



Section 6: Family, Personal and Business Goals

After each topic in this section there is a set of questions designed to help you identify and examine your personal, family and business goals.

According to the 1997 census of agriculture, the majority of farms in New York State (84.6%) are individual or family-owned businesses. The family business is comprised of two systems – the family system and the business system. Individual and family-owned businesses usually have two goals: 1) to make a profit and 2) to meet personal and family lifestyle goals. The family system is an emotional one. Its primary purpose is to nurture its members, develop self-esteem and support family values. The business system is usually less emotional. Its primary purpose is to make a profit: acquiring and using resources efficiently. In a family business the same individuals make up both of these systems.

The unique family/business relationship greatly influences the lives of most farmers. Low profits, rising costs and a rapidly changing industry environment causes stress. Recognize that this stress increases family tensions, interpersonal conflict, and personal stress.

Decision Making in Times of Change

Operating a family business is stressful enough in its own right, and the stress of changing the business may complicate the situation. Because of the complexity of individual, family and business relationships, decisions you are facing right now should address the needs of both the business and the individuals involved.

Goals

It is important especially during times of business planning and decision-making, to be clear on what your goals are for your family and business. Everyone needs to identify their goals. Conflict arises when one person's goal seems to compete with someone else's goal, and when goals are not identified or shared. Awareness of, and communication about your goals can help everyone work together for the mutual benefit of the family and business.

Exercise 1: Have everyone who is involved in the decision-making of your business (self, spouse, children, family, business partners) complete the following exercise. Do this independently.

	Personal Goals	Family Goals	Business Goals
1-Year	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
5-10 Years	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>

Personal Goals**Family Goals****Business Goals***15-20 Years*

25 Years

Communication

After everyone has spent some time thinking about their goals, make some time for a meeting to discuss these goals and to work on identifying goals for your family's business. These goals will serve as the foundation for your decision-making

and planning. Families often have the same goals, but their differences arise around goal priorities or how to achieve the goal. Sharing is the one way to know the goals of each other.

If you recognize any tension or conflict during this meeting you may benefit from utilizing the communication skills on the check list below.

Communication Skills Checklist

- ☐ Speak for yourself, not for others, don't generalize saying "people" and avoid "you" statements
- ☐ Don't use sarcasm or cynicism
- ☐ Be short and to the point, then be silent
- ☐ Be aware that thoughts may be based on expectations or assumptions, which is often the source of miscommunication.
- ☐ Be aware of your non-verbal communication – you speak not only with your words, but with your tone and body language
- ☐ Identify your main point or points
- ☐ Ask the listener to tell you what they are hearing so you can clarify as needed.

Attentive Listening Checklist:

- ☐ Listen to the words (content)
- ☐ Listen to the tone and body language
- ☐ Recognize that what people "say" is not always what they "mean"
- ☐ Make eye contact, Nod head and acknowledge what they are saying
- ☐ Invite more, ask for more detail
- ☐ Build on the speaker's language and words
- ☐ Ask open-ended questions (not yes or no questions)
- ☐ Make sure to listen to what is being said rather than think about what you will say in response
- ☐ Clarify confusing information
- ☐ Frequently check-in to see if you have understood what they are trying to say

Refer to Exercise 1 to complete this exercise.

Exercise 2: List your major family business goals (the ones that you will work on identified at your meeting(s)).

1-Year _____

5-10 Years _____

15-20 Years _____

25 Years _____

Use this list as a reference for your business planning. This list serves as your focal point for your planning.

II. Stress and Conflict

Making business decisions and plans is a stressful time for family businesses and conflict may arise. Be aware and discuss how the following common areas of conflict that generally occur within farm families may affect your relationships and farm planning.

➤ **Economic Stress.** Different family businesses will balance the family and business goals differently, some will be more family focused while others will be more business focused. When things get really stressed financially, families that are more focused on the survival of the business often experience more family conflict. If this conflict continues for a long time, relationships suffer, and

farmers may increasingly consider ending relationships, partnerships and marriages. On the other hand, families that are more focused on the survival of the family may tend to question the future of the business if it puts the family at risk.

➤ **Too much or too little time together.** If you are all working long hours together and then going home for some family time, it is easy to become overwhelmed with the constant presence of other family members. On the other hand, if you are all so engrossed in working that you don't have time to communicate or have family time; your relationships will likewise suffer. Lengthy

contact between family members may be challenging to one family, while limited contact may be more stressful to another.

- **Role confusion.** When are Mom and Dad a parent, when are they a boss, and when are they partners? When is the son or daughter a child? When should they concentrate on being an employee or business partner? If someone is absent for a day, whose responsibility is it to do those chores? Are responsibilities and expectations clear, or are they muddled?

- **Generational challenges:** Farming is often an intergenerational business, involving an older generation looking toward retirement and a younger generation making decisions that will shape the future of the farm. These different stages of life present different developmental and psychological challenges for each generation. The older generation, facing its mortality, also feels the loss of control over its life's work, while the younger generation is working to increase its power and influence over its future. Each generation is doing the work needed for its individual developmental needs, but this often increases conflict between the generations.

Review the follow chart of potential signs of stress. If you recognize that you are experiencing a lot of stress, you may find it helpful to seek outside help for your business decision-making or for your family communications or for your stress management.

Physical

- ___ aching muscles
- ___ elevated blood pressure
- ___ shortness of breath
- ___ tingling fingers or lips
- ___ intestinal upset
- ___ frequent illness (colds, flu)
- ___ perspiration, cold clammy hands
- ___ skin changes, rash, acne

Behavioral

- ___ verbal or physical aggression
- ___ changes in sleeping habits
- ___ changes in eating habits
- ___ excessive use of alcohol or tobacco
- ___ difficulty being flexible
- ___ impulsive behaviors, risk-taking
- ___ increase in accidents

Emotional

- ___ difficulty concentrating
- ___ irritability, impatience or frustration
- ___ mood swings
- ___ overall sense of sadness/hopelessness
- ___ lack of energy
- ___ low self-esteem
- ___ anxiety

Relational

- ___ communication problems
- ___ conflict with friends/family
- ___ competitiveness
- ___ relationship dissatisfaction
- ___ loneliness/feeling alone
- ___ withdrawal from friends/family

Goal Setting Planning Summary

Refer back to your responses to the questions in this section and complete this summary. List below the areas of improvement for family and personal life.

Goal Setting Areas for Improvement
1.
2.
3.
4.



