

The Dispatch

Family Business Insight for your Agriculture Company
September 2023: Resources for Your Journey

Almost all who read this newsletter have been the beneficiaries of the counsel and wisdom of Lance, Davon or Ethan. But what often is ignored in the hustle and bustle of dealing with *your* issues is that they need to deepen *themselves* in order to serve you effectively. Just as the best mentor is the best learner, so the best family business consultant is one who is spending time, and thought, on how to understand, think and communicate better. This issue of the Dispatch takes you “behind the scenes” to some of the things that they do in enriching their own thought lives. Lance suggests both books and audio resources on practical and theological themes. Davon writes of a particularly helpful podcast discussing the dynamics of a family struggle. Ethan examines the concept of “detachment” from a podcast and applies it to his life. We hope you find these reflections useful and timely. Let us know your thoughts. - [Bill](#)

Getting Better

[Lance Woodbury](#)

Several resources I would recommend to any family business right now involve three different scenarios. The first scenario is the handoff of the business, and especially the “letting go” by the senior generation. Last year [I wrote about](#) Arthur Brooks’ book [From Strength to Strength](#). Brooks offers suggestions as you transition from the strength of your current life, which you might consider the success of your family business, to the strength in your “second curve,” the period *after* you’ve achieved business success. Just this past week, Brooks was on Tim Ferris’ podcast, and you can [listen to it here](#).

The second resource is for when you are experiencing a difficult situation with someone. In [The Anatomy of Peace](#), we follow the story of a business leader who is struggling with his family and with his management team. Through insightful dialogue between the characters (including Palestinian and Jewish teachers), the protagonist learns that many of his struggles with others are rooted in his own way of thinking. It is an engaging story, whether you read [or listen](#). Another book by the same author is [Leadership and Self-Deception](#), and it is one of my all-time favorites.

The third resource is the book [Forgiveness: Why Should I and How Can I?](#) written by the late pastor [Tim Keller](#). If you work in a family business, you will, at some point, need to forgive – and be forgiven by – others. Here is a [link to a blessing I wrote](#) after reading Keller’s work, and my October *Progressive Farmer* column will offer more thoughts.

Hopefully some of these resources will improve your perspective and relationships!

A Family Business Story

[Davon Cook](#)

The [Family in Business](#) podcast featuring Chris Herschend of [Herschend Family Entertainment](#) resonated with me. The episode was entitled “Purpose,” but beyond that topic Chris shares candid, and sometimes humorous, examples of a family working through a very messy situation. He describes much distrust and traces the root to each person “writing their own story” <https://www.pinionglobal.com/people/ethan-smith/> in their own silo. Each assumes bad intentions of the other, and their allies—spouses and friends—reinforce that world view. **It is very**

easy for multi-generational families to evolve into silos of family branches, unless you intentionally build crossover experiences to counteract that.

The Herschends decided to get the conflict out in the open. They made headway when the eight cousins, who had never met together without parents, committed to a series of three meetings. Chris characterizes the first as polite but a waste of time and the second as messy and ugly.

But in the third, something clicked. They all realized “I don’t want it to end like that” (in conflict). While their family mission is “live, love, and serve together,” Chris notes that together does not mean unanimity. They are very different in many things-- faith, approach to money, and parenting styles. Trying to force unanimity isn’t successful. “Command and control falls apart after a generation or two.” Rather, they make sure being together is a choice. “To be together requires freedom not to be together.” They have a share buyback policy that originally had many stipulations. As they relaxed the rules, the interest in divesting dropped. Lowering the gates and allowing individual freedom increased the sense of shared purpose.

Give it a listen. There are many more nuggets in this podcast!

Resources for Detachment

[Ethan Smith](#)

New resources for learning—especially podcasts—now abound in our culture. As with many of you I find myself experiencing peaks and valleys as I experiment with this relatively new type of learning. One that came highly recommended to me is [The Huberman Labs](#) podcast, in which host Dr. Andrew Huberman explores neuroscience and learning behavior.

The interview that most resonated with me was with Jocko Willink, a Navy Seal who, *over four hours*, discusses [“How to Become Resilient, Forge Your Identity & Lead Others.”](#) The part I enjoyed most concerns what he calls “Detachment,” in which he highlights a skill that he learned in training when he looked through the sights of a rifle. Without spoiling the story, I can share that Jocko looks through the sights, then gradually pulls his view from the barrel of the rifle, and then looks around. By doing this, he exponentially increases the breadth of his vision. He later discusses how he has incorporated this practice into his personal life.

I find this especially useful in this season, when we are reaping the fruits of our labor in fall harvest or the last push before the end of the year. We tend to get into the tunnel-vision mode. We don’t detach ourselves from the immediate task ahead to foresee problems or take in the majesty (or successes) of where we are. We don't detach or "look around" ourselves to take stock.

I encourage you to listen to this insightful discussion and see how it may help you in whatever “battle” you find yourself in. And for something *less than* four hours, here is [an abbreviated YouTube clip](#) of Willink's explanation of how he detaches.