

Engaging the Rising Generation Discussion Worksheet

Many of the issues that family owned firms have to deal with are “polarities” to be managed rather than problems that can be solved with a “yes or no answer”. When an issue is properly regarded as a polarity to be managed, it is not a question of choosing between one approach which is “right” and another approach which is “wrong”, rather it is a question of having to find a way to accept both approaches at the same time. This is like the Chinese thinking of balancing “yin and yang”.

When an issue is a polarity to be managed, the question is how to accept both ends of the spectrum at the same time but to do so in a way that ensures that you (a) are accomplishing the positive attributes of both ends of the spectrum while (b) watching out for any “red flags” associated with the negative attributes of both ends of the spectrum.

A “polarity map” is a tool to help facilitate discussion and planning for how to manage issues that are polarities; issues that require an “and both” answer.

The “polarity map” set out below is designed to facilitate discussion and planning by a family around the question of:

- (i) on the one hand, how does a family firm engage with and listen to and empower the rising generation, give them room to make mistakes, in a way that maintains their enthusiasm and commitment to the family enterprise (the “**Left End of the Spectrum**”), while
- (ii) on the other hand also taking the view that the rising generation need to learn how to listen, to earn the trust of the current generation, need to learn how to be an employee and a manager before they can be an owner, need to put in their time and rise up through the ranks (the “**Right End of the Spectrum**”).

Both the Left End of the Spectrum and the Right End of the Spectrum can be correct and Asian family firms need to find ways to do both of these things at the same time.

There are four quadrants on a polarity map.

- The top left quadrant is where you list all of the positive attributes of following the Left End of the Spectrum;
- The top right quadrant is where you list all of the positive attributes that flow from the position set out on the Right End of the Spectrum;
- The bottom left quadrants is where you list all of the downsides or negative elements of the Left End of the Spectrum;
- The bottom right quadrant is where you list all of the downside or negative elements of the Right End of the Spectrum.

Instructions for using the Polarity Map.

1. Consider both ends of the spectrum.
2. Fill in all four quadrants on the Polarity Map.
3. Consider what steps can be taken to achieve the positive benefits of both ends of the Spectrum. What can be done to both engage with and empower the rising generation while at the same time ensuring that the rising generation put in their time and learn how to listen.
4. Finally, consider how you can tell if the negative sides of either end of the Spectrum were occurring. What would be the warning signs?

References

- Polarity Management, Identifying and Managing Unsolvable Problems, by Barry Johnson Ph. D.
- Generation Y in the Family Business, Unleashing the Potential, Tharawat Magazine, Volume 23, by Dennis T. Jaffe.
- When your parents sign the paychecks, by Greg McCann
- The Voice of the Rising Generation, Family Wealth and Wisdom, by James E. Hughes Jr., Susan E. Massenzio and Keith Whitaker

Polarity Map worksheet. Instructions: 1. Consider both ends of the spectrum described below; 2. Fill in all four quadrants; 3 Consider what steps can be taken to achieve the Upside of both ends of the spectrum; 4 Consider what feedback systems /warning systems can be adopted to ensure that you can avoid the Downside of both ends of the spectrum.

Left Positives	THE UPSIDE		Right Positives
<p>List all of the benefits of taking the approach described by the Left End of the spectrum here:</p>	<p>List all of the benefits of taking the approach described by the Right End of the spectrum here:</p>		
<p>THE LEFT END OF THE SPECTRUM It is very important for members of the Current Generation to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage with the Rising Generation • Communicate with them • Involve them & give them a voice • Give them positive encouragement & cultivate their enthusiasm • Show there is “something in this for them” • Help them with their own individual dreams 	<p>THE RIGHT END OF THE SPECTRUM Members of the Rising Generation need to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Earn legitimate Credibility <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid having an attitude of “Entitlement” • Constantly seek feedback & develop self awareness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be patient and persistent • Be willing to listen • Prove they are capable and earn the trust of their elders <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remember to act like an “employee” and not act like an “owner” 		
<p>List all of the possible downsides of taking the approach described by the Left End of the spectrum here:</p>	<p>List all of the possible downsides of taking the approach described by the Right End of the spectrum here:</p>		
Left negative	THE DOWNSIDE		Right negative