



# Getting Unstuck

By Christopher Eckrich, Ph.D.

*In a family business, it is not unusual for a junior generation family employee to become stuck in a job where he is under-performing. When this happens, it can be difficult for family management leaders to talk openly with the younger family employee about the situation. Although folks working with the family employee are well aware of the situation, no corrective feedback is given.*

This can be even more difficult if it is a sibling or cousin that is observed to be in a rut. Commonly, the junior generation family employee feels strongly that there are artificial limits placed on what he or she is allowed to do in the organization, perhaps because of age, experience or unhealthy family dynamics that are playing against them. Often, nothing is said as speaking up may create tension and nobody wants to hurt loved ones.

This is not a healthy situation. For the company, the business is robbed of a family employee who could either excel and add much more value to the company, or exit and make room for a nonfamily employee who would be more successful in the position. For the junior generation family employee, being in a stuck position creates frustration as valuable time is being spent doing something that is perceived as either not meaningful or lacking direction.

When this happens, the status quo can continue for months or even years if neither side speaks up. Once the pattern is entrenched, senior generation leaders may form judgments about the junior generation employee's motivations and assume that they are lacking. The junior generation may form judgments about the senior generation's typecasting and form judgments as well. Both sides begin to see each other as the problem and a decline in mutual respect sets in. A better model is needed.

If you see yourself in this situation, don't settle for the status quo. You and your organization are much too valuable to settle for this no-win scenario.

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