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Endogenous Conflicts, its Mitigation and Resolution in a Closely Held Family Business

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Abstract

Family is emotions and business is about economics, both being inseparable. A combination of values, ethics, dedication and discrete potential offered by each family member must exist. The worst is when hostile family members have to work together, where self-interest is first. A critical problem is the tension that exists between their personal lives and career pursuits of the family members, including transition. Essentially, involvement in one role becomes more difficult because of involvement in the other role (Finch, 2000)

Conflicts within family business may revolve around a different set of issues, such as money, personalities or trust. The consequences of conflict in family business can be extreme, resulting destruction to both the firm and the family (Levinson, 1971).

Family businesses being fragile, the failure to adequately control conflict may contribute to the high mortality rate of family owned firms while it is said that roughly two-thirds of family-owned and family-controlled businesses do not survive the founder's generation (Beckhard and Dyer, 1983; Dyer, 1986), with only 10 to 15 percent surviving to a third generation (Applegate 1994). Astrachan (1988) suggests formalizing job descriptions, crafting family protocol manuals, independent non-executive appointment to the board etc. to facilitate actions and ideas that could be judged objectively by people outside the family. Therefore it is prudent to investigate on how "Endogenous conflicts" are mitigated in closely held family businesses?

Results indicated conflicts started from ownership, to power positions. Forced entries of sibling in the business with no competence besides the patriarchs' distribution of business were of major concern; hence, a need to professionalize.

Key words: *- Closely Held Family Business, Conflicts, Conflict Management, Family Business, India.*

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FAMILY BUSINESS

The family business is a business governed and/ or managed with the intention to shape and pursue the vision of the business held by the dominant coalition controlled by members of the same family or a small number of families in a manner that is potentially sustainable across generations of the family or families (Chua, Chrisman & Sharma, 1999). Rosenblatt, et al. (1985) define a family business as any business in which majority ownership or control lies within a single family and in which two or more family members are or at some time were directly involved in the business. The family business is the oldest form of multi-party business enterprise. In fact the world's oldest continuously operated family business, Japanese temple-builder Kongo Gumi, began in 578 (Hutcheson, 2002). Cole (2000) says family business members share a bond dealing with each other in both work and family context and this creates a dual relationship in which two people are managing two relationships simultaneously. When family businesses are founded, they are typically expressions of an entrepreneur's desire for independence (Ward 1987). Although there is some debate over the precise definition of a family business, most revolve around the kinship of family members owning and running a venture (Heck & Trent, 1999; Rogoff & Heck, 2003; Wortman, 1994).

It is even more complex to define family firms (interchangeable with family business) in India. We can consider an operational definition of a family firmas the one that is the firms based on the degree of ownership and management control/influence. Indeed, it is the intersection between family members, the family, and the business that is believed to represent the unique set of features that explain performance differences between family and non family businesses (Habbershon, Williams, & MacMillan, 2003). Princeton University (2007) defines a family firm as the corporation that is family firm a corporation that is entirely owned by the members of a single family. Entrepreneur magazine (2007) defines family business as a business actively owned and/or managed by many more than one member of the family.

Classification of Family Firms

Family firms can range in size from corner store to large multinational corporations. Symrnios (2003) used self-defined definition of the family firm, which classified 92% firms as family businesses. These firms accounted for 50 percent of national GDP and 59 percent workforce (Shankar and Astrachan, 1996). They included the dimensions consisting of percentage of ownership, voting control, power over strategic decisions, involvement of multiple generations, and active management of family members. India comprises of small family owned and controlled informal businesses, mid-sized family controlled but organized companies, beside highly professionally managed but family owned under the Indian business groups, as classified by Akbar & Joshi (2012) in Figure 1.

		FAMILY	OUTSIDE INVESTOR
Management Control	FAMILY MEMBERS	**Family Firms- I** -centralized control, flat structures -lack of structures and systems -informal relation and communications -altruistic leadership style -poor knowledge management -relatively unqualified personnel -uncertain succession	**Indian Business Groups-II** -multi-firm businesses -equity cross holding -funding from bank/capital markets -well developed structures/systems -formal relations and communication -better knowledge management -highly skilled personnel -family succession well defined
	PROFESSIONALS	**Professionalized Firms-III** -multi firm business -reduced cross holding -funding by capital markets -well defined structures/systems -Excellent knowledge management -highly talented professionals -erratic succession of professionals	**Investor driven firms-IV** -multi-divisional structure -direct investor holdings -funding from capital markets -well defined structures/systems -excellent knowledge management -most attractive to best talent -planned succession

Figure 1: Classification of family firms (Akbar and Joshi, 2012)

CLOSELY HELD FAMILY BUSINESS

Cole (2005) says family business members share a bond dealing with each other in both a work and family context and this creates a dual relationship in which two people are managing two relationships simultaneously. Roughly two-thirds of family-owned and family-controlled businesses do not survive the founder's generation (Beckhard and Dyer, 1983; Dyer, 1986), with only 10 to 15 percent surviving to a third generation (Applegate, 1994).

Ownership and succession are a central theme of discussions within closely held family business. At times founders pass down their baton without much thought about whether those descendants have an interest or aptitude for successfully operating the business. This is one major reason why so few family businesses survive to the fifth, fourth or even to the third generation. Probably, this is also one factor adding to family conflict.

Therefore, planning ahead for the succession of the family business is paramount its success. It is crucial to seek opinion of independent advisors on succession decisions. Experienced lawyers, accountants, and thoughtful family advisors can play an important role in this process. However, no perfect solution to complicated succession issues can be forecasted.

Factors towards succession by family members may include the desired skill sets, competence, interest towards the business, level of engagement, command and respect from business partners apart from leadership. The second option in case this is not fulfilled from within the family with a competent outsider. At times the challenge is even greater. One, when the founder manager withdraws suddenly from the business or dies, without succession planning.

Family Business Systems

There are three overlapping systems in a family business: the family, the business and the ownership/governance systems (Federer, 2012). To lead a family business successfully, it mandates managing the different systems of the family and business. Conflicts are bound to happen as a result of gaps and differences between each system.

The family business research and programs on family business has a long history (Tripathi, 2004 & Piramal, 1998). While making important family and business decisions, it is essential that the founder manager considers the theory of wholeness, which suggests that a change in any part of a system impacts on all others. Since the family and business systems are overlapping, decisions are bound to impact the business as well as family relationships. Jensen and Meckling (1976) consider zero agency cost firm as the manager is the singular shareholder and that he acts in the best interest of the shareholders as an owner. Gallo, et al., (2004) found that many family businesses outperform their non-family businesses rivals in many respect, few lack a long term commitment to growth and evaluation.

Need for Governance

One of the major concerns for a family business is a lack of governance and structure. Where family and business intersect, the possibilities for disputes are most. The interests by the family and that required by business must be preserved to avoid future conflict. For family governance regular meetings within family to resolve issues concurrently is required. Creation of formal family council may be one way out that may discuss issues affecting business as well as the family. This may include engaging family members, remuneration, ownership and succession.

Unfortunately family businesses often resist creating formal governance for fear of losing their family feeling. Certain areas that may be considered could be rules on their entry, training, roles, responsibilities, employee relation and most importantly succession. Thus, there is a visible challenge for family businesses to "professionalize" themselves and act like non-family businesses.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The main objectives of this research are:

1. To understand conflicts in family business
   a. Father-son/daughter (heir) power battles
   b. Sibling rivalries
   c. Internal family issues
   d. Collision between basic family values
2. To understand conflict resolution
   a. When to ignore as well as when to resolve the conflicts
3. To understand a culture that address conflicts in a positive way.

CONFLICTS

Conflicts are very obvious phenomenon within family businesses. They are endogenous by nature. In family business, conflicts arise when there is a disagreement on certain decisions such as succession planning, personality differences, differences in interests, in laws, etc. Conflict is inevitable in any business and often it is constructive. Conflict management is the process of limiting the negative aspects of conflict, while increasing the positive aspect of it. Conflicts can be resolved either by self or by the concern of others. Conflict resolution is necessary for any family business to leverage growth and sustainability. At times, unsolved conflicts in a family business are not professional conflicts rather they become personal conflicts leading to bigger unresolved issues such as personal issues within the family members, loss in business, finally leading to closure of family business, etc.

Tillett (2001) says conflicts are related more on human needs and values. Sometimes they are expressed through problems or disputes. Some may be addressed, else the dispute or problem will continue, while newer ones will arise. Conflicts at times can be beneficial, while forcing business leaders to think through their options in an effort to deal with any objections and reservations (Hutcheson, 2002). It has been found that managers devote more than 20 percent of their time in managing conflict, which they rate as equal in importance to their other managerial activities (Thomas and Schmidt 1976). Conflict that energizes a business may destroy the family that created it (Finch, 2000) Many authors (De Dreu & Van Vliert, 1997; Pondy, 1967) have indicated that conflict is a phenomenon, giving rise to both beneficial and functional consequences, besides having important positive and negative effects on individuals, group and organizations. There are no historic solutions to problems. Simple problems if not resolved timely may lead to complex problems. Ignoring at an early stage may have disastrous effects on business. Conflicts in family business generally revolve around the issues like ownership, management of business, governance and succession and can be worse by several family history issues and personal dynamics among the family members. Some conflicts may arise due to the sudden death of the founder or a change in the situations within family and the business. Problems generate when the family, the business or both have poor communication history.

How many family members handle the tension between family and business and whether they have anticipated conflict and armed themselves with tools to deal with a dispute can determine the extent of the ultimate damage. Anticipating and planning for a potential dispute when the goals and the objectives of the business and the family are aligned, combined with good communication between and among the business and the family, is the best way to avoid potentially damaging conflict when a triggering event occurs.

One of the aspects of organizational conflict is that it is intrinsic to the life and dynamics of organizations (Medina, et al., 2002). Amason (1996) pointed out on cognitive criticism that might be interpreted as a personal disapproval to enhance one's own position at the expense of others. Jehn and Chatman (2000), and Janseen, et al. (1999) view conflict as complex system of conflict types.

Sources of Conflicts

A common source of conflict emanates at the intersection of within the family and business respectively (Daily & Dollinger, 1993; Harvey & Evans, 1994; Kellermanns & Eddleston, 2004). This may be as a result of disagreements on growth issues, nature of business, succession planning etc. Beckhard and Dyer (1983 and pg. no. 59) state, family members often differ from the founder and this may be yet another reason on frequent conflicts. At times founders usually desire in continuing family ownership, in contrasting to later generations demanding an outside entrant. The focal conflicts in the family business may revolve around a different set of issues, such as money, personalities or trust. The focal conflicts in a family business will be as diverse and varied as each enterprise is unique (Finch, 2000).

Conflicts happen between founder and the family member, which is unique for a first generation family business. Hoy & Verser (1994), state that conflicts arise when the second family member enters the business on a permanent basis. Dyer (1986) brings out an important opinion at times founders of the family business tends to control and manage dissent, permitting very little input from others in the decision making process.

Secondly, a parent who is the founder may refuse to retire, unconsciously feeling on the lower capability of siblings in running the business. This creates tension between siblings and the parents over the leading positions and at times ending up in the child leaving the business in frustration (Finch, 2000). Finch (2000) also brings the importance of ownership and succession. If this decision is not handled sensitively it might result in conflict and hostility amongst siblings and if left unresolved, jealousy has the potential to divide the family and destroy the business. Yet there is another problem that roots from confusion or the inability to manage the complex rules, roles and dual relationships, which need to be maintained between family and business leading to conflicts (Finch, 2000). Rosenblatt et al. (1985) have stated that verbalized or assumed rules are something all families have. The major challenge arises when family rules do not apply after they are transferred to the business systems.

A critical problem faced by the family business is the tension that exists between the personal lives and career pursuits of the family members. There may be diversified interests. This can be seen as a form of inter role conflict with incompatibility between work and home. Essentially, involvement in one role becomes more difficult because of involvement in the other role (Finch, 2000). And lastly, symptom of poor communication and a cause of tension also lead to conflict (Finch, 2000).

Conflicting Issues in Family Business

The major area of concern is the inability of family members to resolve the conflict effectively at its infancy, leading to complex conflicts and often resulting in emotional decisions that cause serious damage to the family relationships. This may be a result of lack of opportunity and inability of the family members in engaging direct communication within them. Communication patterns differ in each family. What is normal for one family is upsetting for another. Some issues that can create conflict are difficulty for family members in respecting boundaries, power struggles, lack of transparency, compensation and succession planning.

The problem usually starts with the founder not agreeing with heir followed by power battles amongst siblings. Internal family issues may also spring in conflicts and the collision between basic family values may yet be another important root to conflicts.

Father-son/Daughter (heir) Power Struggles

It is very difficult to hand over the business to the heir because the founder considers the business as an extension of himself and his networks. Unconsciously, father continues to exhibit his ideas and competence to the heir. Father has an unusual feeling and apprehension on the success by his heir as compared to his own abilities. This might be a misconception and not fit always. At the same time, the son or daughter feels undignified with such low level of confidence perceived on them. Though, father may be of the opinion that it's for the goodness of the business and the family that the heir remain in strict supervision and mandate of the father. The father has a continuous feeling that the siblings have not grown to run the business, which may be a serious misconception. At times when the son or daughter sees their counterparts taking responsibility, impatience starts creeping in. The tension and anger mounts with each delay. The capabilities of the heir may be underestimated. The worst being when the father starts thinking his son or daughter attempting to coup over his establishment rather than mentoring and handling over it with pride.

Sibling Rivalries

The rivalry between the brothers and their approval for the business from father starts form the childhood and continues even when they are grown up. The father always supports the elder brother, the elder brother has much more knowledge and experience as compared to younger one, the elder one is much more involved in the business are some conflict generating reasons in the family which also creates a wall between the two brothers. The younger brother considers himself less confident as compared to the elder one. He is always over controlled by elders, gets less opportunity to explore as there are elders in the family to point at every step. The problem is further severe when mother and wives are also indirectly involved in the business. Mother has her favorites and wives too and they speak for their favorites and the remaining feel unhappy.

Internal Family Issues

The problem continues when the sons grow up and join the family business. For youngsters designation and responsibilities matter most. The father continues his focuses on sustainability and profits. On the contrary the siblings are more concerned on individual responsibilities the power centre for decision making. Inside competition prevails. The negative effects of conflict are most often rooted in relationship conflict, whereas the benefits of conflict tend to be the result of task and process conflict (Jehn, 1995; Jehn, 1997b). The dominant presence of the family and the overlapping of control and management activities complicate the understanding of conflict in firms (Daily & Dollinger, 1992). The involvement of several generations within the family business results in different ways of undertaking tasks and processes, resulting in relationship conflicts.

Collision Between Basic Family Values

Family values differ from one family to the other. The basic premise being these businesses emanate from different regions, geographies bringing in diversified cultures. There is no fixed understanding and establishment of what these family values are and must be to run the business. What suits one may not be deemed fit by other. Some may offer principle centred leadership, ethics, morality etc. while others may compromise in the business journey. The collisions happen when conflicting family values impregnate within the family, mainly arising between the first-second-third-fourth and subsequent generations, as values inherited might change course with the passage of time.

TYPES OF CONFLICTS

Research suggests that there are three types of conflicts: task, process, and relationships conflict (e.g. Jehn, 1995; Jehn ,1997b). Each of these types of conflict can occur in varying degree of frequency and intensity they being strongly related, that is, highly intense conflict is associated with more frequent conflict (De Dreu & Van Vianen, 2001).

Task conflict is related to the quality of ideas and innovation (West and Anderson, 1996), an increase in constructive debate (Jehn, Northcraft & Neale, 1999), acceptance of group decisions (Amason, 1996), or the prevention of group think (Turner & Pratkanis, 1997). Amason & Mooney (1999) have debated their doubts that decision making could effectively embrace one type of conflict, while simultaneously resisting the other. High levels of task conflict can reduce satisfaction and commitment within the team, may also cause tension, antagonism and unhappiness between group members, and an indisposition to work together in the future (Amason & Sapienza, 1997; Jehn, 1995). Process conflict focusses on different opinions on the processes managing systems. For the same output, there may be different set of processes one not so efficient than the other.

Relationship conflict contrastingly is negatively associated with such variables (De Dreu & van Viannen, 2001). It has been found that relationship conflict affects group climate and reduces team effectiveness (Jehn, 1997). Conflict is present in interpersonal relations (Pruitt & Carnevale, 1993), in intragroup and inter group relations (Jehn, 1995), in strategic decision-making (Amason, 1996). Relationship conflict worsens employees' satisfaction, psychological well-being, commitment to the work team, increasing tension levels in the job. Almost all studies have shown positive correlation between task and relationship conflict (Amason, 1996; De Dreu, 1997; Jehn, 1995; Jehn & Mannix, 2001; Jehn & Chataman, 2000; Pelled et al. 1999)

It is possible that task related conflict may turn into relation conflict (Jehn, 1997). Friedman et al's study (2000) suggests that the relationship between task conflict and effective variables such as tension at work, are mediated by relationship conflict. Family businesses are often plagued by these conflicts. The family and business are so knotted in the family businesses that possibility for discord is greater than in firms with other governance forms (Lee & Rogof, 1996). Research has shown conflict to be multidimensional (e.g. Amason, 1996; Cosier& Schwenck, 1990; Jehn, 1995; Van de Vliert& De Dreu, 1994). Prior research has mainly focused on the dark side of the conflict (Bechhard & Dyer, Jr., 1983; Danes, Zuiker, Kean, Arbuthnot, & Kaye, 1999; Dyer, Jr., 1986; Gersick, Davis, Hampton, &Lansberg, 1997; Levinson, 1971) while overlooking its benefits, or the bright side (Harvey & Evans, 1994; Sharma, Chrisman, & Chua, 1997; Tjosvold, 1991; Wall, Jr., Galanes, & Love, 1987).

CONSEQUENCES OF CONFLICTS

The impact of conflict within family business is much more complex as compared to non-family managed business. How to ascertain and mitigate these conflicts is yet to be understood. Conflicts in the family firm may cost the business as the family members are trapped within the business. At the same time exit costs are also very high as the family members fear losing rights and status. The consequences of conflict in family business may result in extreme behaviors destructive to both the firm and the family (Levinson, 1971). The complexity arises if the firm focuses more on the values rather than the purpose and needs of the family business.

Conflict Management

The most appropriate time to address family business conflict is before the actual conflict establishes itself. After the conflict has manifested, it may lead to high levels of emotion and tension. This may have a catastrophic impact on the family business if it is not dealt with appropriately (Finch, 2000). Beckhard and Dyer (1983) have suggested that failure to address conflict issues may lead to the high mortality rate of family owned firms. Hence, family businesses are measuredas delicate. A proactive plan must providea measurable roadmap towards implementing the founder's vision. Proper planning shall be the key in mitigating present and anticipated future conflicts for the benefit of the entire family.

When to Ignore and When to Resolve Conflicts

Based on literature review and research undertaken it becomes imperative to understand and establish an understanding on "when to ignore and when to resolve conflicts". Conflicts are integral to any family business. The vacillation between "family" (emotions) and "business" (economics) component leads to such conflicts. It is very difficult and extremely complex to summarize and justify this statement as to when and what precedes other, however in principle of wealth creation and preservation both are of equal importance.

Without family, business has no value and without business the family may be disintegrated. At times, based on family values, intervention in family based disputes is likely to damage the harmony leading to distortions in business. On the contrary, interventions in the business may create discords in the family structure.

However, some issues are intrinsic and the some being extrinsic. Intrinsic issues that are soft based on competence, skill sets, when a sibling must get an entry into business, at what point and position, the transition level, interpersonal relationship between family members, siblings etc, if tackled skillfully with succession planning in hand, can mitigate conflicts to a large level. This may also keep relationship and ownership issues intact. At times, unless there is a possibility of flaring up the conflicts, it may be ignored. But when it comes to issues concerning wealth creation like nature of business, operations, decision making etc, the professional level of conduct must be seen into account, rather than the individual as a family member. Intervention is a must, unless based on calculated risk, the incumbent sibling is given a chance to show case his/her decision making, without destroying much of the wealth.

Private resolution of conflict becomes more important in the family business setting because, when a dispute erupts and becomes public, vendors, employees, bankers, customers, friends and associates become aware of the conflict, which can dramatically affect the reputation of the business and of individual family members. Having a well drafted shareholder's charter can prevent bad publicity and provide tools for a successful resolution of an ownership or succession dispute. The key to successfully resolving the family business dispute is to separate the person from the problem. Understanding the position of the others and insisting the negotiations be based on objective criteria such as standards of fairness, best practices in the industry, efficiency and observable behavior is essential to maintaining a professional atmosphere. Benefit might also be derived from engaging a family business consultant to provide education on conflict management strategies or facilitate formal communication between family members.

However some conflicts are bound to happen during unnatural situations. Gascoigne (2003) suggests that the best time is to tackle family issues before a crisis, such as the sudden death of a senior member, and not to shy away from potentially scary discussions. To solve the issues, it may be necessary to rope in a neutral third party. The reward for such effort could be a healthy business and a happy family (Finch, 2000). Resolving the conflict before it destroys the business is difficult to achieve especially when there are blocks that inhibit effective communication between work and home (Finch, 2000). There is an urgency to resolve conflicts within families seeking to pass on their business to the next generation (Finch, 2000).

Astrachan (1988) advocates formalizing job descriptions, writing out family protocol manuals, appointing an independent non-executive to the board and/or setting up an independent advisory board. To avoid the threat of the firm breaking up on account of conflict between the sibling heirs a meticulous succession planning should be crafted. This must cover siblings as entrants and exit plans for them. Decision making process and when not to engage family members must also be written in the succession plan. Family members working together closely must have written job descriptions. By separating work roles between each other this will aid in clarifying and separating business roles from spouse/family roles and help reduce confusion (Finch, 2000). Appointing an independent non-executive director to the board will promote a reliable governing structure, which is independent of the founder, thereby ensuring the business survival beyond first generation (Finch, 2000). The succession plan should not be a deterrent for the subsequent generation. The plan should also include a timetable for stepping down and this should be communicated throughout the family (Finch, 2000)

DEVELOPING A CULTURE THAT ANTICIPATES, MITIGATES AND RESOLVES CONFLICTS

Engaging one or more independent directors, who are not connected with the family or employees of the businesses may be a good choice. They can provide valuable independent perspectives related to the family and the business. With their outside experience, this board of advisors can fore see critical issues that may lead to conflict and hence advise on measures that can mitigate and resolve conflicts. Bringing in corporate governance procedures may be one choice as the business grows. An independent board can also offer the required guidance towards developing the short and long-term strategies for the family business. But there are pitfalls in attempting to resolve conflicts in the family business. Many of the pitfalls relate to undisclosed or unconscious needs of the family members (Finch, 2000)

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The main analysis of this study has been the family business and conflicts. This research intends to identify few family businesses where the conflicts have occurred and has had effects on the growth of the family as well as its business. Almost one hundred family businesses were short listed that belonged to different levels of generations namely first, second, third, fourth, fifth and sixth representing different industry verticals. The list was further divide into clusters and generation level, followed by a first level of contact with these incumbent family businesses. The results were not encouraging as most desisted from participating in the survey, stating conflict was an internal issue and not for public domain. Using social networks and individual persuasion very few agreed initially and some dropped during mid-way. It was then consciously decided to use the case method, where authors had access to their previous published cases, besides professional and personal relations with the incumbent firms. Hence, the samples were carefully chosen from the pre-written published cases that investigated some kind of conflicts in the family business. The same firms also agreed to share their inside story on conflicts as a double check with their stake holders, while one new firm agreed to map its conflicts, with the understanding to assist it in mitigating and resolving the conflicts as consulting.

The five published cases on family business belonged to the following organisations:

1. Hafizia Art & Crafts Pvt. Ltd.: Jute Vertical: 6thgeneration
2. PAL: Chemical Vertical: 2nd generation
3. Ashoka Sports: Sports Vertical: 5th generation
4. Comfort N Care: Finance Vertical: 3rd generation
5. D.K. Exports: Engineering Vertical: 2nd generation

Descriptive and exploratory case study method was used followed by content analysis. The conflicting issues within the published cases were identified and explored further with the respective organization. As the objective of the study was to identify conflicts in Indian family business and the ways by which such conflicts could be mitigated and resolved, the information at various levels were collected through:

1. Interaction with authors of the sample cases
2. Interviews of the:
   - Owners of the organization
   - Employees
   - Family Members

Cases

A case framework was developed, which descried briefly about the organization, ownership structure, organizational structure, nature of business, conflicts and its resolution carried by the founders or and members of the family. These have been summarized in table 1, briefly emphasizing on the central issue that is conflict management.

Table 1: Brief on Cases

S.No	Organization	Description
1	**Hafizia Art & Crafts Pvt.**	**Case A- A Case of Hafizia Art & Crafts Pvt. Ltd (Joshi & Srivastava, 2012)** **Organizational background-** It is into sixth generation family business and its legacy was established by Haji Noor Mohammad in 1992. It is the leading manufacturer and exporter of superior range of home furnishing products. **Ownership structure:** From father to sons, currently multiple holdings from different generations holding control of business.

		Organizational structure- The business has a formal organization structure most of its activities like marketing, selling, production, sampling, etc. are handled by family members. It gives direct employment to 450-500 people and indirectly supports more than 1000 families. **Nature of the Business-** Basically, the family is into manufacturing and selling of home furnishing products such as carpets, cushions, mats, rugs, etc. to the customers all over the world and to the Indian retailers like Reliance Retail, Spencer's and Home Town. **Competition-** They compete with all the manufacturers of home furnishing products in the domestic and in global markets. **Conflict-** Conflicts arise on issues concerning individual style of work, investment issues and lack of proper succession planning in written format. **Conflict resolution-** Board Meetings are held regularly, where all the Directors, Managing Director and President cum CEO debate together and discuss on issues. In case the members are still unsatisfied on solutions they are then made to vote and majority's decision is considered as the final one.
2	**PAL**	**Case B: Family business in transition: A case of PAL (Joshi & Srivastava, 2014)** **Organization Background-** Panchamrit Asbestos Ltd. (PAL) was incorporated under the Companies Act 1956 and obtained certificate of commencement of business on 4th August, 1973. **Ownership structure:** It is a joint venture of Panchmal Cement Corporation (a state government subsidiary) and between two partners now into second generation. **Organization structure:** It has a formal three level structure with most functional areas headed by professionals, except decision making positions held by family members. **Nature of business-** The firm is in the business of manufacturing and marketing of Asbestos Cement Sheets and Moulded goods, AC sheet industry. The other being a real estate business started by his son along with his friend. **Competitors-** The competitors of PAL include major producers and marketers of cement sheets, moulded goods and AC sheets **Conflict-** Despite having diversified interests, competence and capabilities, the son of the founder has been compelled to join the family business. The father wanted to Spin-off due to various business reasons but the son foresaw negative growth in the existing business. **Conflict resolution-** According to the skills, capabilities and interest, the son lately had to look for spin-off into a new business.
3	**Ashoka Sports**	**Case C: Sporting Family Business Generations (Joshi, Srivastava and Aggarwal, 2013)** **Organizational background-** The family tried various businesses in assorted sectors but ended up as sports equipment's. Currently into 5th generation, they were into manufacturing, marketing and selling of roller skates under the banner Ashoka Sports Industries, brandedas "Ashoka". They main target is kids as customers. **Ownership structure:** Being into fifth generation, they had multiple cross holdings from generations but over the period the stake has been diluted with only two members in the fourth and one from the fifth generation in control. **Organization structure:** Its a multigenerational enterprise having a formal organization structure, with sales and marketing directly driven by the fifth generation incumbent, who happens to be a qualified MBA in Entrepreneurship and Marketing. **Nature of business**- Basically, there are into manufacturing and selling sports equipment's business. Their main product is roller skates. **Competition-** Their competition is with all the leading manufacturers of sports equipment's, majorly skates. **Conflict-** There was a conflict in the decision making, when a member of the third generation got his sons in business. He distributed business according to their capabilities and not according to their age, as heir and diversified interests by the family members, etc. **Conflict resolution-** The three sons belonging to the fourth generation split from each other and tried hard in starting something of their own.
4	**Comfort N Care**	**Case D: Shelter Imbroglio: The rise and fall of family business (Joshi, 2012)** **Organizational background-** SPL was initiated by its founder and his friend. The seed money was Rs. 4.0 Lacs of which Rs. 1.0 Lac each was contributed by three brothers including the founder and his friend. **Ownership structure-**Three brothers and a family friend. **Organizational structure-** It had a formal organization structure, with decision making position held by he founder.

		Nature of Business- SPL was into construction business. They used to purchase land, construct house on it and then sell it. Later, they started giving houses on loans also. **Competition-** The competition was with all major construction companies. **Conflict-** The youngest son of the patriarch was having maximum capabilities amongst all, therefore gained maximum popularity, which was disliked by the other three partners. Secondly, there were too many unethical practices in the business in lust of additional profits. The partition of business at a later stage was not done on the basis of individual capabilities but on the basis of age and seniority **Conflict resolution-** Partition of business was accepted amongst the partners with the founder head receiving very less as compared to his higher capability.
5	**D.K. Exports**	**Case E- D.K. Exports (Joshi & Srivastava, 2014)** **Organizational background-** The firm D. K. Dies and Tools had been set up as a tool room by its founder. It manufactured Machine parts, Sheet Metal Tools, Jigs and Fixtures, Plastic/Rubber Molds and Metal Fabrications, professionalized in 2003 for merchant exporting, and renamed as D. K. Exports. **Ownership Structure-** Into second generation, the firm started by its founder was transferred to his son, when the founder died abruptly due to a heart attack. Currently, the daughter-in-law is also an active partner. **Organizational Structure-** The organization is international and has a formal structure. **Nature of Business-** The family is basically manufacturing and selling (exporting) machine parts components, rubber components, embroidered fabrics, sheet metal components, hydraulic cylinders. **Competition-** The competitors are leading manufacturers of dyes and those exporting similar products to European countries. **Conflict-** Before founder's death, father and son had different ways of working. Father banked on experiential learning, whereas the son used his tacit knowledge. The son holds a Master's degree in engineering and the daughter in law an MBA in International Business. They understand the business but not its complexities. The husband and wife have difference of opinion in decision making in almost every issue. There was lack of professionalization in the firm. **Conflict resolution–**Husband wife combination have off lately decided that the one who creates the problem shall only resolve it.

Analysis of Cases

Based on content analysis and interview sessions with the incumbent family businesses, the following has been summarized as in Table 2.

Table 2: Analysis of Cases

S No.	Factors to Conflict(s)	Case(s)	Issue(s)	Action Taken	Action Suggested
1.	The unique relationship-Rules, roles and dual relationships	D	D: Founder was youngest but used to take all major decisions of the business.	D: No action taken.	D: Should have consulted other brothers too.
2.	Poor communication	E,F	E: Communication-break between husband and wife.	E: The one who initiates will solve the issue. per professional discussions.	E: Communica-tion gap must be overcome by pro-
			F: Communication gap between the brothers of the first generation.	F: Events organized in the family to fill the gap.	F: Discussions over lunch and dinner table could be done.
3.	Succession planning	B,F	B: Son was intere-sted in job or some other business.	B: Son was forced to enter the family business business.	B: Son should have pursued his interest on new

			F: Altruism came along in the third generation.	F: No action taken.	F: Decisions should have been taken according to what other partners wished to do.
4.	Differing vision	A,B,D,E	A: People had differed vision and way of doing work.	A: Decisions of the majority were accepted whether right or wrong in business interest. interest be chosen.	A: Every suggestion should have been heard and then the best out of it in business
			B: Vision of both father and son were different.	B: Firstly, the work was done as per father followed by son.	B: When son knew that there was no scope in the current business, he should have initiated with his new business.
			D: Level of disagreement was high during partition.	D: Founder expressed unhappiness during partition.	D: Partition should have been done according to capabilities not according to the age.
			E: Conflicts in decision making.	E: Father used experiential knowledge while the son used tacit knowledge.	E: Professionalism was required
5.	Poor conflict management skills	D,F	D: Father could not manage the conflict of partition.	D: No action taken.	D: Partition should have been done properly to avoid conflicts amongst the brothers.
			F: Conflict of distribution of business.	F: Unresolved	F: Conflicts of family and business should be managed carefully.
6.	Jealousy amongst family	D,F	D: Other two brothers were jealous of the youngest one's popularity.	D: Distribution of property and business.	D: They should have felt proud instead of being jealous
			F: Brothers' jealousy onother on account of popularity and growth of his dismal performance in business	F: Two brothers came forward to help the third one on account	F: Elders of the family must intervene to solve the cold war.
7.	Inequality in rewards	D,F	D: Unequal distribution amongst the brothers. the least of all. performance.	D: The youngest son was the most deserving but got capabilities and	D: The youngest should have got according to his

			F: Partiality was done while distribution amongst the brothers of second generation.	F: No action taken	F: Distribution should have been done equally.
8.	Introducing a fulltime role of a family member	F	F: A sibling from the third generation entered the Plywood business but other family members had problem concerning this.	F: The sibling continues to look after the business.	F: The other family members must empathize and understand the complex business situation.
9.	Other contributing factors	A,C,E	A: Investment issue, lack of proper planning, professionalization.	A: Loan taken, no proper planning was done, no professionalization was undertaken	A: Planning should necessarily be done, firm needs to be professionalized
			C: Other people in the family had objection on the decision taken by patriarch of dividing the job according to capabilities.	C: No action taken	C: The desired was done.
			E: Conflicts of ideas on becoming international. Wife understands business but not about international marketing complexities	E: No action taken, did not touch the marketing department.	E: Required professionalism, to guide her or to give her the department of her choice.

Note:

1. A - Case A: Hafizia Art & Crafts Pvt. Ltd.
2. B - Case B: PAL
3. C- Case B: Ashoka Sports
4. D - Case D: Comfort N Care
5. E - Case E: D.K. Exports

CONCLUSION

We have found nine major conflicting issues of closely held family business. They are as follows:

1. The unique relationship- rules, roles and dual relationship
2. Poor communication
3. Succession planning
4. Differing vision
5. Poor conflict management skills
6. Jealousy amongst family members
7. Introducing a full time role of a family member
8. Other conflicting factors

While most conflicts exist in one or the other family businesses, "differing vision" and "other contributing factors" has its presence in almost all of them.

DISCUSSIONS AND LIMITATIONS

Even though the sample cases chosen were few, but they did represent a fair understanding on the objectives of this study. Had the larger sample of closely held family businesses for the research study that represented multiple geographies participated in this research, the authors would have unearthed additional dimensions on conflicts, its mitigation and resolution undertaken.

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