A View From Afar: Rethinking the Director's Role in University-Based Family Business Programs

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This article is the result of a spark that began at the 2002 USASBE Conference. The idea was to collectively rethink the role of the family business center (FBC). Our goal was twofold: to challenge ourselves and the profession to more effectively lead our centers and serve our stakeholders by more clearly identifying the value propositions generally present in family business centers, and to offer a process through which to explicitly communicate these value propositions to the various stakeholders. This is followed by a brief discussion and outline of typical value propositions related to the stakeholder groups.

Introduction

The family business is one of the most unique, complex, and dynamic systems in our society. The blending of two inherently different realms—the performance-based world of business and the emotion-based domain of the family—creates a system potentially fraught with role confusion and conflict. Undoubtedly, these difficulties contribute to the demise of family businesses; the majority of them do not survive the transition from one generation to the next (Gersick, Davis, Hampton, & Lansberg, 1997; Shanker & Astrachan, 1996). Yet despite their challenges and complexities, family businesses are pervasive. Broadly defined, family businesses make up the vast majority of all businesses worldwide (Gersick et al., 1997; Shanker & Astrachan, 1996). And, although the institution of family business has probably been around in one form or another since the beginning of human society, those offering services directly to family businesses have emerged only relatively recently (Beckhard & Dyer, 1983; Bork, 1986; Bork, Jaffe, Lane, Dashew, & Heisler, 1996; Danco, 1975, 1980).

One subset of the group that provides services to family businesses is the director of the university-based family business center. In such a dynamic field with systems as complex as those found in family businesses, we believe it is necessary to rethink the role of the director. We suggest that in order to serve the complex needs of family businesses, the role of the director needs to be seen more strategically. Directors need to identify and clarify the value propositions for the stakeholders of their centers and have a process through which to regularly communicate and deliver on these value propositions.

This article is intended to add depth and clarity to the emerging profession of the center director. Along these lines, issues that warrant further discussion and research will also be noted. Building on a review of the current state of the field and our proposed rethinking of the directors' role, we will propose concrete ways for directors to integrate their roles with that of the diverse, if not conflicting, needs of the various stakeholders.

The five authors are all currently or have been directors of university-based family business centers in the United States. We range geographically from coast to coast and, more importantly, include centers whose foundations vary so as to include teaching, research, and outreach. This variety enables us to speak from experience about the relative differences and similarities of each type of center. At the same time, we realize that any generality may need to be adapted for any particular center's needs. Finally, this article is intended to address the two themes framed above. It is not intended to directly address how centers ought to better serve family businesses—though we believe that directors coming to a clearer understanding of their role and being more effective leaders will lead to that result.

The Family Business

We begin by defining family business. Often, the criteria for defining a family business are nebulous (Shanker & Astrachan, 1996; Ward & Aronoff, 1990). Although the size of the business, its management quality, and type of ownership (public or private) have been used as defining criteria, Ward and Aronoff (1990) suggest that these are not distinguishing indicators. Many believe that family business equates to small business. Although many are indeed small, about one-third of the nation's largest companies are considered family businesses (Shanker & Astrachan, 1996). For example, Wal-Mart Stores is the largest retailer in the world. With annual revenues of $165 billion and 1.4 million employees, the Walton family still controls America's largest family business (Editors, 2000). In addition, the management quality of many family firms has led to respectable performances. In 1988, for example, *Fortune Magazine* named Liz Claiborne, Inc.—a family business—as the best performing Fortune 500 business of the year (Ward & Aronoff, 1990). Furthermore, *Family Business Magazine* generated a list of family firms that have had positive, worldwide impact, including DuPont, Johnson & Johnson, R. H. Macy & Company, J. P. Morgan & Company, and the New York Times Company (Editors, 2001). In terms of ownership, the best estimates are that up to 60% of all public companies in the United States are family controlled (Shanker & Astrachan, 1996). The most recent study found that family-controlled firms on the S&P 500 outperformed nonfamily firms over an eight-year period (Reeb & Anderson, forthcoming).

Professional Organizations

The emerging role of professionals helping family businesses is relatively recent in our culture. Perhaps the best indicator of that emergence and growth is the formation of the Family Firm Institute (FFI). Founded in 1986, FFI is an interdisciplinary organization of nearly 1,200 individual and organizational members from various professional backgrounds, academic interests, and family businesses. "The Family Firm Institute (FFI) is an international professional membership organization dedicated to providing interdisciplinary education and networking opportunities for family business advisors, consultants, educators, and researchers and to raising public awareness about trends and developments in the family business field" (<http://www.ffi.org>). Through annual conferences, study groups, publication of the premiere academic journal on family business issues (*Family Business Review*), and other activities, FFI has become a tremendous resource for family businesses and for those who serve them. FFI has not only served these professionals, it has done much to build awareness of the field as a whole.

Emergence of Family Business Centers

Paralleling the growth of FFI has been the development of university-based programs to help family businesses. In the mid-1980s, a handful of universities pioneered the advancement of family business centers across the country (e.g., the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania, Kennesaw State University, and Oregon State University). Today, there are 149 educational centers for family business (in 19 countries) listed in the FFI membership records.

The growing number of family business education centers prompted the creation of an organization primarily devoted to university-based centers. In 1989, the International Family Business Program Association (IFBPA) was formed, and provided a central resource for the directors and educators involved with the family business centers. It later merged with a larger umbrella organization, the United States Association for Small Business and Entrepreneurship (USASBE), whose mission is to "advance knowledge and foster business development through entrepreneurship education and research. USASBE is interdisciplinary, cross-functional and globally connected (as an affiliate of the International Council for Small Business). USASBE is the premier network for entrepreneurship educators at all student levels, for professional practitioners, for entrepreneurship researchers, and for government policy makers. USASBE offers cutting-edge programs for entrepreneurship education and encourages research that has practical application" (<http://www.usasbe.org/about/mission.htm>). Both these organizations—FFI and IFBPA (USASBE)—have played a key role in shaping the evolution of university-based family business programs.

Entrepreneurship

A third significant influence has been the field of entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship had to establish itself in the world of academia as a legitimate discipline. Thus both from its experience over the last 30 years related to establishing itself, as well as the overlap in research topics, entrepreneurship has exerted a powerful influence. Not only do many of the academics currently in the family business field have backgrounds in entrepreneurship, but many university family business programs, to varying degrees, work with entrepreneurship programs on campus. For an interesting perspective on how the field of entrepreneurship has helped shape family business research, see the family business chapter in the book *Entrepreneurship 2000* (Upton & Heck, 1997). It is beyond the scope of this article to address the debate of how these two relate, but suffice it to say that they clearly do, and that family business is much more complex due to its explicit inclusion of the family.

Under the influence of these three forces then, family business programs began to flourish. The first originated at the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania in 1979 (Upton, 2000). From that time until the mid 1990s there was a continuous growth of university-based centers. Generally, the model that experienced the greatest growth was the so-called forum model. This model was and is often primarily based on outreach, relies heavily on sponsors, and is often run by a businessperson who is not necessarily a member of the university's faculty.

Survey of the Field

Through the 1980s and early 1990s, the number of university-based family business programs grew. The forum model multiplied throughout the country, funded by membership fees and sponsorship dollars from corporations attempting to position themselves as leaders in meeting the complex demands of family business (e.g., MassMutual, McGladrey & Pullen, US Bank, and many others).

Beginning in the mid- to late 1990s, however, the upward momentum of university-based family business centers seemed to stall. Though exact numbers are difficult to obtain, the number of centers seems to be declining from its peak, which ocurred somewhere in the mid-1990s. In addition to the apparent decline in the number of centers, there also seems to be a shift toward incorporating academic curriculum and research into the centers' activities. According to the University of Illinois at Chicago, the number of schools offering family business curriculum has increased over the last five years (<http://www.uillinois.edu/home/index.html>). The authors have also noted that there is more "talk" about research and using research to help legitimize the function of the university-based family business center.

Three factors seem to be influencing this shift in family business center models. First, finding sponsors willing to put up large amounts of money ($10,000–50,000) each year has become more difficult (Wilder, 2000). Second, centers primarily built on the function of outreach or community service (as opposed to teaching or research) have frankly been undervalued by the university (Upton, 2000) and underfunded in many cases. Third, strategically, more centers are looking at the appropriate mix of outreach, teaching, and research that best serves family businesses. One such example is the holistic model developed at Stetson University.

The holistic model is built on the general principles of systems thinking—believing that the parts relate to the whole and the whole always relates to the part. The most fundamental application of the holistic model states that a university family business program must integrate its mix of the three main functions of that university (teaching, research, and service) to its own specific set of values, goals, and objectives. This perspective requires greater planning, communication, and mindfulness of relationships (vs. transactions). In Stetson's case, this application meant the function of teaching came first, with both research and service secondary. The holistic model "could be applied to any institution in the U.S. to any social concern of their community" (Upton, 2000, p. 24).

Role of the Director

Turning to the first theme of this article, from a broad perspective, we put forth the premise that the members of this profession need to realize that they must be innovators. In the context of the relatively young field of family business service providers, we are offering a new service, delivered by a new provider, and we need to help create demand. The current bestseller by Treacy and Wiersema (1997), *The Discipline of Market Leaders*, talks about three market approaches from which a company must select one: product leader (e.g., Nike), operational excellence (e.g., Wal-Mart), and customer intimacy[1] (e.g., IBM). Though a center might select any one of these approaches, we believe that Treacy and Wiersema's view of product leader is particularly informative for the profession as a whole as we are innovating and creating new and unique products. One of the ways to measure the success of the product is the "experiential or emotional impact" (1997, p. 89). Treacy and Wiersma (1997) assert that product leaders must realize that there is often little initial demand for new products (or services) and the product leader's (center director's) role is to "prepare and educate potential customers to accept products that never before existed" (1997, p. 92). How we do that in a collective effort, how we measure results, and how we share best practices are all important issues for not just directors but others with a vested interest in the success of this field.

Essentially, in a dynamic and changing environment, each stakeholder of a family business center—the university, the sponsors, the family business members, the director—is perhaps reevaluating how the family business center meets its overall mission and vision, and most certainly demanding an answer to the question: "What's in it for me?" Through answering this second question, some are revitalized, some refine their focus, and still others have decided to close up shop. The key is finding a mix that strengthens the purposes defined by the institution, provides value to each stakeholder, and cultivates an ongoing dialogue to keep those discussions alive on a continuous basis. Directors must realize that their role is not only to deliver the value demanded but, equally important, to manage the dialogue.

A Marketing Perspective

Before addressing the specific role of the director of a university-based family business center, insight into the challenges facing family business programs can be gained from taking a marketing perspective. Beyond the typical marketing analysis, there are some unique dynamics related to the practice of offering services to family businesses. First, the specialty of family business education and consultation is a relatively new service, meaning that there is a lack of awareness by the customer base. As mentioned above, consider that the services we are providing are relatively unknown, there is little initial demand, and the value is still unclear.

Most family businesses simply do not know that services geared specifically toward them exist or how the services of an accountant may be different from those of a management consultant when it comes to issues such as succession. Another hurdle is that many businesses that fit the "family

[1] From the perspective of an individual center, this model of customer intimacy is very applicable for most centers: providing the best overall solution to the clients needs and have the *courage to charge accordingly.*

business" criteria do not identify themselves as such. There seems to be an ongoing perception that "family business" refers exclusively to very small mom-and-pop shops, leading many to unknowingly disqualify themselves from services and resources that could increase their odds of success. Finally, and perhaps where we believe lies the greatest challenge and opportunity, is the *emotional resistance* of family businesses to seek help. As previously stated, family businesses are complex systems. When the challenges of growing a successful business collide with the natural challenges of family development and interpersonal relationships, the task of balancing both worlds can seem insurmountable. These are intense challenges, challenges that are foreign to nonfamily firms. In a society that highly values independence, control, privacy, and competition, many families in business struggle on their own, and would rather "gut it out" themselves than seek the professional assistance of consultants or family business programs. Their desire to maintain family stability outweighs the need to adapt to change and grow.

This reaction is observed by noted business consultant, Peter Block, who states that when consulting with a business, the consultant must be highly cognizant that the client feels vulnerable (Block & Nowlan, 1999). If this is true of a manager seeking help for her or his organization, imagine the even greater sense of vulnerability when an owner of a family business contemplates seeking help for both the business *and the family*.

These observations greatly impact another marketing dynamic: the difference between need and demand. Generally, "customers buy in order to improve, or at least maintain, their well-being" (Bakken, 2001, p. 31). They perceive a need—some deficit in their well-being—and pursue goods or services to remedy the deficit. One of the challenges in discussing a family business's need for a particular service (or participation in a family business center) is the lack of perception on its part that the need exists. If there is no perception of need for services, there is no demand for services. Indeed, it is often the level of family tension that creates the family's sense of need. Additionally, the director is faced with the challenge of identifying and educating family businesses to recognize current and future needs (i.e., to overcome the emotional resistance).

Adapting the notion of product leader mentioned above to the particulars of the director's role, we argue that through better education there will be greater demand for our services. We believe this plays out on at least two levels. First is the basic roadmap of the predictable transitions, issues, and best practices for family businesses. Second is the great awareness of a specific family's behavior and the foreseeable consequences of those choices (e.g., an intervention). Though most families, especially those involved with centers, realize that succession planning is crucial, tellingly a far smaller percentage actually do such planning. This indicates what all of us experience: that mere rational arguments miss the profound emotional issues that define family business.

The reasons family businesses fail have been narrowed down to two fairly broad categories: lack of planning and failure to effectively deal with emotional conflicts. From the consultant's side of the table, there clearly is a need for services geared toward planning and dealing with emotional issues. For example, one could argue that if only 30% of family businesses have a functioning business plan, then perhaps as high as 70% have a need for business-planning services. Yet, there is clearly not a demand for such services proportional to this deduced need.

One potential barrier to perceiving the need for resolving family issues is emotional resistance. In efforts to avoid emotional waves, some families in business attend programs to address their business issues and avoid dealing with the riskier family issues. Thus, they create the sense that they are addressing their business *and* family issues, but in actuality they are not. In other words, sometimes the demand is for services that enable the avoidance of or suppression of the real need. The family business center (FBC) directors often find themselves facing the challenge of providing services that family businesses need the most, yet tend to demand the least. The paradox is that "need" and "demand" become, in this environment, diametrically opposed. This field needs to develop and share best practices, code of ethics, and to struggle with the tension between marketing and putting our clients first.

Some typical excuses that flag emotional resistance include endlessly seeking more information, complaining about too little time, and ongoing procrastination and lack of implementation (Block & Nowlan, 1999). Although occasionally these may be legitimate issues, Block suggests that they are often red flags. The authors of this article have each experienced the difficulty in assisting participating family businesses to move beyond the emotional resistance and into the implementation stage. Families sometimes use membership in a family business center to make themselves feel as though they are addressing the difficult issues, when in reality they fail to implement the plans. This dynamic often results in a false sense of action by the families and frustration among the directors.

Director's Role and Position of FBC

Such emotional resistance cultivates a culture of being reactive, not proactive. To illustrate, we suggest that one looks at the university-based family business center as a triage unit that diagnoses and reacts to situations, versus a wellness center that would focus on maintaining the health of a family business. The reality is that in the field of family business there exist a variety of services along a continuum of care ranging from the relatively benign reading of articles and books, to the more in-depth and focused consultation with a family business professional. Not every family needs in-depth consultation, nor can many family business centers provide it. The key here is to develop an understanding of the need of the family and ensure that it receives the assistance it needs.

Each family business program must then: (1) assess where its services fall on the continuum of care; (2) assess the family business client needs; (3) seek alignment of the interventions to assure that the center's services are meeting the clients' needs (and be able to refer to appropriate service providers); and (4) evaluate the success of the interventions.

This premise leads to three conclusions. First, *if* proactive families are the ideal client base, then the director/center must cultivate and support such culture in its clients. (McCann, DeMoss, Dascher, & Barnett, 2003).

Second, from a strategic point of view, centers must develop services that align with this intent. In other words, there should be more affordable, accessible, and practical assessment tools for

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Reading Articles/Speakers Attending Seminars In-Depth Consultation

Figure 1 Continuum of Care for Family Businesses

family businesses. In essence there must be road maps for or visions of what healthy, successful family businesses look like; a development plan crafted for the unique characteristics of each client; and feedback/monitoring to assess if real progress is being made quantitatively and qualitatively. Working with family businesses needs to be more like a practice or like a person working to get in shape at a wellness center: it is an ongoing commitment, not an event. Underlying this conclusion is the realization or understanding that if you just watch and listen to the trainer or read a book about exercise without breaking a sweat, it is not going to work; the same applies to family businesses that do not apply the lessons learned.

Third, the centers themselves must practice what they preach by becoming more proactive. We believe this could go a long way to helping family businesses in general, and also help position academics and the university-based program as more of a place that healthy family businesses go to "stay in shape," not an emergency room where one is diagnosed and treated or "fixed." This could also help reposition the services offered so that they have a more positive perception (and less stigma) and encourage the family businesses themselves to take advantage of the services offered. Again, here is a place where as a leader in an innovative field, the role of the director needs to include the ability to reposition the function of a family business center, and assist family businesses to view that as an important, applicable benefit.

Linking the Role of the Director to the Stakeholders

All of us agree that a paradigm shift is necessary for directors. Because of the environment in which we operate, there needs to be a shift from thinking of ourselves as operators/managers, to seeing our role as leaders and strategic thinkers. Within this redefined role, directors must become leaders who communicate and emphasize the value proposition for each key stakeholder. We must help each key stakeholder to see the value they can expect *and can contribute* within the context of the family business center, consistent with the vision and mission of the sponsoring institution. This leadership role can vary greatly from university to university. For some, the purpose of the family business center is to cultivate relationships that result in sizeable financial contributions to general development efforts. For others, it is to attract students with interest and/or experience in private enterprise. For still others, it may be to become a leader in academic research and advancement in the field of family enterprise. The key is for the director's strategic thinking and leadership to lead and collaborate.

Consider briefly the framework in which directors typically operate. Virtually every director must at least *consider the strategic mix* of teaching, research, and outreach/service. Traditionally, many centers were primarily focused on outreach, though as mentioned above, this is shifting. No matter which of these three functions is to be the foundation or primary focus, the other two often need to be considered and utilized to the extent that they are productive. Thus, within this context, albeit tailored to each center, there are some notable generalities. The director must be a strategic leader: she or he must set the vision and constantly, consistently, and clearly communicate this vision to each stakeholder. Then depending on the specific mix for a center, the director may need skills in teaching and curriculum development, research, and making effective presentations. Even more likely, however, directors will need metaskills in each area. In other words, they will need to recruit the motivated people and necessary resources to achieve the objectives within each of the three functions. The skills/roles of the director include: politician, salesperson, public relations person, teacher, scholar, ethicist, marketer, recruiter, coach, confidant, mentor, and fundraiser (Keyt, 2000). Thus, to merely define the role of a director as satisfying the needs of the family businesses without the attendant education, without factoring in the other stakeholders, is to invite failure.

Directors, especially those more aligned with research and teaching institutions, operate in a more complex, often more political, environment than the bottom-line commercial setting of business. Typically, university accounting procedures are such that the "bottom line" is more of a vague notion. Couple that with questions of whether the development office feels threatened; whether the dean is willing to champion the director's cause; or whether the director's success becomes threatening to colleagues. If the director only looks at the so-called bottom line, then sustainability is in peril. The complexity and political nature of the university environment provides both opportunity and challenge, challenges that are not easily overcome. One associate dean stated that the biggest problem a dean can have is a faculty member who succeeds. This is an interesting segue to not only the value propositions, but why the director must factor himself or herself into this dialogue.

Crafting the Value Propositions

Despite the inherent challenges, there are some important strategic advantages of university affiliation. The director must start with a strategic vision of the center's mission, and constantly test that vision to see whether it in fact creates (*and is perceived* as creating) value for the key stakeholders. Not doing so undermines the strategic advantages of operating from within the university. These advantages often include the following: being perceived as credible through affiliation with an academic institution, not being perceived as merely another commercial entity, being seen as a partial fulfillment of the university's mission to provide community service, and having the ability to think long term as contrasted with the quarterly financial statement.

This does not mean that there should not be financial responsibility nor that the services should not, at least sometimes, be sold at market prices. It means that the determinants of success are more broadly defined than by just the bottom line. It is worth noting that *if* the center fails to set and communicate the strategic vision, then the default position will typically be the short-term profits produced.

Aligning itself with a respected university is potentially advantageous for a family business center, but the benefits often flow the other way as well. Doing so can potentially bring prestige to the university through its intellectual contributions to the field of family business. The relationships with generally wealthy or otherwise successful business families that are built through the existence of successful family business centers provide additional prestige to the institution. Under the right circumstances, university-based family business centers can provide a wonderful partnership with reciprocal benefits.

However, a university selling services to families that own businesses is not only a new "product" (i.e., quite different than selling tires or even accounting courses), but maybe something that currently has limited demand and may potentially spawn emotional resistance. Accordingly, there is an educational process that must take place to help the stakeholders understand the challenges, yet this is incredibly difficult when so many stakeholders want things explained in one page or less. Thus we see the value propositions as a method to educate the various stakeholders about the complexity of a university-based family business center. Thus, the director's role here is to facilitate the process, instead of being an expert on each stakeholder's views, experiences, and expectations.

This dialogue must be based on research, ongoing testing, and ongoing communication. Out of this we need to develop assessment tools for evaluating the success of interventions. Given that the center's director has limited resources, especially that most precious resource of time, stakeholders must be prioritized based on the center's model and strategy. For example, a typical forum model may involve the greatest emphasis on communication with members and secondarily with sponsors. In an academically-based model focused on teaching, the students would warrant the greatest communication and their parents and/or faculty colleagues might be second. Yet even the perspective the stakeholders may have for this dialogue probably involves a series of interventions/education initiatives to shift their perspective.

Framing the Dialogue

It is generally assumed that there are eight key stakeholders common to most university-based centers: (1) university administration, (2) university faculty, (3) students, (4) family businesses, (5) donors, (6) boards and sponsors, (7) the general public, media, and business communities, and (8) directors. These are the stakeholders that dominate the thoughts on how family business centers provide value, and to whom. If the directors are not an explicit part of this dialogue and merely facilitators, then they (and ultimately the center) are at risk of not being sustainable. This may be an indication of the same dynamic many family businesses face: one becomes too busy running the business to step back and plan. That is an understandable yet easy excuse.

Tactics to Help Directors

The challenge is how to help the other seven stakeholders have an understanding and appreciation for the value propositions of all center stakeholders. In response to this challenge, we suggest five tools to help identify and communicate the value propositions to and from the stakeholders: (1) planning, (2) academic and marketing research, (3) improved communication structures, (4) systematized feedback and benchmarking, and (5) political support.

Planning

Of the eight directors attending the retreat that sparked the idea for this article, less than half had functioning strategic plans. Without a clear plan, stakeholders are very unlikely to take ownership in the program or commit to its success. Directors often have to coordinate involvement of the stakeholders with little direct authority and less of a transactional approach than that available to many businesses. For example, recruiting faculty to do research or write chapters often involves less direct tangible benefits than monetary compensation. Getting the university to support a function on campus is also typically far from a commercial task. To gather motivation, cultivate ownership, and ask people to commit resources requires them to be inspired. The first step is to inspire with a vision.

The plan should show the priorities, the key stakeholders served, the mix of teaching, research, and service, and the financial, material, and human resources required. It should link the university to the center and the center to each of its stakeholders. It must also not only address the environment it operates in (the geography: Chicago vs. Honolulu or Purdue vs. Brigham Young), but its sustainability. Sustainability of the center needs to be addressed both intellectually and financially—again a distinction from most commercial entities.

The value outlined in the plan must be portrayed through services that the stakeholders come to demand. In fact, the strategic plan by which the center operates must create a demand for the likely unperceived need. In other words, it is the center's role to break through the day-to-day complexities that demand so much attention from the family business and open its eyes to the need for the center's services, thus creating demand. Two questions will follow: First, is the service in fact valued by that stakeholder group? Second, if so, what is fair for the center to expect in return?

Research: Marketing and Academic

Center directors need accurate ongoing information. They also need to convey that information in a concise, clear manner to key stakeholders. Unlike most commercial entities, the university-based center director must manage both academic research and marketing research. Ideally, academic research creates a way to not only test the efficacy of its program, recruit and motivate faculty, and improve the curriculum/programming, but also to further enhance the intellectual sustainability of the center. This is an area where the resources of the center can pay dividends to the academic institution by providing opportunities for faculty to conduct primary research in conjunction with center activities, contributing to the advancement of research within the field of family business.

It is also imperative that the director take the opportunity to conduct marketing research to assess the perceived needs of the stakeholders. Primarily, this may focus on the participating members, but rich information can be gathered and analyzed from other stakeholders, such as sponsors, board members, university administration, and faculty. This information can become a powerful tool in the planning and evaluation of the center's programming efforts.

Communication

Communication is the lifeblood of the center. If based on trust, it is the way that the stakeholders *relate*. The center will benefit by systematizing its communication in a way that is timely, clear, concise, and relevant. It must make certain that the dialogue is truly a dialogue. How do the stakeholders' voices get heard and their suggestions implemented? What is the role of the web, written communication, the meetings—especially to the board members and the champions?

Through proactive example, the director must model effective communication, and must report to the appropriate stakeholders in a timely and organized way. This may entail developing communication structures that provide a logical, bidirectional flow of information. This may also include establishing communication procedures with the director's superiors, opening the way to receive feedback and other communication in a positive, consistent manner. Essentially, the director needs to be listing and sharing the progress being made toward the stakeholders' value propositions.

The authors' experience is that often the director is left out of many conversations that impact his or her own value propositions. What is being communicated to any stakeholder when he or she is left out of the conversation? By being proactive, the communication tool can become an opportunity for directors to restructure the dynamics that may have left them frustrated, undervalued, and/or unappreciated for the tireless efforts put into the center's success. At the same time, directors can lead by modeling appropriately assertive behavior.

A crucial part of this communication is to make explicit the value propositions that each stakeholder can expect and how they relate to the vision or plan. At the same time, and perhaps even more difficult, the director must explain the expectations the center has *from each stakeholder*. Because of the challenge of limited resources, the center and its director must also cultivate and expect the support and contributions of the stakeholders. Centers where the stakeholders merely slide a list of demands across the table are not sustainable.

Feedback and Benchmarks

Effective innovation requires consistent feedback. In a university setting, where the performance and results are broadly defined, the director must frame the goals as well as test the results. This helps make the quid pro quo communication more concrete and measurable. But beyond that, what are the perceptions of the key stakeholders? If a stranger asked the president, a family business, a student, a professional, and a faculty member what they thought of the center, would their responses at all correlate with the efforts and reality? Others act and decide based on their perceptions. The director must make sure that those perceptions are in the best interests of all the stakeholders.

Political Support

Political support is crucial. Many writers in this field have talked about the need for a champion within the university (Keyt, 2000). But perhaps further than just a champion, the center and the director need *champions*: leaders in each stakeholder group willing to carry on this dialogue. The key to enlisting effective champions goes back to the development of a clear, achievable mission, vision, and strategic plan. When careful thought has been expressed in an organized plan of action, the vision from which the plan emerges is exciting and others involved will want to see the vision become a reality. By recruiting champions from each stakeholder group, the director—and the organization as a whole—is armed with the confidence that the value propositions for each are given voice.

Challenges

What are the critical challenges related to the topics above? A study of 21 university programs was best summarized by the comment that centers ought to "become more consultative, move away from a forum that comes across as CPA's, bankers, attorneys, insurance brokers all trying to 'pitch'/sell their services to forum members . . . work with members to deal with their issues" (Kaplan, 2000).[2] Although this is revealing of the possibility that members may want services, it also suggests that they don't want services if the approach seems to be a professional pitch. Somehow, the value proposition of the sponsor needs to be brought into better alignment with the value proposition of the center's family business members. Each must understand the other's needs and role. This is the responsibility of the center's director.

This same study analyzed the expectations of three key stakeholder groups (directors, sponsors, and family business members) in nine categories. In all but one category the directors had the highest expectations. In all nine categories, the sponsors had higher expectations than members. Members had the lowest expectations. The program directors' expectations were least met. Furthermore, neither the directors' nor the sponsors' perceptions were significantly correlated with those of the same program's members. That seems to indicate a very important gap. This is reinforced by a different survey of 37 center directors who ranked the willingness to learn and grow as the most important trait of a healthy family business (McCann et al., 2003).

These studies all indicate that the stakeholders have very differing perceptions. They indicate that expectations and perceptions differ. They illustrate that the issue of value is subjective and confused and that there is little or no consensus as to what exactly the value for each stakeholder is.

Think Win/Win: Examples of Value Propositions

The Appendix A contains a sample list of the "value contributed to the center" for each of the seven stakeholder groups as well as the "value gained for the stakeholder." This list is meant to be descriptive not prescriptive of what has resulted from the dialogues at our universities.

The risk is that the reader takes the value propositions listed as a conclusion and ignores the process of uncovering the value propositions of the center's stakeholders. The process of dialogue

[2] Note that all 21 programs studied were in the United States, all member- and sponsor-based, established before 1995. Thus it would seem that the evolving academic-based centers would be even more at risk for mixed perceptions if they are operating in the three areas of teaching, research, and service.

creates a sense of ownership for each of the stakeholders and a sense of mutual responsibility between them.

The process is as important as the outcome: without the dialogue, few people will really buy into or take ownership of these value propositions. So consider the list as a catalyst to start the dialogue regarding value propositions for each of the stakeholders. It is by no means intended to be definitive or complete.

Conclusion

This article is intended to be a significant contribution to the effort to create a dialogue that will lead to a roadmap outlining the issues, stakeholders, and processes for the emerging profession of center director. Directors operate in an environment that, at least organizationally, is not noted for fostering innovation. Yet innovation is exactly the essence of the directors' challenge. How do we bring all the appropriate and necessary resources of the university to bear to help this vital institution? How will we help these family businesses that drive the economy and help foster our values?

The starting point for this emerging profession is to rethink the existing paradigm. This means looking at two interrelated issues: What is the director's role? and What is the purpose of the center? On the former, the director must be a visionary and strategic leader. The director must align the purpose of the center with the university and then engage all the key stakeholders in an ongoing dialogue about mutual beneficial relationships. Innovation must go beyond merely how to work the existing model/paradigm better; it must create a process of engagement with its stakeholders that enables the center to be constantly available and committed to improvement.

At the same time, it is important for directors and, indeed, all key stakeholders to realize the unique environment in which FBCs operate. Uninformed stakeholders are inevitably prone to unrealistic and counterproductive expectations. This makes sense when we consider from a marketing perspective that FBCs selling a relatively new service in a still newer method of delivery. From a consulting perspective, they must overcome the emotional resistance of not only seeking help with one's business, but the even greater resistance to seeking help with one's family. Thus an ongoing challenge for this profession is to know and utilize effective methods to inform, motivate, and change the visions of the various stakeholders. This is a promising area for further research.

This first theme—helping to shape the role of the director as an emerging profession—can be informed by looking at other fields that have had to innovate. We are, as a group, innovators (or "product leaders" as one business expert terms it). As such we need to educate the market and help initiate demand, and do so in a professional manner that is both ethical and effective. Further dialogue and research needs to occur on that issue in particular. Given this role, what are some tactical tools that can help virtually every director?

The key tools that we believe are necessary for every director include (1) planning, (2) academic and marketing research, (3) improved communication structures, (4) systematized feedback and benchmarking, and (5) political support. Each director may need a different combination of these tools, but none of them should be ignored.

The examples of the value propositions included in the Appendix are offered with a word of caution. The concern we have is that directors might take this list as prescriptive rather than as an example. The examples given might be best used as a *starting point* for discussions with stakeholders, not as the actual value propositions of *your* stakeholders. Communicate with your stakeholders to craft their own list of value propositions, then these value propositions will be owned.

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Appendix: Examples of Value Propositions for Academic-Based Centers

Stakeholders	*Value Contributed to Center*	*Value Gained for Stakeholder*
University administration	• Permanent university funding • Collaboration from development, public relations, and admissions • Recruiting of students • Enhancing alumni relations	• Return on funding in areas of teaching, research, and service aligned with the university mission statement • Enhanced fundraising, media exposure, and recruiting • A niche for recruiting and retaining students • Enhancing alumni relations
University faculty	• Teaching new courses or adapting existing courses • Developing a new research niche or adapting an existing one • Enhancing existing relationships or building new ones	• Opportunity for new challenges and competences and for contributing to an emerging field in areas of teaching, research, and service • Enhancing relationships with students, families, and the business community
Students	• Recruit families, other students, and faculty • Build relationships with business community through internships • Participate with families in retreats • Providing critical feedback for continuous improvement of curriculum	• Self-confidence through self-assessment and understanding family business as a field • Marketability of skills, credentials, and experiences (e.g., internship) • A roadmap applying theory to lives • A chance to integrate their family into its development work • Networking opportunities
Family business (parents and other)	• Donation of time, money, or other resources • Testimonials and communicate with media on behalf of center • Offer internships and employment opportunities • Participation and feedback on programs	• Recognition and other naming opportunities • Media exposure and networking opportunities • Opportunity to recruit top internship and employment candidates • Shared experiences with other family businesses • A roadmap applying theory to owners' lives (and their children's)
Donors, boards, and sponsors	• Contribution of money and other resources • Name recognition to enhance program's credibility • Strategic advice gained from their experience for center • Serve as a liaison between the center and the various stakeholder groups	• Satisfaction of helping an emerging field • Greater name recognition from newness of the field • Chance to contribute their expertise and history to academia • Enhanced networking including client recruitment

General public, media, and business communities	• Recognition of the uniqueness of family business and appropriate support • Recognize and celebrate this vital institution • Opportunity for center to share story of nation's two most vital institutions: family and business	• By increasing successful succession, greater economic stability is gained, including creation of new jobs • Community values are better protected and sustained • An opportunity for the media to give voice to this relatively hidden story