

Family Business Solutions (1)

Nothing Behind Matters

I went out for a walk on a nice spring day a few weeks ago when a runner passed me. On the back of his tee shirt was the statement “nothing behind matters.”

It occurred to me that in family business, as in sports, amnesia is a critical key to success. Just as a great basketball player may miss a whole series of shots or a baseball slugger may strike out repeatedly, neither doubts that the next shot will go in or the next at bat will be a home run. Highly skilled athletes develop the ability to selectively forget that it hasn't been working for them. They are not paralyzed by insecurities or self-defeating memories.

If you want to be successful in a family business, you can't have a long memory. Memory kills. It is one of the most bedeviling aspects of family life and it has killed many prosperous family businesses. The missed birthday party or confirmation. The celebration your sister got but you didn't. The trip to Disney that others took that you were unable to take.

The accumulated impact of all these remembered slights is often what forms the basis for battles later in life that paralyze businesses and leave family members thinking with their tongues and imaginations rather than their minds.

“Nothing behind matters.” Let it go. Forgive one another. Make a fresh start.

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