

# The Dispatch

## The April 2022: Words Matter

Many people look at words as they do their health—as long as everything seems to be “working,” why give it any thought? But as more and more medical literature stresses the importance of self-care at any age, so we thought it helpful for this month’s Dispatch to stress our commitment to timely and appropriate use of words. We believe that care for words is a type of care for the soul. Words can help lower or raise the emotional temperature of an encounter. Well-calibrated words are, as Proverbs says, “like apples of gold in a setting of silver.” In this issue. . .

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### A Word of Welcome

This month we welcome [Ethan Smith](#) to the family business consulting team. Growing up in Eustis, Nebraska, Ethan gained hands-on knowledge while working with his family. From row crop farming, hay production, and a commercial Angus cow-calf herd, his crop and livestock roots run deep. He is still actively involved with his family operation in Nebraska today, while also participating in a cow-calf herd in Texas. Ethan previously worked for 10 years as a third-party farm and ranch manager with Farmers National Company, and in that role developed a robust understanding of ownership, management, and succession strategies with trusts, corporate fiduciaries, charitable organizations, and individual absentee owners. Ethan currently lives in Fort Worth, Texas with his wife and daughter.

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### Three Important Words in the Family Business

[Lance Woodbury](#)

There are three critically important words in the family business – and they aren’t “I love you!” While expressing your love for your family members is important, three *other* words represent the making or breaking of the family business.

**Share:** Long-term relationships, and a common history, cause family members in business to take communication with one another for granted. Owners and managers in family businesses sometimes go days or weeks without catching up on key operational issues. Or family members assume estate plans or asset transitions will happen a certain way without ever confirming exactly what will take place. “I Knowledge” never

becomes “We Knowledge.” The key is to share what you are thinking about, what you are concerned about, what you are grateful for, and what your plans and intentions are.

**Trust:** Stephen Covey called trust “the glue of life.” It holds everything in a family business together, and it is very difficult to regain once lost. But what does trust look like in a family business? A few examples: Standing up for a family member. Dealing directly with a family member when you have concerns. Supporting a family business decision once it has been made. Following through on your promises. Respecting the organizational chart so as not to undermine a family member’s authority.

**Forgive:** Last but most important, your family business partners will at some point disappoint you, and you will no doubt disappoint them. Mistakes will be made. There may even be outbursts of anger, words spoken that you or they might regret. The most important task, the one that will contribute the most to your personal and business success, is for family members to practice mutual forgiveness.

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Reinhold Niebuhr, author of the Serenity Prayer, also wrote that “forgiveness is the final form of love.”

Sharing, Trusting, Forgiving. Remember those three words and your family business will be better!

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## Words Deconstructed

[Davon Cook](#)

Besides doing the Wordle puzzle every day, I’ve been pondering words that provide additional insight when taken apart and analyzed.

The first comes from Stephen R. Covey’s classic [The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People](#). Covey tells the story of

Victor Frankl, who was imprisoned in Nazi concentration camps. After losing his parents, brother, and wife there, one day he was naked and alone in a solitary confinement room at psychological breakdown. He had an epiphany moment and realized he could decide within himself how all of this was going to affect him. (Frankl survived to write [Man’s Search for Meaning](#).) Covey observed that between every stimulus and response, there is a *space* where we decide how to respond. And that we have a **responsibility** to use our “**response-ability**”. Hmm...that means I have a duty to think before I react and lose my temper; a duty to truly consider the other person’s idea before I say no; a duty to consider there might have been good intention before I default to assuming the worst; a duty to carefully choose my words as Lance writes about. When could you demonstrate more responsibility by carefully using your ability to respond?

Next, the adverb **together** is closely aligned with the action **to gather**. They share an intertwined etymology with the Old English word “togædere”. It makes sense they are related words. If effectively working *together* better is the goal for many of our organizations, would it be beneficial *to gather* more? Would intentionally and consistently gathering the right people with the purpose to brainstorm, improve processes, or simply be informed result in better outcomes?

In your businesses, that might look like [daily or weekly huddles](#) to cover logistics. Or pre-planting meetings to reinforce safety information and organize logistics. Or a [once-a-year brainstorming session](#) of the whole team to identify ways to improve the business. Or ownership meetings to make sure owners that don’t work there daily are kept in the loop. Or a celebration of a success. Who and when can you gather to accomplish the goal of bringing together?

## A New word – and a Rediscovered Word

[Bill Long](#)

English is a constantly evolving language. Each year the major dictionaries try to capture that evolution by coming up with lists of “trending” new words. In my mind, one of the best new words to emerge in the past twenty years is the verb “catastrophize” (my writing program still underlines it in red!). To catastrophize means to have a tendency consistently to jump to the worst conclusion in difficult situations. For example: a storm is coming. A person who catastrophizes says, “Surely this storm will wipe out everything!” Another example: Family members are late for a gathering. “Surely something dreadful has happened to them!” You all know people like this; perhaps you are one of them. Now we all have a word for it. S/he catastrophizes.

What is interesting about “catastrophize” is that the sentence in which it was prominently used several years ago also used another new word that never caught on. The psychologist John Bradshaw wrote: “Fear addicts

tend to catastrophize and awfulize.” Only one of the two made it!

Then, I have noted the increased usage of a word by those in the 35-45 year age group which was not much used by baby boomers as we were growing up, even though its origins go back hundreds of years. It is written either as one or two words: “forsure” or “for sure.” It expresses hearty agreement with what is said. A person who says “for sure” has no room for doubt. I think this word has risen in popularity over the last few decades because of the increased stress on “coming to yes” or “building consensus” in organizations. “Do you agree?” “Forsure!”

Be aware, then, of how new words may be used around you. You, indeed, may give birth to some of them.