

# HOW TO



## Communicating with the Next Generation

**L**ack of effective communication among family members is the root cause of most family business failures. Effective communication between parents and their adult children is essential to a mutually satisfying transfer of a legacy from one generation to the next. A legacy is the summation of a lifetime of achievement, the context in which that lifetime will be remembered, including: reputation, accomplishments, and a persons' impact on the world. Good communication skills are essential to establishing the mechanisms for transferring that legacy to the next generation. Furthermore, good communication skills can be learned. Communication between people include both verbal and non-verbal aspects. Facial expression, posture, orientation and voice tone all add richness to the message being sent.

### Communication

The foundations for solid communication skills include: questioning, listening, explaining, and reflecting.

- Questioning: Asking questions is how we get information, but different kinds of questions yield different results.
- Listening: Active listening seeks to hear what the other person is saying and understand what they are feeling. The understanding of where another person is coming from – what his or her wants and needs are – is called empathy.
- Explaining: Some conversations require a lot more time, effort and involvement than others. If you want to have a conversation that will require a significant amount of effort from another person, it will go better if that person understands what he or she is getting into and consents to participate.

- **Reflecting:** Reflecting is the key skill of a master listener. In a reflective response, the listener restates the feelings and/or content of what the speaker has communicated and does so in a way that demonstrates understanding and acceptance.

Barriers to good communication can be split into two main groups: physical and emotional. Physical barriers can be more easily identified and allowances made when dealing with a speech impediment, deafness, or impaired mental capacity. Emotional barriers might be less obvious. These hurdles include things like perceptions, prejudices, or fear and threats. Clearly these will take more time and effort to overcome. Listening is the main skill to use when working to overcome obstacles to communication.

## Conflicts

All family businesses experience interpersonal conflicts. It is not a matter of if, but a matter of when. Here are some basic approaches to try in resolving conflicts.

- **Work it out:** Encourage the family members to work out their own conflict and reward them for solving their own problems. Encourage family members to attack the problem, not the person.
- **Mediation:** Mediation is where the two parties involved in the conflict meet with an objective third party who recommends a solution.
- **Arbitration:** Arbitration is a binding solution that is imposed by someone else.
- **Separation:** When all other attempts to resolve the conflict fail, as a last resort one or more family members may be forced to agree not work together in the business.



## Resolving Conflict

Conflict is a natural part of life brought on by different beliefs, experiences, and values. If not managed carefully, however, conflict can harm relationships. Here are seven steps adults can use to resolve conflicts: 1. Treat the other person with respect, 2. Confront the problem not the person, 3. Define the conflict, 4. Communicate understanding, 5. Explore alternative solutions, 6. Agree on the most workable solution, and 7. Evaluate after time.

## Forgiveness

Where conflicts are not resolved to a persons' satisfaction, that person has at least two choices. One choice is to hold it against the others involved, embitter themselves, and remain in that conflict. Another choice is forgiveness. Forgiveness dares you to imagine a future based on the possibility that your hurt will not be the final word on the matter. It challenges you to give up your destructive thoughts and to believe in the possibility of a better future. It does not mean you will forget what happened or that the person is not responsible for what he/she did or that you need to bring him/her back into your life.



Telling the other individual that you forgive them is not required to begin the process to heal the hurt. It has little or nothing to do with another person, because forgiveness is an internal matter. To forgive another simply means you no longer allow the person's actions or words to cause you resentment, anger, or pain.

One of the greatest misconceptions about forgiveness is the belief that forgiving the offense means that you condone it. That is not true. In fact, we can only forgive what we know to be wrong. Forgiveness does not mean that you must reconcile with someone who treated you badly. The unkind and selfish people in your life would retain power over you indefinitely if their poor behavior was the thing that determined whether or not you can heal. Forgiveness is the experience of finding peace inside and can neither be compelled nor stopped by another.

## Family Communication

Family council meetings, family business meetings, and a family code of conduct are all channels through which family members can communicate effectively. These channels will not prevent conflict on their own. However, where family members are regularly communicating via open, transparent, and expected mechanisms any conflicts that do arise are likely to be less frequent and of lower intensity.

There may be many benefits to using an outside expert to facilitate family meetings or at least to get them started. Engaging the services of an expert who works with family businesses, understands the significance of family dynamics and is willing to deal with family issues could be one of the best investments you make.

Family council meetings could be used to provide a communication forum to keep the broader family informed of what is going on in the family business, as well as the current and anticipated role of the family members in it. These meetings are typically comprised of the broader family, including spouses, in-laws, children, grandparents and grandchildren whether active or non-active in the family business.

The purpose of family business meetings is to provide the active family members with a dedicated communication forum to discuss family issues that impact the management and ownership of the business. The agenda of the meeting can be primarily business issues or primarily family issues or both. The meetings help family members who are working in the business to deal with the interaction between family and the business. Family business meetings are not intended to replace regular business/management meetings. Family business meetings are dedicated meetings for family members who are working together in the business to deal with the interaction between the family and business.

Establishing a family business code of conduct could be one of the most important pieces of work achieved by a family business. The code of conduct is a list of items that are of significance to the family members involved in the business.

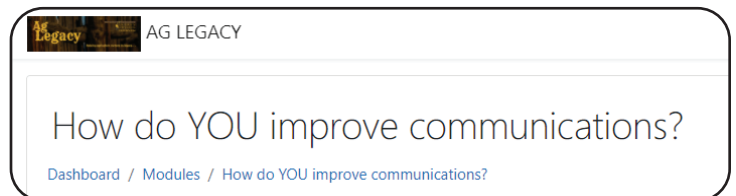
## Family Business Success

Successful family businesses are based on strong sense of team among active family members. Engaged teamwork leads to greater productivity and creativity, increased family self-esteem and ultimately to the success of the family, the business, and everyone involved. Some common components to strong teams include: 1. Commitment: All team members must be committed to the mission and goals of the business and to each other. 2. Cooperation: Cooperation is based on a shared sense of purpose and mutual gain. and 3. Contribution: Contribution should never be an option. All team members must contribute toward the mission and goals of the business. You cannot sacrifice the good of the family team for the good of an individual.

## Online Module

AGLEGACY.org hosts a set of online modules to allow individuals and families to explore legacy concepts further. Modules are available free of charge to all who are willing to register to participate (self-registration is available 24/7).

Modules, posted in Moodle courseware, offer the opportunity for individuals to engage anonymously around the topic of communication. Sections of this module provide participants the chance to interact with one another, explore the topic of communication with the next generation and what it means, discuss strategies that work and



those that have not, and test their knowledge about available resources. Each module includes several components to allow participants to engage the topic from several different perspectives.

## Best Practices -

Best Practices begins with a short recorded presentation on the topic. Slides with narration is one format, but materials are also available in audio-only (MP3) format, as well as a version with the slides and accompanying narration as text, for those more comfortable reading the presentation offered. A short Q&A session offers participants the opportunity to hear others' questions and the presenter's response.

### COMMUNICATION Best Practices

**Best Practices:** offers the chance to learn when others teach. In this section you will be able to review a recorded version of the live webinar and view the slides presented, complete with the speaker's notes.

### COMMUNICATION Ideas to Build On

**Ideas to Build On:** offers the chance to learn by observing others. In this section you will have the opportunity to engage in a discussion forum. You will have the chance to share what has worked for you and to learn what strategies others have used and how they worked as you each react to the posted discussion questions.

## Ideas to Build On -

Ideas to Build On offers discussion questions for families or individuals to respond to. These responses might include relating what has worked for you or stories you have heard of techniques that have worked for others. In addition, you might also learn what strategies others have used and how they worked as you each react to the posted discussion questions.

## Tips for Success -

The Tips for Success section offers a set of AGLEGACY newsletters for further reading, as well as a chance to teach others about resources you are aware of, approaches you have tried and that have worked, or to describe methods that families you are familiar with have used. In this way, you may uncover new ideas for yourself or help others refine an approach they might try.

### COMMUNICATION Tips for Success

**Tips for Success:** provides a chance for participants to teach others about strategies that have worked. In this section you can teach others about resources you are aware of, approaches you have tried and that have worked, or describe methods that families you are familiar with have used. In this way, you may uncover new ideas for yourself or help others refine an approach they might try.


### COMMUNICATION Practice

**Practice:** allows participants the chance to learn by practicing the concepts covered previously. Practice may include completing an assignment, submitting a document you've prepared for comment, or checking your knowledge level with a short quiz.

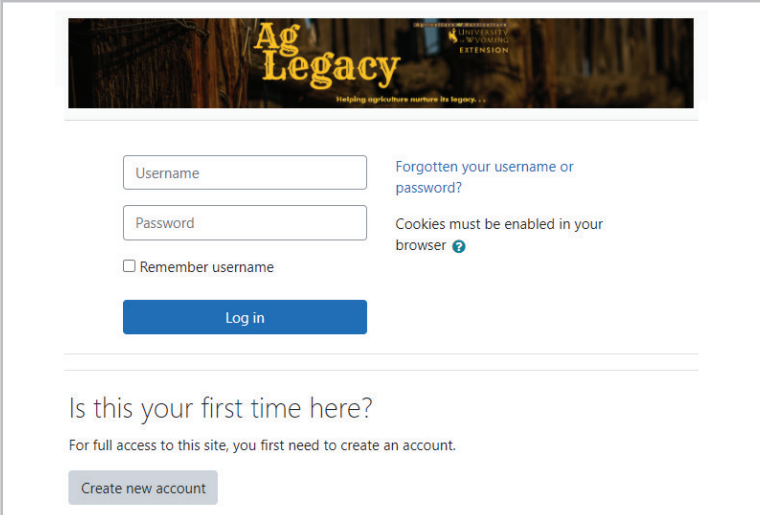
## Practice -

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## ACCESS:

To access the online module, point your browser to [AGLEGACY.org](http://AGLEGACY.org). Click on the Modules tab (at the top) and select any module from the list with a Moodle icon. 

Click a title to begin your registration process if you have never registered for an Ag Legacy module before. Then click the Create New Account button to enter your registration information. An email message will be sent to the address you enter that includes a link allowing you to finalize your registration once you complete the form. Now login and enjoy your AGLEGACY online module!



*Persons seeking admission, employment, or access to programs of the University of Wyoming shall be considered without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability, age, veteran status, sexual orientation, or political belief.*