

Guidelines for Communication*

Suggested Communication Guidelines for Family Enterprise Meetings

1. Listen respectfully and don't interrupt.
2. Focus on issues, not people or personalities.
3. Create an opportunity at each meeting for all attending family to address each other as peers. (One way to do this is by using first names)
4. It is "OK" to disagree with other family members.
5. Offer feedback with consideration and kindness and avoid making attacks.
6. Find a term to describe your "difference of opinion" which does not elicit unwanted emotional responses in your family enterprise. Try using the term:
 - Disagreement
 - Dispute
 - Difference of opinion
7. Avoid telling someone that their opinion is "wrong." Facts may be inaccurate, but all opinions are valid statements of someone else's point-of-view.
8. Use "I" statements, not "you" statements, as in "I feel irritated and hurt when people interrupt me" rather than "you are so nasty, interrupting me all the time."
9. Assign a "Referee" or Time-Keeper for particularly emotionally-charged discussions.
10. No one is always right in everything he or she suggests.
11. Resolution of controversies is a "give and take" process in search for the win-win solution. Find a middle ground that meets each person's minimum requirement for a tolerable solution.

It is suggested that all attendees agree to follow the suggested guidelines by executing a copy of this agreement.

Upon execution of this document, the undersigned hereby agree to abide by the above ground rules for communication at all family enterprise meetings.

Dated: _____, 200_ _____

Dated: _____, 200_ _____

Dated: _____, 200_ _____

Dated: _____, 200_ _____

* See www.fambus.com/Tools/Family-Meeting-Start.htm for guidelines to starting, structuring and leading family meetings.
© 1997 Ralph M. Daniel, Ph.D. & John Ambrecht