Data office supply: a study of leadership in family business

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April 1994
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4-20-1994
I. Research and Discussion of Family Business

What is a Family Business?

When asked to define the term "family business," the majority of people conjure up images of small mom and pop, cleaners, restaurants or laundry mats. The term family business is often surrounded with ambiguity concerning what the qualifications and/or ramifications are, that separate a family business from any other type of business. In fact, Websters New Collegiate Dictionary does not contain a definition of a Family business, or even list the term.

Fortunately, there is an abundance of literature that focuses on family business. According to the aforementioned literature, a family business is,

"one that has been started by a family member and has been passed, or is expected to be passed, to succeeding generations of the family, sometimes through marriage. Descendants of the original founder(s) will own and control the business. Also, members of the family work, participate in, and benefit from the enterprise (Bork, 1986, p24)."

Another definition of family business defines the term as a,

"profit-making concern that is either a proprietorship, a partnership, or a corporation. In a corporation, the stock is either privately owned by a family or, if part of the stock is publicly owned, the family owns a controlling interest. The family must also operate the business. Typically, the owner selects the employees, maintains direct contact with them, works in their behalf, and expects a relationship of mutual loyalty (Alcorn, 1982, p23)."

In other words, regardless of the shape the particular
individual who, with the aid of his or her family, runs the business and then hands the business over to a member of the family, is in fact a family business.

While a proportion of family businesses are often the small operations that consist of an individual or couple, operating a relatively small store, one would be surprised as to the enormous diversity of the different types of family businesses. A family business can range from a small endeavor operated out of the home, to enormous companies such as the family-operated Wrigley Company (chewing gum) which boasts annual sales of over half of a billion dollars (Bork, 1986, p5).

Importance of Family Business

With a better understanding of exactly what a family business is, one needs to understand the enormous role family business plays in American economics. Calvin Coolidge said, "The business of America is business. And the family enterprise is it's backbone (Bork, 1986, p7)." "By 1980, the Small Business Administration reported that there were more than 13 million family-held businesses in the United States (Bork, 1986, p5)." These 13 million family-held businesses, "In the sense of being owned (or at least controlled) and operated within a single family, make up 90 percent of the 15 million businesses in the United States (Barnes and Hershon, 1976, p105-114)." "Roughly 175
States, are either owned or controlled by a single family (Lansberg S., 1983, p39-46)." Contrary to the stereotype that family businesses don't have much impact on the greater economic landscape, "Family businesses generate between 40 and 60 percent of the gross national income (Bork, 1986, p5)." The aforementioned statistics clearly illustrate the importance of family business to American economics.

**History of Family Business**

Our country was founded by a number of entrepreneurs or family businessmen. "John Hancock was the adopted nephew and partner of Thomas Hancock whose successful whalebone business grew to become a monopoly in 1976 (Bork, 1986, p1)." Paul Revere was also a family businessman/patriot. Revere, "Established a business in copper and metals. With his family's help, he managed both revolutionary activities and a prosperous firm. His business lasted through five generations of the Revere family, merging in 1928 to become Revere Copper and Brass, Inc. Revere is still a household word synonymous with quality and excellence in copper more than two centuries long (Bork, 1986, p2)."

During the industrial revolution that took place between 1830 and 1900, many businesses were family business whose names still stand for major businesses today. The following is a list of some of the family businesses of that era that are still recognized today.
"Andrew Carnegie (steel); Marshall Field (retailing); Jay Gould (railroads); J. Pierpoint Morgan (banking); Samuel Cunard (shipping); Charles Goodyear (originator of rubber vulcanization); Samuel P. B. Morse (telegraph); E. B. Bigelow (carpets); John Deere (farm machinery); I. M. Singer (sewing machines); Thomas Edison (light bulb, phonograph); George Eastman (camera); Cyrus McCormick (grain Reaper); Henry Ford (automobile manufacturing); P. D. Armour (meat Packing); E. Remington (rifles); and Alexander Graham Bell (telephone). (Bork, 1986, p3)."

Family business continued to be a part of the American economic landscape throughout the early twentieth century. After suffering through the depression following Black Tuesday, October 29, 1929, family business enjoyed a substantial growth period during World War II, as they worked to fulfill the military and social needs of the time. (Bork, 1986, p4)

Family business struggled during the 1960's as competition from sophisticated computer technologies and foreign competition threatened the American Entrepreneur. (Bork, 1986, p5) During the 1970's, family business enjoyed a resurgence, largely due to the efforts of women who, "sought through family business to resolve the conflict between commitment to family and financial survival (Bork, 1986, p5)."

Problems Facing Family Business

All too often, people stereotype family businesses as being negatively affected by a number of problems. "The stereotype of the family business as a cauldron of
yielding to a new image (Bork, 1986, p5)." While not all family businesses suffer from problems, there are some inherent problems that could, and often do, negatively effect the business, ultimately resulting in the failure of the business. "Only 13 percent of successful family businesses last through the third generation (Ward, 1987, p1)."

Any business is susceptible to failure from causes such as changing markets and technologies, but the family business possesses additional characteristics that could potentially be harmful. In order to operate successfully as a family business, certain pitfalls common only to family business, must be addressed and avoided. Often, family businesses, "lack the financial capabilities or staff skills of larger concerns (Ward, 1987, p3)." This lack of funds can often lead to the decline of the family business because it is unable to keep up with larger, more financially endowed companies. If a small, family business cannot afford to incorporate expensive new technology, and subsequently becomes less competitive, the family business will fall further and further behind companies that can afford new technologies.

Another potential problem is that often, "The family itself becomes a stumbling block (Ward, 1987, p3)." Issues of the family become intertwined with issues of the business. For example, when the family is more concerned
business, they allocate profits towards satisfying the needs of the family, rather than investing the money back into the company, which would ensure future success.

Another issue that can potentially threaten a family business is role carry over, either from home to work or work to home. A family member who has a certain role in the household sometimes assumes that role in the business or vice versa. Carrying over roles from the household to work or vice versa, can, and often does, lead to role conflict. If one sees their role in the family as one thing, and acts that way in the business, regardless of the requirements of their position, conflict can result from that individual overstepping the boundaries of their role in the business.

The two types of role conflict are between parental/offspring or wife/husband. An example of wife/husband role carryover occurs when a wife may be the head of the household in terms of making the financial decisions. If the wife carries that role over into the business when it is not her responsibility, assuming that she is more skilled in financial concerns than her husband, this could potentially harm their relationship and subsequently, the business.

Parent/offspring carryover commonly manifests itself when a parent assumes that since he or she is dominant in the household, they should also be dominant in the business. This feeling of dominance often manifests itself in
authoritarianism, regardless of the competency, and potential superiority of the offspring.

Another potential problem that family businesses face is the issue of succession. The problem of succession, or choosing a new leader for the business, can prove harmful to the business if not addressed and handled correctly. Succession needs to be considered before the time comes when the current head of the business decides it is time to retire. In the event of the premature demise of the company head, a successor would be needed immediately to ensure the survival of the businesses. Succession poses other possible threats to the company. Deciding who is to be the successor is a difficult task because of the necessity to decide who is most capable of running the business, as well as addressing the possibility of offending the non chosen.

The Family Business Lifecycle

There are four developmental stages that the majority of family businesses go through. The first stage is the Creating the Business phase which is characterized by the founder creating the new business. This stage is characterized by the founder being, "consumed with the problems of finding capital, developing a viable product and creating the means for getting the product to the marketplace (Dyer, 1986, p4)." The "means of getting the product to the marketplace," involves establishing the type
the good(s) and assembling a staff to carry out the plan of action.

The second stage is the *Growth and Development* stage. (Dyer, 1986, p4) This stage is characterized by the finder dealing with a set of problems that include; changes in the business environment, delegation of responsibility, teaching of the founder's values and beliefs to employees, training family members for future leadership, competition between family and non-family employees, and retirement and estate planning. (Dyer, 1986, p4) Due the number of problems that face a family business in this stage, "most businesses fail to make it to the second generation (Dyer, 1986, p4)."

The third stage in the life cycle of a family business is *Succession to the Second Generation* (Dyer, 1986, p4)." Businesses in this stage are now mature and face a different set of problems. The founder is no longer the driving force of the company which has become a complex network of family and non-family employees, all of which have their own interests. These interests range from personal financial benefits to reinvesting monies in order to ensure the future success of the company. In this stage, the major obstacle facing the business is managing the conflicting interests of employees, bringing them together to work for the common good (Dyer, 1986, p5).

The fourth and final stage is the *Public Ownership and Professional Management* stage. (Dyer, 1986, p5) The major
capitol to remain competitive and continue growing. This often poses the possibility of the company going public. Another issue that needs resolving in this stage is the bringing in of professional management if necessary. These problems are often not resolved in the best possible manner, which results in the business becoming a publicly owned, professionally managed company (Dyer, 1986, p5).

Culture in Family Business

Webster's dictionary defines culture as, "The integrated pattern of human knowledge, belief, and behavior that depends upon man's capacity for learning and transmitting knowledge to succeeding generations (Webster, 1990, p314)." Culture plays a crucial role in family business. Culture allows the founder to successfully develop and institute business plans according to a clear understanding of the culture of the business.

There are four levels of culture in a family business, the first of which is the Artifacts level (Dyer, 1986, p15). Artifacts are the sights and sound the distinguish and separate one area from another. When someone goes to another country, they immediately notice different sights and sounds that are different than the sights and sound with which they are familiar in their home setting. So to is the case with family business. When one enters a family business, they are confronted with verbal, physical and
that business. Verbal artifacts are the language and jargon that is used by the members of the business as well as the stories and myths told within the organization (Dyer, 1986, p15). Verbal artifacts such as sarcastic slogans in the office cue one into the culture of the business.

Physical artifacts describes the, "art, technology, physical layout and accepted working attire," of the organization (Dyer, 1986, p16). Physical artifacts such as formal business attire worn by everyone in the company or the management's office being obviously physically set apart from the rest of the employees, gives one who enters the establishment clues to what is the pervading culture of that particular business.

The behavioral artifacts of a family business are the clues, given by the founder of the business, that communicate the ideals and beliefs of the founder, subsequently shaping the actions of the employees (Dyer, 1986, p16). By making ones stance, on issues such as smoking and drinking, known to all of the employees of the organization, the founder attempts to shape the culture. Subsequently shaping the actions of his or her employees, in accordance with the culture of the organization.

The second level of culture in the family business is Perspectives. Perspectives refer to the, "coordinate set of ideas and actions a person uses in dealing with some problematic situation (Becker, Geer, Hughes and Strauss,
shared rules and norms that are associated with the cultural artifacts and applicable in a given situation (Dyer, 1986, p17).” Perspectives provide a framework for a company, that defines the boundaries of acceptable behaviors for employees in specific situations, and gives the employee an acceptable course of action that should be taken when facing these situations.

The third level of culture in family business is Values. Values, "are broader, transitional principles that serve as guidelines for overall behavior (dyer, 1986, p18)." While perspectives give the employee specific guidelines for behavior in specific situations, values govern the overall actions of the employee(s), regardless of the situation. "Values reflect the general goals, ideals and standards, such as, serve the customer, and show initiative Dyer, 1986, p18)," that provide the employee with a general understanding of the philosophy of the company.

The fourth and final level of culture in an organization is Assumptions. Assumptions form the very foundation of the culture of the family business. Assumptions are, "the core beliefs that underpin overt artifacts, perspectives and values (Dyer, 1986, p19)." Assumptions of culture fall into seven categories, assumptions about; "relationships, human nature, the nature of truth, the environment, universalism, time, and the nature of human activity (Dyer, 1986, p20)." These
assumptions between the employees, and allow the members of an organization to understand those assumptions and their relations to the culture of the family business.

II. Data Office Supply

The Business

Data Office Supply is a relatively small, family-owned, office supply company. The company has been in existence for six years. Data Office Supply serves mainly the Richmond area. Its customers include; doctors offices, academic offices, state offices and various other types of commercial and retail businesses.

The company is basically a delivery service. Data Office Supply offers free, next-day delivery of all of its office products. The company is not a large wholesaler by any means. Data has very little product in stock, the majority of merchandise is acquired via local distribution warehouses. Data offers a variety of office products to its customers by using a generic catalogue, created by its suppliers, with Data Office Supply printed on the cover. The customer simply finds the item in the catalogue that they wish to purchase and order it from Data. Data then, at the end of every day, places orders with its suppliers according to the requests of the customers. Daily deliveries and pickups from these suppliers, is the manner
in which Data offers a wide variety of products to its customers without needing a large warehouse or inventory.

The office itself is fairly small. Data Office Supply occupies one third of a small to medium sized building in the west end of Richmond. The space is divided into two sections, warehouse and offices. The warehouse portion is approximately 20' x 35' and is used to store items that are ordered regularly, such as; pens, pencils, copy paper, computer paper, tape and other smaller office supplies. The warehouse is also used as a work station where products are received and then packaged for delivery.

The other half of the space is dedicated office space. There is a common room, approximately 20' x 20' that contains desks for three individuals, a small refrigerator and a small copy machine. There are two smaller offices adjacent to this common room, one for the president and one which contains a computer workstation.

The Researcher

Data Office Supply currently employs six people. The first employee that I will discuss is myself, Justin Andress. I am not beginning with myself because I feel I am most important to the business. I begin with myself because I feel that one must understand my role both in the business and in the family to fully understand the information that follows.
I have worked at Data Office supply, off and on, for almost two years. My main job responsibility is receiving and delivering office supplies. I have also assembled a great deal of merchandise such as furniture, and have performed clerical work as well as answered the phones to take orders.

One might ask how an outsider came to be a part of this business. Well, I am engaged to Jessica Bailey, cousin of Michell Harika, Wife of Gus Harika, founder of the company. I was asked to work during the fall of my junior year, after I ceased playing football. Since then, I have worked part time during school, and full time over breaks. During this semester and the course of my observing the company for this research project, I worked approximately twenty hours a week. The number of hours I put in at Data, gave me more than ample time for observation and discussion with everyone who works at the company.

Since I worked for the company during the course of my conducting research for this study, my method of observation has been that of the participant observer. Participant observation is a term used in sociology to describe, "the main technique use in conducting fieldwork, involving living among a people and participating in their sociocultural system (Peoples and Bailey, 1991, p436)." In other words, the observer lives with the people with whom he or she is studying and takes place in all of the rituals and social
exactly live with the group, I worked with them in enough facets of the operation, in a large enough percentage of the week, to be considered a participant observer.

When one is a participant observer, one must be very careful when reporting on, and evaluating the subjects being studied. It is very easy for the participant observer to subconsciously include his or her personal biases while recording their observations. Every effort must be made by the observer to remain impartial in their representation of the people and the events being studied.

Being both a member of a different culture, a different age group, and not being a member of the family, I had to make a conscious effort not to let any personal biases or conflicts prejudice my findings. I must admit, conflicts that arise during work, have the potential to, and often do skew one's thinking about a certain individual. It is only after serious reflection, and objective analysis of the situation, that one can report on what actually occurred rather than simply tell their side of the story. In summary I want it to be understood that I made every possible effort to ensure that my results were not biased in any way.

The methods I employed during my research were varied. As previously discussed, I used participant observation to gather information about the company and its members. While I did observe occurrences that I took part in, I also observed occurrences that did not involve me personally. By
an objective view of the company and it's members. I also incorporated direct discussions with the members of the business regarding issues that I felt were of particular interest regarding this project. In addition to conversations, I created and distributed a survey that will be discussed in a later portion of this paper.

The People

Ghassan (Gus) Harika is the president and founder of the company. Gus is in his mid to late forties and is first generation Lebanese, he moved to the United States in 1972. He started Data Office Supply six years ago with the aid of several family members. I am not sure of this, but I have been told that he received financial support to start the business, from his brother Sam, who also works at Data and will be discussed later.

Gus' responsibilities, according to his response to the survey (discussed later), range from, "overseeing selling and purchasing, invoicing, shipping and all aspects of the operation." Because of his position as "president," Gus is the formal leader of the company. As a person, Gus is a very likeable and pleasant individual who attempts to keep the atmosphere in the office fairly informal. His dress code is informal, usually jeans and a short sleeve shirt or sweater. His leadership could also be considered informal, at one moment he is joking around with the employees,
times he is forced to act as a manager and tell someone to accomplish a task.

Gus' informal style makes for a pleasant work environment, but often leads to sub-par performance because of the lack of an authority figure motivating the employees. The surveys (discussed later) illustrate the different motivations of the different employees. The different motivations of employees require actions to be taken by the leader according to their motivation. Gus does understand, somewhat at least, the different motivation of the employees. He does not, however, understand that he needs to act in a way to accommodate these motivations in a manner that will benefit both the business and the employee. An example of this is Gus' allowing of one employee to show up whenever they want to. While this does coincide with the individuals admitted motivation of flexibility in the workplace, performance is often sacrificed at the expense of the individuals preferences.

Gus does have a firm grasp in the concept of pleasing the customer and offering the best product and service at the best possible price. He is a decent businessman in that respect, in other respects, his business practices could be questioned as to their effectiveness.

Gus' main weakness in his business practice, is his overlapping of business and family responsibilities. Gus has expressed to me many times, how he is annoyed at the
business because it is a family business." By this, Gus means the attitude of family members. These family members feel that, because the business is a family-run enterprise, they have certain freedoms that are not available to people who work in a non-family business. More specifically the flexibility to leave responsibilities of work in order to fulfil a familial duty. The irony in Gus repeatedly uttering this remark is that he is the main purveyor of this mindset.

A typical day for Gus includes, conservatively, at least one and a half hours being devoted in some way to a family or other personal concern. Trips to pick up kids from dance class, take them to nursery school, long conversations with family members and/or friends are all too often the norm rather than the exception. These activities often take away from his ability to perform business duties. His actions contradict his displeasure at others treating the business as anything other than a "normal" business. Perhaps if Gus were a little more introspective, he might realize that it is exactly this element of flexibility that he enjoys as the single most benefit he enjoys about his job.

The next employee to be discussed is Michelle Harika, Gus's wife. She is in her mid thirties and is of Lebanese decent, but only third or fourth generation. Michelle also has been with the company since it's inception, six years
The third member of Data that will now be discussed is Sam Harika. Sam is Gus' brother and is also first generation Lebanese. I am unsure of Sam's exact business title and exactly what his responsibilities are because even after several requests, he refused to fill out a survey saying, "I don't understand these types of things." Sam's observed duties include receiving payments from customers, issuing checks for those picking up merchandise, small deliveries and answering phones.

Sam has been the cause of many frustrations for me during my time with Data office supply. My frustrations with Sam began long before he refused to fill out a survey. My initial frustration was a result of me not knowing exactly what was his role and what were his responsibilities.

Through observation, it was clear what everyone else was at least supposed to be doing, but Sam was different. Some days he would come in late and some days he would not come in at all. When he was at the office, he would simply open up the mail, not payments from customers, but junk mail along with his personal mail. When he wasn't opening the mail, he was running some type of errand. He would go to the post office to mail something, even though a postman picked up the mail from the office daily. Sometimes he would read a magazine or check the fluids in his car, anything but something that resembled work for the company.
I initially thought that I felt hostility towards Sam because I was doing all of the work and he was being lazy, but that was not the case. I felt hostility towards this individual because I felt he was hurting the company by receiving a salary for not doing anything. I felt that if the company were to encounter some financial difficulty, it would surely be attributed to a needless expense of paying Sam for doing nothing. I don't want to give the impression that Sam and I don't get along, we do, it is just that I feel resentment towards someone that freeloads.

My displeasure with Sam grew as I had a number of conversations with different members of the family. Several people expressed to me how the Lebanese cultural attitudes towards work differ greatly from western ideas. I had always been brought up on the ideal that hard work, even hard physical work, is a virtue, something that should be respected. Well, the Lebanese look down on physical labor as something that the lower class does, not the upper classes. With this knowledge I began noticing how sometimes Gus, but mostly Sam, would abstain from performing any physical labor, using the excuse that I was, "so much stronger than he is." Initially I thought he was telling the truth but when I forced the issue by asking him to unload the material he picked up, he responded, "no, I don't do that, you are much better at that kind if stuff than me." This infuriated me. To think that this man thought that I
the lifting, really made me dislike Sam. Even after
critical reflection of the events I have described, I still
feel that Sam intentionally "delegated," for a lack of a
better word, any physical task because he felt it was
beneath him.

The next employee of Data Office Supply that will be
discussed is Ed Hottle. Ed is in his late fifties and has
been with the company for five years. Ed is not connected
with the family (Harika) in any way. Ed came to the company
when a small office supply store that he owned failed.
Office Supply Salesman is what Ed considers his official job
title and his responsibilities include sales, answering
phones, taking orders, and occasional small deliveries.

Mr. Hottle is a very nice, cordial man, but his
effectiveness as an employee can be questioned. During my
observations, Ed has proven himself to be reliable to show
up for work on time and stay there. While Ed is at work,
however, his effectiveness is questionable. Every morning,
Ed can be found at his desk, eating a McDonalds sausage
biscuit and reading the paper, occasionally answering the
phone until Cheryl (discussed later) arrives at work. The
significance of this lack of activity is that he could use
the time in the morning to communicate with existing
customers or investigate potential new customers.

While Ed is a pleasant, willing employee, he is often
prone to making mistakes or forgetting to perform a duty
mistakes, but Ed is constantly forgetting to do something or getting something wrong. Ed's susceptibility to error can be attributed to his lack of organization. His desk is often in disarray, and his Rolodex of business cards is only half full, with the remainder of cards in a pile in his drawer. This lack of organization often makes Ed appear confused and incompetent, which is not an asset one would want one's main salesman to have.

Another reason for Ed's subpar performance stems from complications outside of the office. Just like every other member of Data Office Supply, Ed's performance is negatively effected by overlapping concerns of family and business. Unlike the Harikas, Ed is not hampered by time constraints resulting from family commitments. Ed is negatively effected by a recent separation from his wife of over thirty years. Ed's wife leaving him has had a severe effect on him. Not a day goes by when he does not mention the separation or refer to his wife in some manner. This focusing on his personal problems could be the single most deterring factor that keeps Ed from performing to the best of his abilities.

The final employee that will be discussed is Cheryl Barlow. Cheryl is married, in her mid forties, and has been with the company for four years. Cheryl is not related to the family in any way and I am unsure of exactly how she came to work at Data. Cheryl's presence at Data Office
unknown, even to her. Responsibilities often assigned to Cheryl include; filing, sales, delivery and general office maintenance (cleaning).

Cheryl's position at Data is unusual to say the least. Cheryl does not have a set time that she has to come to work. Some days she comes in at ten thirty, some days at eleven thirty, and some days she does not come in at all. What is being described should not be confused with flex time because nobody knows when or if Cheryl will come into work that day because she does not communicate when she will arrive. This negatively effects the office because Ed is forced to stay and answer the phones until Cheryl comes into work, lessening his ability to go out and interact with the customers, which is his main responsibility.

Cheryl's lackadaisical attitude transcends from her arrival time to her actual work. Like Gus, she spends a great deal of time on the phone handling personal concerns. In between phone calls, smoking breaks and conversations about anything but business, Cheryl does do a little bit of work. Cheryl's "flexibility" is often a source of frustration and conflict in the office, which will dealt with in great depth in a later portion of this paper.

Organizational Structure

The structure of an organization is reflects in the organizational chart. An organizational chart is a visual
grouping together of individuals into departments, and the design of systems to ensure effective communication and integration across departments (Daft, 1992, p179)."

Reporting relationships and grouping of individuals constitute the framework of the organization. The design of communication and integration systems pertain to the interactions between members of the organization.

The organizational chart for Data Office supply can be found in the appendix.

There are no formal systems designed to ensure effective communication and coordination of efforts. Communication happens randomly, without any governing rules. There are also no formal groupings of people into independent departments. The overlapping of duties of each individual makes it impossible to divide the employees into separate groups. The only organizational chart that can be observed is the hierarchical system of authority at Data.

The organizational structure that is perceived by the employees at Data differs from the organizational chart that I created after observing the organization. The perceived formal levels of hierarchy at Data offers a chain of command with the first level being the president, Gus. The second level is perceived to composed of Michelle and Sam. The third level contains Cheryl, Ed, and myself.

The organizational chart that I observed is quite different from the perceived hierarchical chart. The first
only other level, is made up of the remaining individuals; Sam, Ed, Cheryl, and myself. The significance of the differentiation between the perceived organizational chart of Data and the chart derived from my observations, is

Sources of Conflict

There are several sources of conflict at Data office supply. Conflict, "occurs when people have separate but conflicting interests (Lewicki & Litterer, 1985, p.4)." The primary source of conflict at Data is conflicting roles. The conflicts of roles are not a result of role expectancies of either the leader or the subordinate being met. The conflict occurs when the different roles that each individual plays in different environments, overlap and result in one role suffering from a lack of effort being given to fulfil the duties required of that role.

The roles that overlap at Data are the roles of employee, and the role of family member. The family business is unique in it's incorporation of family roles into the business world. But all to often, these familial roles, and the responsibilities that come with them, override the responsibilities given to the role of a member of the company.

For example, the role of siblings in a family dictates a certain amount of loyalty and tolerance to one's siblings. When siblings work together in a business setting, if the
be a sibling of the leader, a certain amount of tolerance is afforded to the sibling due to the expectancies that accompany the role of being members of the same family. At Data, this conflict of sibling/managerial roles has manifested itself on many occasions. On these occasions, the sibling has been treated with more lenience that other, non-family member employees in similar situations.

Conflicting role responsibilities also take away from the amount of time that one can devote to different roles. For example at Data, the role of parent and husband often overrided the role of businessman. When the need to fulfil one's family responsibility coincides with the individual's need to perform a business responsibility, it is the business responsibility that is put on hold until the responsibilities of the family-member role are met. The result of the conflicting role responsibilities is the suffering of the business.

Another source of conflict at Data Office Supply is Culture. Not culture in the sense of corporate culture discussed earlier in section I of this paper, but in terms of culture as it pertains to the backgrounds and personal beliefs of the different members of a group. With two members of the office being first generation Lebanese, there are certain conflicting cultural values that surface in the day to day activities of the company.

The main conflict that I observed was the conflict in
Apparently, there is a different value and social status the Lebanese place on those who perform manual labor. Western culture considers hard work a virtue, something that should be respected and admired. The Lebanese culture looks down on physical labor as something that is done by the lower classes. An example of this conflicting concept of work at Data office supply occurs whenever there is a task that incorporates physical exertion in its completion. Any such activity is looked down upon by the Lebanese culture, therefore the members of the company that are Lebanese abstain from performing these tasks, no matter how crucial they are to operating a successful business.

The third source of conflict at Data Office Supply is interpersonal differences. Interpersonal differences are any differences in opinion, attitude or basic personality differences between different members of the company. The central interpersonal conflict that exists at Data, is the lackadaisical attitude of a single member of the staff. I am referring to Cheryl, and her practice of not following any set guidelines for work schedules or activities.

Cheryl's inability to get to the office around the same time as other members of the company, causes ill feelings toward her as an employee and as a person. When asked why Cheryl comes in late every day, Gus replied, "there is no reason, she does not have anything to do at home that would force her to come in late, she just does not like to get up
constant tardiness, her capabilities as an employee are often questioned, which is a direct source of conflict for those who are forced to pick up the slack when she is not trusted to fulfil a duty. Distrust of workers is extremely detrimental to the effectiveness of a company, and should be dealt with in order to ensure optimum performance of the business and it's members.

The fourth source of conflict at Data office Supply is competition. Every business is effected by competition, direct conflict with other competitors in the same market. At Data, there are several local office supply companies, as well as large office supply chains that serve as competition for the company. The competition, and the conflicts that are inherent in competition, often either spill over into, or are multiplied by, the other three types of conflict previously mentioned. While conflict from competition cannot be avoided, it must be addressed and recognized as a potential catalyst for additional conflicts.

Conflict Resolution

When resolving conflicts, one must determine the cause(s) of the conflict. Determining the cause of conflict is accomplished by ascertaining all one can about the conflict, including everything and everyone involved in the conflict, then the best possible action to take in order to benefit everyone involved is chosen. The individual(s) who
according the decision made after the information gathering process.

As mentioned earlier, there are many sources of conflict at Data Office Supply, subsequently, conflicts often arise. The main tool of conflict resolution used at the company is not dealing with conflict at all. For whatever reason, be it unwillingness to argue or lack of appreciation for the severity of conflicts, the majority of conflicts generally do not get resolved at Data office supply. External conflicts with competitors get resolved, but they are the only conflicts that are ever addressed.

Interpersonal, role and cultural conflicts are all too often ignored. For example, Gus and I have had numerous discussions concerning Cheryl and her inability to arrive at work at a set time. He realizes it is a problem, a conflict, that hurts the business because it forces others to fill in for her, neglecting their own duties. Despite the negative effects to the company, Gus just replies, "well if she's not here, I don't have to pay her." While he might be joking, he is sending the message that it is not something that he is going to confront her about. This lack of confrontation and unwillingness to address the problem, festers into other interpersonal conflicts that result from others resenting Cheryl, and carrying their resentment over into additional conflicts, perpetuating an endless cycle.
Rather than confront Cheryl, and resolve the conflict, Gus does not make any attempt to solve the problem. To understand the reasons why Gus does not resolve the conflict despite understanding the negative ramifications, one must understand the intangibles that are involved in the process. Intangibles are, "the psychological factors that effect our behavior in negotiation, how we perceive the process, how we are seen and evaluated by others, how we feel about the negotiation process and the outcomes we obtain (Liwicki & Litterer, 1985, p15)." Intangibles such as looking good and winning and losing often effect a negotiators behavior in resolving conflict. The intangibles that are affecting Gus are the intangibles of preserving a relationship with an opponent and/or retaining a reputation of tolerance (Liwicki & Litterer, 1985, p15). Gus does not want to confront Cheryl because that poses the possibility of damaging a personal friendship, something that he feels is important in his company.

"Some people, when faced with a conflict, decide it's not worth the stress and strain to argue, and choose to accept what the other person offers (Liwicki & Litterer, 1985, p4)." If conflicts are not resolved, they can fester and breed additional conflicts. In order for the organization to remain healthy, Gus must resolve both internal and external conflicts to avoid any further conflicts from stemming out of the original unresolved
Decision-Making Process

"Without a doubt decision making is the most significant activity engaged in by managers in all types of organizations and at any level (Harrison, 1987, p4)." Decisions need to be made in every aspect of a company, by every individual, therefore, effective decision making is essential for a healthy business.

There are six components of the decision making process; setting managerial objectives, searching for alternative, comparing and evaluating alternatives, the act of choice, implementing the decision, and follow up and control (Harrison, 1987, p34-35). The first stage, setting managerial objectives, involves setting the objectives, which is to satisfy the need that spurned on the decision making process. This step basically is involved in identifying the problem. At Data, all members of the organization participate in this stage. Any individual can bring a decision, that needs to be made, to light.

The second stage involves searching for alternatives. In this stage, "Relevant information is formulated into alternatives that seem likely to fulfill the objectives (Harrison, 1987, p35)." This stage, like the first stage, also can incorporate all members of Data Office Supply. Once the problem is identified, everyone is free to offer their suggestions, creating alternatives that others might
The third stage of decision making involves comparing and evaluating alternatives. In this phase, the alternatives are compared as to their ability to satisfy the objective of the situation. This stage also can include the participation of several individuals. At Data however, the act of comparing alternatives is usually performed by one individual, Gus. Even though Gus might evaluate and compare the alternatives out loud, unless he specifically asks for input from someone, he does the comparison alone.

The fourth stage, the act of choice, is characterized by one of the alternatives being selected. The alternative is selected according to its ability to satisfy the situational objectives better than any of the other alternatives. The actual process of choice, is handled by only one individual, Gus. If Gus is not present then the decision is made by Michelle. If Gus is present, it is he and he alone who makes the final decision as to what alternative will be selected.

Implementing the decision is the fifth stage. This stage involves the chosen course of action to be carried out. "It is that moment in the total decision-making process that the choice is transformed from an abstraction into an operational reality (Harrison, 1987, p35)."

Implementing the decision involves all those in the company that is needed to implement the decision. For example, if a decision is made for everyone to come to work early to
everyone is involved personally in the implementation of the decision.

The sixth and final stage of decision making is follow-up and control. In this stage, the decision is re-examined to make sure it was implemented and that the objectives that the decision was based on were satisfied. At Data Office Supply, the follow-up and control usually consists of someone asking, "well, did it work." If the chosen implementation did satisfy the objectives, the issue is resolved. If the objectives were not met the alternatives are re-evaluated and an alternative course of action is taken in order to meet those objectives.

Group Dynamics

Group dynamics involve; "the group's capacity to serve as an arena for social interaction, the powerful impact of group structures on member's actions, the diversity of groups in terms of size, their usefulness as vehicles for accomplishing goals, the way in which groups become cohesive, and their ability to change over time (Forsyth 1990, p13)." This paper has previously discussed the group in terms of size, ability to serve as an arena for interaction, and the impact of the group structure on the actions of the members. Since my observations lasted only a short period of time, I cannot properly address the ability of the group to change over time.
Group cohesiveness refers to, "the strength of the relationships linking the members to one another and to the group itself (Forsyth, 1990, p10)." Since group cohesiveness refers to the bond between members of the group, one would think that with cohesiveness comes improved group performance. On the contrary, increased group cohesiveness can lead to decreased productivity.

The determining factors on the correlation between cohesiveness and productivity are the group norms. (Forsyth, 1990, p87) If the group norms encourage high productivity than cohesiveness will increases the productivity of the group. On the contrary, if the group norm encourages low productivity, cohesiveness actually lessons the productivity of the group.

At Data Office Supply, the group norms encourage low productivity. When statements such as, "he doesn't realize he is getting paid by the hour," are used when someone accomplishes a great deal in a short time period, one cannot help but ascertain the low importance the group places on productivity. Since the group norms encourage low productivity, cohesiveness undermines productivity in the office.

Another characteristic of group dynamics is the groups usefulness as a vehicle to accomplish goals. Their are several factors that effect a group's ability to accomplish goals. One factor is known as social loafing. Social
working in groups (Forsyth, 1990, p271)." The social loafer simply allows him of herself to simply be carried along by the work of other group members.

Cheryl and Sam are perfect examples of social loafing. They reduce their efforts because they know that the rest of the group will pick up the slack for them. While the social loafing of Sam and Cheryl is not destroying the business, it is lessening it's ability to attain goals.

The lessening of productivity of groups as compared to the productivity of individuals is known as the Ringelman effect. The Ringleman effect stipulates that the sum of production of a group is less than the sum of production of the individual multiplied by the number of the group (Forsyth, 1990, p270). The reason for the Ringleman effect is that the individual can reduce their efforts because they believe that the group will continue to work, despite their decreased efforts.

**Surveys**

I created a survey as an instrument that would aid me in extrapolating a number of leadership issues, from my studies at the Jepson school, that I believed were applicable to a small family business. An example of the survey distributed and the responses given can be found in the appendix.

The questions ranged from, "how long have you been with
I attempted to phrase the questions devoid of a majority of the jargon used to describe leadership issues at Jepson because I wanted to observe their different interpretations of questions. The different interpretations of questions allows one to determine the different levels of knowledge concerning leadership issues, possessed by the different group members.

Results of these surveys have been referred to throughout the body of this paper. This survey was not designed to answer any particular question either about leadership or the business. It was, however, created as a vehicle to obtain additional information from group members that cannot be ascertained through observation and day to day conversation.

I would like to comment that the hesitancy of one member of the business to complete the survey was particularly annoying. The refusal to fill out the survey, did not however, negatively bias any of my observations of the individual.

Customer/Supplier Communication

I have observed the communication between members of Data Office Supply and their customers/suppliers varying depending on the individual. A significant portion of their clients are either family or friends. With these clients communication is often very informal. Clients that are not
manner, coinciding with traditional business formalities. The suppliers are also treated in traditional business fashion as they are neither family or personal friends.

Summary

Data Office Supply is a young company that has the potential to be very successful in its market. It's success, however, depends on the ability of the employees to recognize issues that have the potential of destroying the business. If these problems are recognized and dealt with accordingly, Data has a fighting chance at survival in a competitive market. If Data's problems are not addressed and solved, the company is destined to destroy itself before it can reach its full potential.
Bibliography


Appendix
Perceived Organizational Chart

Gus

Michelle  Sam

Cheryl  Ed  Justin

Observed Organizational Chart

Michelle  Gus

Sam  Ed  Cheryl  Justin
1. How long have you been with Data Office Supply?
   2 years

2. What is your job title? Delivery man

3. What are your responsibilities? Supply delivery/installation

4. From where does the leadership stem within the office?
   Boss + Michele

5. What types of leadership behavior are displayed within the company? Communication, delegation

6. What is your motivation for working at Data? Family

7. Does this company have a formal mission, and if so what is it? None to my knowledge

8. What are some of this company's strong points? Pleasant work environment

weak points? (Flexibility, ambiguity, others)

9. On a scale of 1 to 5, rate the level of effective communication within the company. 1 2 3 4 5

10. On a scale of 1 to 5, rate the level of effective decision making within the company. 1 2 3 4 5

11. On the back of this sheet, add any additional comments concerning leadership within the organization.
Name: GHASSAN E. HARIFA
Date: 4/8/94

1. How long have you been with Data Office Supply?
   6 years

2. What is your job title? President

3. What are your responsibilities? Overseeing selling, purchasing, invoicing and shipping/ASPECTS OF THE OPERATION.

4. From where does the leadership stem within the office? BEING A FAMILY BUSINESS, FROM MANY BUT THE BOTTOM LINE IS FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE CO.

5. What types of leadership behavior are displayed within the company? IN GENERAL IT IS COMPATABLE, BUT STEEP WHEN THE GOOD OF THE BUSINESS IS AT STAKE.

6. What is your motivation for working at Data? BUILDING A FUTURE FOR MYSELF AND MY FAMILIES!

7. Does this company have a formal mission, and if so what is it? SELL! SELL! SELL!

   PROFIT! PROFIT! PROFIT!

8. What are some of this company's strong points? BEING FAMILY OWNED AND RUN, CUSTOMER'S GET THE BEST OF SERVICE.

   Weak points? THE NEED FOR A WORKING CAPITAL.

9. On a scale of 1 to 5, rate the level of effective communication within the company. 1 2 3 4 5

10. On a scale of 1 to 5, rate the level of effective decision making within the company. 1 2 3 4 5

11. On the back of this sheet, add any additional comments concerning leadership within the organization.
1. How long have you been with Data Office Supply?
   
   6 years

2. What is your job title?  Sec.-Treas.

3. What are your responsibilities?  All bookkeeping and A/R A/P audit.

4. From where does the leadership stem within the office?
   The president, Corp. Officers, A/P Clerk.

5. What types of leadership behavior are displayed within the company?  Emphasis on leadership.

6. What is your motivation for working at Data?  Company ownership.

7. Does this company have a formal mission, and if so what is it?  Our mission is to offer office and computer supplies at reduced prices and to provide customer service.  Order completion.

8. What are some of this company's strong points?  Organizational - job duties, descriptions overlap.
   Weak points?  Organizational - job duties, descriptions overlap.

9. On a scale of 1 to 5, rate the level of effective communication within the company.  1 2 3 4 5

10. On a scale of 1 to 5, rate the level of effective decision making within the company.  1 2 3 4 5

11. On the back of this sheet, add any additional comments concerning leadership within the organizations.
Name: Cheryl J. Barlow
Date: 4/8/94

1. How long have you been with Data Office Supply? 
   4 yrs.

2. What is your job title? good question, don't know

3. What are your responsibilities? office, (general) sales, delivery, quality control, cleaning

4. From where does the leadership stem within the office? from the President to V.Pres or Sec/Treas

5. What types of leadership behavior are displayed within the company? different types from different people — anything from discussion to command

6. What is your motivation for working at Data? flexibility & diversity

7. Does this company have a formal mission, and if so what is it? to provide quality products at a discounted price, with excellent service.

8. What are some of this company's strong points? service to the customer
   weak points? overlapping of duties & responsibilities

9. On a scale of 1 to 5, rate the level of effective communication within the company. 1 2 3 4 5

10. On a scale of 1 to 5, rate the level of effective decision making within the company. 1 2 3 4 5

11. On the back of this sheet, add any additional comments concerning leadership within the organization.
Name: ED Hottle
Date: 4/11/94

1. How long have you been with Data Office Supply?

5 YEARS

2. What is your job title? OFFICE SUPPLY SALESMAN

3. What are your responsibilities? GETTING NEW CUSTOMERS

AND HOLDING ON TO OLD CUSTOMERS

4. From where does the leadership stem within the office?

HUSBAND AND WIFE TEAM

5. What types of leadership behavior are displayed within the company? GIVING THE CUSTOMERS THE BEST

KIND OF SERVICE WE CAN GIVE THEM

6. What is your motivation for working at Data?

LIKING WHAT I DO AND GETTING A GOOD PAY FOR IT

7. Does this company have a formal mission, and if so what is it? GETTING ALL THE CUSTOMERS WE CAN GET

8. What are some of this company's strong points?

GETTING OFFICE SUPPLIES TO BUSINESS AVOID PROBLEMS

PERSONAL CONTACT WITH CUSTOMERS KEEPING THEM HAPPY

weak points? NONE

9. On a scale of 1 to 5, rate the level of effective communication within the company. 1 4 3 4 5

10. On a scale of 1 to 5, rate the level of effective decision making within the company. 1 2 3 4 5

11. On the back of this sheet, add any additional comments concerning leadership within the organization.
I

Discussion of family business and factors such (culture) that may be important in your study.

(about 10 pp.)

Explain your role and possible bias in your study.

II

1) Description of the business, the people, 
   org. structure

2) How the business operates in terms of:
   a) Conflict resolution, conflicts, why are there conflicts?
   b) Decision process
   c) Group dynamics
   d) Survey, interview, not less than 4, include yourself

3) Customer, supplier, competition

Not less than 25 pp

* Critical thinking, how will you reflect, research