

Guiding Principles: Kristjan Hebert

By [Tanner Ehmke](#)

[Kristjan Hebert](#), managing partner of [Hebert Grain Ventures](#) in Moosomin, Saskatchewan, Canada, knows that good relationships in a family business start with good business principles. That's what's held the 11,000-acre grain and oilseed family farm with a risk management consulting firm together as it has continued on a steady growth path. The farm today consists of his parents, his wife and two kids, four full-time employees and five seasonal employees. Kristjan points to 10 principles that are the foundation of the farm's growth.

Know cost and opportunity: "We know our cost of production very, very well. So, we try not to worry too much if we miss the top of the market as long as we're always locking in margins above cost."

Get the Facts, Make a Decision: "Get the facts, make a decision and don't be scared of that decision. If three weeks from now you find out that decision was wrong, make a new one and get the course right. It's engrained in our culture that we're not scared of making decisions."

Take Pride in Your Business: "Our mission is to be an operation of distinction, which is something to be proud of in any ag enterprise. We have a real passion to help agriculture be viewed as a real business and the backbone of North America."

Pursue Perfection: "If your goal is perfection, you've got a shot at being excellent. We want to be 5% better at everything instead of 100% better at one thing, whether that's cleaning out a bin right or making the right marketing decision."

Embrace Change: "The idea that 'if it's not broke, don't fix it' probably isn't right. You just haven't looked hard enough."

Hire for the Right Culture: "We hire more on attitude and smarts than skill. We like to hire people that like challenges, learning new things, working hard and have a team mentality. That's the culture we're trying to create."

Keep Good Records: "Have good records both for proactive planning and reactive reprimanding. You can have frank, open discussions on things that need to change, but also be proactive so mistakes don't happen again."

Work Safely: "We try to make it a safe place to work for everybody. Our biggest worry is guys working long hours, so we try to have them working in teams just to keep an eye on each other. We also have other safety standards on the farm, like for mixing chemicals."

Get Outside Perspective: "We have a board of advisers that we meet with once a year to talk about big picture and long-term strategy. That board will become more important as mom and dad get older and slow down."

Network: "It's surprising how in agriculture it's not what you grow or what you know, it's who you know – whether it's getting that load of grain accepted, finding a new crop to grow, or someone wanting you to test out a new technology."

Managing the Family-Work Mix at Holiday Time

By [Davon Cook](#)

Has this ever happened at your Thanksgiving table? Dinner starts off with a heartfelt prayer and joyful laughter. We compliment the food, inquire about the kids' activities, reminisce over a long ago story, honor a friend lost this year. Then somewhere ~30 minutes in, Dad asks Son how far the tillage crew made it yesterday. Son answers quietly and tries to change the subject. Dad persists, which leads to a status update field by field. And in a few minutes, they are the only two left at the table as everyone else has wandered off.

As we head into the holiday season, I invite you to reflect on how your gatherings distinguish time spent in family relationships from time spent on business matters. Some family members who work in the business may desire personal time talking about topics other than work. Family members not involved in the daily business may feel excluded or resent the emphasis on work—or they may actually crave the opportunity to catch up on the business.

It's also often a logical time of year to have an ownership meeting while far flung members are gathered at one



place. Take advantage of that, but schedule a specific time and make all aware of it. It's not appreciated if the movie outing is postponed because 'Dad suddenly decided we have to have a meeting'. And clarify ahead of time who will be invited, who will not, and why.

There is no "right" answer here, but strive to find an acceptable balance for *your* family. Be aware of the issue, take cues from body language, or better yet, ask your family members to collectively set some ground rules together. This is a conversation I often facilitate with clients, and there is seldom a lack of passion on the topic.

In Giving We Receive

By [Sheila Bird](#)

As we approach the holiday season, what do you think about when you think about giving? Christmas presents? Gifts to church or other charities? A bonus at work? Discounts by local retailers? Smiles and hugs from those you love? At [Sterling College](#) (Lance's alma mater), we're especially grateful when people give others the gift of a Christian education.

No matter what you think about, there are multiple health benefits to giving. There is a joke among professional fundraisers that, "When someone includes your organization into their estate plan, you guarantee they will live a long, healthy life." Scientific studies [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#) find that

- Giving increases the health of people with chronic illness.
- Elderly people who volunteer are 44% less likely to die over a 5-year period.
- Generosity reduces stress and lowers blood pressure.
- Positive social interactions created by giving are central to good mental and physical health.
- The trust and cooperation created by giving strengthens ties with others.
- Being kind and generous lets you perceive others more positively.
- Gratitude is a byproduct of giving and is integral to personal happiness, health, and social bonds.
- Observers are inspired to behave generously to other people.
- Oxytocin, a hormone that induces feelings of warmth, euphoria, and connection to others is released when we give.

These are just a few of the positive results for good health when we are generous. The next time you are tempted to hoard the blessings God has provided for you, just remember, "God so loved the world that He gave..." (John 3:16a).

Faith and Family Business: A Hymn of Thanksgiving

By [Dr. Bill Long](#)

One of my favorite Thanksgiving hymns is "[We Gather Together to Ask the Lord's Blessing](#)." Whenever the organ intones the first note of that hymn, I am transported back to my earliest days in Connecticut, when our family gathered around the large table at my grandparents' home and celebrated the blessings of liberty and our lives. With only a child's perspective on time, and witnessing the authority of my grandfather as he wielded the knife to cut the turkey, I thought that my grandparents actually were contemporaries of the Pilgrims whom we studied at school! Time and maturity has put those things in perspective, but I never will get beyond those earliest memories—and the hymn that triggers them.

That famous hymn was in fact the product of Dutch Protestants in the late 16th century, who celebrated their deliverance from the threat of Spain through this hymn. It was taken up in a German hymnbook, translated into English in the late 19th century and put in the part of the hymnbook on Thanksgiving hymns, even though the concept is not there in the original words of the song.

Yet I sing it with gusto at this time of the year. Every word brings to mind the way that God's faithfulness has followed me through the ebbs and flows of life. If you are so inclined you can hear the incomparable [Kathryn Grayson singing it](#). And as you listen, may your faith be renewed in this harvest time, and may it be a faith that lives in your heart and that of your family, your family business and your community.

