



News Briefs

January 2001

Welcome New Members!

We welcomed two family businesses to Forum membership in December:

- * **Sadoff & Rudoy Industries LLP**, Fond du Lac
- * **Kobussen Buses Ltd.**, Kaukauna

In 1947 Edward H. Rudoy began a legacy with his purchase of Block Salvage Company in Oshkosh, a small scrap yard. He changed the name to Block Iron and Supply Company to better reflect the scope of the business he had planned. Expansion followed through acquisition and Sadoff & Rudoy Industries was born in 1964 with the purchase of Sadoff Iron & Metal Company in Fond du Lac. Additional acquisitions and new operations from 1964 to today have propelled the company to its current stature of six scrap metal processing operations in Wisconsin and one in Lincoln, Nebraska.

Edward's son-in-law, Sheldon Lasky, is the current CEO while Mark and Jason, two of Sheldon's sons, are in management. You may have met Jason at the December program when he attended as our guest. Jason and Mark are interested in participating in our peer and special interest groups and in learning through the Forum programs.

Elwood Kobussen (Goldie) founded Kobussen Buses in 1937. His grandson and current company president, Joe Kobussen, was also our guest at the December program. Joe's brother Dan, uncle Mike and aunt Ann are active in the business. His parents Jim and Marion are retired from the business.

Kobussen Buses Ltd. provides transportation services for schools, paratransit, and motor coach customers. The Forum was pleased to have Kobussen as our transportation provider last March when 29 Forum members and sponsors traveled to and from O'Hare en route to our excellent Italy workshop.

We look forward to getting acquainted with, and learning alongside, these families in the coming months.



The Laskys and Kobussens will be invited to introduce their businesses in more detail at upcoming programs.

Transitioning Out of the Family Business

On January 25, 2001, several of our sponsors — **Al Hartman, Mark Johanssen, Paul Piikkila, John Peeters, and Craig Smith** will focus on the issues, concerns, and questions you, our members, raised about transitioning out of the family business.

Succession should never be an event. It should be a process. If it becomes an event, you have a problem.

*Ivan Lansberg
Director
Yale University's Program
for the Study of Family
Firms*

In studying the items that were raised, we discovered that they fit into four categories: financial issues, other business related issues such as leadership concerns, issues related to control, and concerns related to life after the business.

As the presenters discuss transition issues, they will describe, while protecting confidentiality, cases that

were successful transitions and some that were unsuccessful. The understanding of these cases and the underlying issues will undoubtedly provide everyone with insights and guidelines for successful transitions in their businesses.

Transition is a process that takes years to manage. It is *the* defining process that determines whether a business will survive into successive generations.

The Forum exists to ensure that those businesses that want to survive know how to do so and have the tools and support needed. This program is a must for every family business whether first generation or fourth. Plan to be there and to bring as many family members as possible.

Successors Group

The **Successor Generation group** now includes representatives of 10 businesses. Group members meet monthly to enhance their business knowledge and skills and to learn more about issues and strategies for successful family owned businesses.

On November 8th, the group was hosted by Tom and Joe Verhagen and their sister Mary Knapp at Larry's Market, Kaukauna. The discussion focused on the challenges of the changing marketplace and the impact of technologies. The meeting included a tour and discussion of the business.

On December 5th, the group was hosted by David Ludwig at H.G. Weber in Kiel. The meeting included an introduction to the international business environment of H.G. Weber, a tour the plant, and a discussion of issues related to developing employee ownership in the business.

The next meeting of the group will be February 1st at Morton Drug Company.

Member successors are encouraged to join the group. Learning from each other and invited experts provides multiple perspectives and experiences. Each meeting focuses on a topic of interest to the group as well as an introduction to, and tour of, the host business.

In order to plan for each meeting, we request that you make reservations at least 48 hours before the meeting by contacting Sue at (920) 424-2257 or schierss@uwosh.edu.

Best Practices Group

The first meeting of the Best Practices group is scheduled for January 23. Seventeen people have indicated an interest in participating in this group.

In response to a suggestion from **Fred Leach**, we explored the degree of interest in beginning a Best Practices group. If you have been reading your e-mail from our *familyforum* ListServ, you know that interest is high.

Over the past few weeks, the interested group members have responded to identified topics to be included in the first year's meetings. Those items are being compiled at this time.

Ron Miller, Miller Masonry & Concrete Inc., has volunteered to facilitate the first few meetings and has provided a suggested concept and format for the group. These ideas will be explored as the group forms.

Lyle Reigel, U.S. Paper Converters, has agreed to host the first meeting on January 23 from 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at his site.

If you are interested in being a part of this special

interest group and have not contacted the office, please call Sue at (920) 424-2257 no later than January 19.

Family Forum ListServ

In November, we introduced the *familyforum* mailing list, or ListServ, that provides a forum for the discussion of topics of interest using electronic mail.

During our first few months of use, we discovered some techniques for using this system.

- * Identify your topic in the subject line of the message
- * Recognize that over 100 people will receive the message so be clear and concise
- * Delete messages that aren't relevant to you
- * Automatically moving messages addressed to the *familyforum* list to a designated mailbox for review at a later time may be a good strategy
- * Reply to an individual rather than the entire list when appropriate

Recognize the power this system provides for getting quick answers from your peers and from our sponsors. Use the system to your advantage.

The *familyforum* mailing list includes both members and sponsors (over 100 individual e-mail addresses as of this mailing) so the wealth of experience and knowledge is both broad and deep.

Each message will identify the sender. To provide a detailed and direct answer to a question or concern, you should consider responding directly to the sender rather than to the entire group.

Finally, thank you for your patience as we get this system up and running. The mistakes that have been made were great for the learning process. We hope you recognized this and enjoyed getting acquainted with the system.

Forum Growth

The Forum currently has 26 family business members and five sponsors. Our goal for this year is to reach 30 members and six sponsors.

We believe that the educational programs are enhanced by the perspectives of a broad spectrum of owners and managers. We recognize the interaction with other owners and managers as one of the benefits of Forum membership.

You can help. If you know of a family business that would benefit from Forum membership, please contact our office at (920) 424-2257. We would be pleased to provide them Forum information, speak with them about how the Forum can meet their interests and needs, and/or invite them to be our guest at a program.

Members and sponsors are also encouraged to bring

prospective members as guests to the short programs. Your program registration form provides space to add the names of your guests. Note that the Forum's policy limits a prospective member business to attend only *one* program as our guest.

Conflict Resolution in the Family Business

Bud Simpson, chairman of Marion Body Works Inc. and member of the Forum, led about 60 program participants through the tools and techniques of conflict resolution at Liberty Hall on December 6.

Bud provided excellent resources, explanations, and examples along with his three basics of conflict resolution for a family business:

- * Earn and cultivate trust,
- * Cultivate "active listening", and
- * Remember that conflict resolution begins with ME.

Program attendees thanked Bud for his tangible examples and suggestions in what one called "Bud's 'folksy', down-to-earth presentation style." They also appreciated many of the tools he provided including the 360° evaluation, the consensus building model, and the code of conduct.

During the small group discussion time, Bud asked the groups to identify examples of "no-no's" for conflict resolution in a family business and examples of successful conflict resolution techniques. Members received the summary list following the program.

Another Forum first and, perhaps, one of the most memorable moments during the program was Bud's trombone playing of "Let There Be Peace on Earth" as he led the group in song to make his point. The lyrics end with the phrase, "and let it begin with ME."

Practice Dying Until You Get It Right: Seven Strategic Drills for Managing Money, Power and LoveSM

Bonnie Brown, president of Transition Dynamics, Inc. of Eugene Oregon, knows that many wills and estate plans get written but never signed. Many business plans get written, only to be filed away unimplemented. By working through some strategic drills under Bonnie's guidance, you may find it easier to get those documents signed.

Bonnie focuses on strategic drills in three core areas:

- as a wake-up call that underscores the need to focus on building a strategic foundation for change;

- as a conflict-mapping device to uncover communication time bombs, land mines, and sink holes;
- as a means of verification that key people in the family and business understand and are preparing adequately for their respective roles in the transition process.

In this workshop, you will learn how to work with interdisciplinary teams to practice these strategic drills as part of your estate and strategic planning. Done with enough lead time, these drills teach people to build skills that help you, your family, and your businesses survive transitions and thrive on the challenges that surface in the process.

Paul Sessions, director, Family Business Program, University of New Haven reports that Bonnie and her workshop were "thoroughly enjoyed and appreciated... excellent group sessions, practical and usable advice... She raised tough questions and gave tools to answer them. People felt 'provoked to action'."

Mark your calendar for this March 14, 2001 workshop.

Program Calendar 2000-2001

Date/Time	Topic/Event	Presenter(s)
Jan 25 7 - 10 am	<i>Transitioning Out of the Company</i>	Sponsors
Mar 14 7 am - 3 pm	<i>Practice Dying Until You Get It Right!</i>	Bonnie Brown, Transition Dynamics, Inc.
Apr 16 5:30 - 8:00 pm	<i>A Family Heritage Annual Dinner</i>	Don Schneider, President/CEO, Schneider National, Inc.
June 6 Noon - 8 pm	<i>Second Annual Golf Outing</i>	Mascoutin Golf & Supper Club
Oct 23 7 am - 3 pm	<i>Strengthening & Organizing the Family's Role</i>	Nancy Waichler, Follett Corporation

Information about reciprocal programs members may attend is available on our web site.

Vol. 4, No. 4 News Briefs © 2001

Wisconsin Family Business Forum

Editor: Susan Schierstedt

Phone: (920) 424-2257

E-mail: schierss@uwosh.edu

Website: www.uwosh.edu/wfbf/

UW Oshkosh, 800 Algoma Blvd., Oshkosh, WI 54901

The following sponsor-members continue to contribute their time, professional service, and money to keep their forum at the forefront of family business forums, worldwide:



First National Bank — Fox Valley has a competitive advantage of developing strong, close customer relationships, especially in the niche of family-owned businesses. Thanks to a dedicated staff, FNB has completed its 113th year of providing financial services to the people and businesses of the Fox Valley with locations in Menasha, Neenah and Oshkosh.



Grant Thornton LLP is an international accounting and management consulting firm with offices throughout the United States and in over 97 countries worldwide. Their mission is to be the leading global organization creating, enhancing, and preserving wealth for entrepreneurial companies and the people who own and run them. Grant Thornton accomplishes this by providing business, tax and financial services that deliver measurable value to their clients.



McCarty, Curry, Wydeven, Peeters & Haak LLP has been serving the legal needs of large and small family businesses in northeast Wisconsin since 1949. The firm's services include all aspects of business and corporate law, real estate, complex estate planning, commercial and personal litigation, as well as general practice.



Retained Earnings Company/MassMutual—The Blue Chip Company has 144 years of service and recognized excellence in providing family owned businesses with the product tools that allow for the confident construction of estate and business succession plans. The firm brings experience, education, empathy and motivation to clients' quest for financial growth and security. Acknowledged as the premier provider of pension and investment products, life and health insurances.



University of Wisconsin Oshkosh, College of Business Administration provides undergraduate and graduate education with a wide array of outreach services to benefit economic development in northeast Wisconsin. The faculty and staff of the College are professionals dedicated to being quality teachers, accessible to students; furthering knowledge through research; and serving as valuable resources to the University and community. A key strength of the College is providing professional expertise through personal contact among students, faculty, and members of the community.
