



ONE MAN SHOW

The risk of failure during farm transfer

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“My son will never be able to do what I did and will never be able to succeed like I have.” Paul is proud to an unhealthy and destructive degree. He is a 60-year-old farmer who started with nothing and built up a prosperous company, attaining impressive success. That is all to his credit, but the problem is that his ego is as developed as his business. Nothing wrong with that, you think? However, what happens when the ego won't even fit through the doorway anymore?

Observing family businesses from all sectors combined reveals some failures attributable to the founders' style. The “one man show” kind of style inevitably leads to failure during transfer. The qualities that helped the entrepreneur achieve success can also lead directly to failure.

In fact, being independently-minded, having their own way, making all the decisions alone, having a strong need to be personally identified with the business's success, not consulting with anyone else, having an authoritarian and dominant approach, pursuing their objectives and being energetic and competitive are often the character traits of entrepreneurs. In a certain context, those traits may lead to success, but we can imagine the havoc they create in partnerships with either family members or strangers.

Paradoxically, some entrepreneurs with major professional success may have perpetual doubts about their own worth. In some cases, it is more important for the father that his children not to “outdo” him than to ensure the business' success even in the face of significant financial loss. The ego wins its war against the numbers because human beings are not rational but emotional.

Exactly how does a one man show kind of father interact with his children? Here is how Antoine, Paul's son, responds to that question:

He never congratulates me or recognizes my accomplishments, my successes, but takes all the credit when they work and tears me down me when I make a mistake. I have the impression that he is constantly trying to find faults in me. He has no interest in what I need, my expectations or my interests. He doesn't discuss anything with me but makes demands of me and makes all the decisions. I'm 35, and he treats me as if I were still 15.

So the one man show types should avoid partnerships because they will sabotage their businesses and their relationship with their family, often unconsciously. The one man show type is only interested in continuing his show alone and waiting for the curtain to fall so that he can sit back



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and relish his achievements. However, he needs to know that after the show is over and the applause dies away, he will be alone in his dressing room. No one will be there to celebrate with him.

Comments or suggestions? Please contact Pierrette Desrosiers.

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