



DR CLARISSE LAFLEUR

FAMILY BUSINESS SUCCESSION READINESS ASSESSMENT[®]

A practical self-assessment tool for evaluating succession preparedness, governance, and family alignment.

Introduction

Succession is one of the most critical transitions a family business will navigate. While attention is often placed on leadership or ownership transfer, long-term continuity also depends on governance, communication, family alignment, and next-generation preparedness.

This diagnostic checklist is a practical self-assessment tool to help family businesses reflect on their succession readiness. It is designed to support discussion, highlight strengths, and identify gaps that may require further attention.

The checklist covers five key areas that commonly influence continuity:

- succession readiness
- governance
- ownership clarity
- next-generation engagement
- family alignment

Rather than offering definitive answers, this tool intends to prompt thoughtful reflection and more intentional planning for the future of the business and the family behind it.

Who This Checklist is For

This checklist is designed for family business stakeholders involved in succession and continuity planning, including:

- founders and current leaders
- next-generation family members
- family business owners and shareholders
- family councils or governance groups
- advisors supporting family business transitions

It may be completed individually or used to facilitate more structured discussion around succession planning and family alignment among stakeholders.

How to Use This Checklist

Review each section individually or alongside relevant family members, owners, or advisors.

For each statement, select the response that best reflects your current situation:

- **Yes** – fully in place
- **In Progress** – partially addressed or currently underway

- **No** – not yet addressed

Responses may help identify areas requiring further discussion, planning, or specialist support. Revisit the checklist periodically to monitor progress as succession planning evolves over time.

Section 1 – Succession Readiness

Checklist Item	Yes	In Progress	No	Comments/Actions
Leadership succession has been discussed within the family.				
Potential future leaders have been identified.				
A timeline for leadership transition has been identified.				
Successors are gaining relevant experience and development opportunities.				
The current leader has considered their transition from the business.				

Section 2 – Governance

Checklist Item	Yes	In Progress	No	Comments/Actions
Roles between family, owners, and management are clearly defined.				
The business has an active advisory board or governance structure.				
Policies regarding family involvement in the business are documented.				
Major decisions follow defined governance processes.				

There are structured forums for family members for discussing family-business matters.				
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Section 3 – Ownership Clarity

Checklist Item	Yes	In Progress	No	Comments/Actions
Ownership structures are clearly understood by relevant stakeholders.				
Shareholder expectations are documented and communicated.				
Dividend and reinvestment expectations are clearly defined.				
Future ownership transfer has been considered and discussed.				
Exit or buy-sell arrangements have been considered.				

Section 4 – Next Generation Engagement

Checklist Item	Yes	In Progress	No	Comments/Actions
The next generation understands the history and legacy of the business.				
The next generation is educated on the responsibilities of ownership.				
Opportunities exist for next-generation involvement in the business.				

Family members are encouraged to gain external experience.				
The next generation understands the long-term vision for the business.				

Section 5 – Family Alignment

Checklist Item	Yes	In Progress	No	Comments/Actions
The family has discussed long-term goals for the business.				
There is shared alignment around family values and purpose.				
Difficult conversations can be addressed constructively.				
Expectations around fairness, roles, and opportunity are openly discussed.				
Communication across generations is open and respectful.				

Interpretation

This checklist is intended to highlight areas of strength, potential gaps, and opportunities for further discussion. Responses marked “In Progress” or “No” may indicate areas where greater clarity, alignment, or planning could strengthen long-term continuity.

Review responses across all sections to identify patterns, priority areas, and aspects requiring further attention. Use any notes, comments, or action items to help prioritise next steps, clarify responsibilities, and support ongoing planning discussions.

Areas commonly requiring further focus may include:

- leadership and succession planning
- governance and decision-making structures
- ownership alignment and clarity
- next-generation development

- family communication and alignment

Revisiting the checklist periodically can help track progress over time, maintain momentum, and adapt planning as family and business circumstances evolve.

Next Steps

Every family business faces unique dynamics, priorities, and transition challenges. This diagnostic is intended as a starting point for reflection and discussion, not a definitive assessment.

For families seeking to strengthen succession readiness and long-term continuity, a structured advisory process can help clarify priorities, align stakeholders, and identify practical next steps for both the business and the family behind it.

About the Authors

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