types of relationships. People who aren't in the business shouldn't have any say, and too often they have the ear of someone in the company.

**On a day off I like to ...** play golf.

**Philanthropic causes our family supports:** A lot of firms like to contribute to major causes. We do a lot with Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, but we like to find things that are under the radar, like the Scleroderma Foundation. We run one of their major fundraisers.

**Book I think every family business leader should read:** *The Last Lion*, about Winston Churchill and how he conducted himself during World War II.

**I realized I had emerged from the previous generation's shadow when ...** in 1987, my uncle said he was cutting his hours back and making me president.

**Future succession plans:** We have no more family members interested in the business, so we have plans with employees.  
—As told to Patricia Olsen