

Family Communication Agreement

When 60% of the reason family businesses struggle to transfer to the next generation is because of communication & trust it's a key area to monitor. In our experience, we find there is often an opportunity to improve communication.



We recommend each family design how they will communicate with each other and document their agreement. While this is typically best created with an experienced facilitator, some families are able to develop their own. Explore questions such as:

- *How do we want to speak and behave towards each other to have an open and effective discussion?*
- *What is our history in working through differences of opinion? How do we want to disagree?*
- *What do we need to do to create a safe environment? How do we ensure every voice is heard?*
- *How do we keep each other on track and cope when it becomes difficult?*

Below is a simplified sample to give you an idea of how to structure the agreement after the facilitated dialogue. It is really important you create your own because the power is in the discussion. Then use this agreement at the start of every family and family business meeting to remind everyone how we want to operate together to bring out the best possible conversation.

SAMPLE AGREEMENT	HOW WE GET BACK ON TRACK
Active listening <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stay curious to understand different ideas and perspectives • Careful with our assumptions • One conversation at a time, do not interrupt 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage curiosity with each other to pose questions rather than statements "what question could you pose?" • "One conversation please"
Speak up from my perspective <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every voice & perspective matters • Don't keep it in, sit in silent disagreement • Don't speak or assume another's perspective 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check in - "We haven't heard from John" • Encourage those who aren't ready to speak to come back at an agreed upon time to share • "Please let Sandra cover her perspective"
Assume positive intent <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are on the same side – not adversaries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check in – "Could you state your intent, so we understand where you are coming from?"