



**Will the Next Generation Stay or Go? Communications That Support Family Business Unity**  
**Steve Lytle – Director, The Agnew Company & Principal, Clearpath Services**

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**Background**

Speaking with the next generation about their intentions and ambitions is a key component to figuring out your succession plan. Clear communication between generations about the future of the family business can often mean the difference between whether successors stay or go. A PricewaterhouseCoopers survey of 2,000 family firms in 2012 indicated that only 41% of family businesses planned to fully transfer ownership and management to the next generation. That is down from past surveys (55% in 2010, and 72% in 2007). Additionally, a survey conducted at Oregon State University in 2014 showed that 25% of undergrad students came from a family business, and of those, 47% "strongly disagreed" when asked if they were likely to pursue a career in a business that their family owned. To what degree do communication difficulties between generations affect these trends?

How early should discussions start with the next generation? How does a potential successor broach the subject of taking over the business if it's never been discussed? Do your key non-family employees factor into the communications regarding the next generation, and if so, how? During this session we explore these questions and other communication best practices that support family business unity and the preparation of the next generation to lead the family enterprise.

**More Information**

[When Family Businesses are Best: The Parallel Planning Process for Family Harmony and Business Success](#) (2010), R. Carlock and J. Ward, New York, Palgrave Macmillan

[When Your Parents Sign the Paychecks: Finding Success Inside or Outside the Family Enterprise](#) (2013), Greg McCann, CreateSpace Independent Publishing

[The Legacy Family: The Definitive Guide to Creating a Successful Multigenerational Family](#) (2009) Hausner, L. and Freeman, D.K. New York, Palgrave MacMillan.

[Family Education for Business-Owning Families: Strengthening Bonds by Learning Together](#) (2011), A. Schuman and J. Ward, New York, Palgrave Macmillan

Scale, Skills, and Succession: Tackling the Tipping Points for Family Firms (2012), E. Andrew and O. Pound, PwC Family Business Survey

## **Austin Family Business Program Resources**

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<http://business.oregonstate.edu/familybusinessonline/advisor-search>

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### **Steve Lytle**

Steve is a 4th generation participant in his family's business where he was employed for 23 years in roles ranging from "floor sweeper" and "bottle sorter" to Chairman of the Board.

Today Steve works with multi-generational family businesses and (and the leaders who serve them) as an educator, advisor and coach with a focus on improving the quality and clarity of complex "family enterprise" vision, communication, governance and succession.

In addition to his practice, Steve currently serves as a director at The Agnew Company (his family's single family office) and on the advisory board of the Austin Family Business Program at Oregon State University. He also serves on the executive committee for YPO's Global Family Business Network and has certificates in Coaching and Family Business Advising.

Steve regularly speaks and writes on topics of significance to family enterprises and their advisors from his home in Portland, Oregon.