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MG9D.1

Farm families benefit from developing a written mission statement for their farm business. If you think of your farm family as riding a bus together, the mission statement becomes the targeted destination on your business road map. A mission defines a clear and compelling purpose for your farm business. It defines what will remain constant as other things in your family business change. A mission statement should reflect both the owner's passion and commitment. It serves as an inspiration for the family during hard times and times of indecision. As a weather vane points out the direction of the wind, a mission statement guides all the movement within your farm business.

Farm families profit from talking about what they want from their shared life on the family farm. These conversations start to shape a mission for their family farm business. The first worksheet in this publication asks a series of questions designed to create such a conversation within your family. Each family member jots down brief answers to each of these questions. Later the family gathers together to share their responses. This exercise reveals values core to your family business.

After family members listen to everyone's responses to the first worksheet, each member can use the second worksheet to jot down more thoughts about a farm mission. The two questions in this worksheet come from the books *The One Page Business Plan* written by Jim Horan and *Built to Last* by Jim Collins. The family once again gets together to listen to what each individual wrote down on the second worksheet. The family then delegates one individual to gather all these thoughts and aspirations to complete the third worksheet. This individual should be able to listen to everyone in the family and summarize the common themes which unite and direct the family into the future.

The conversations your family has in developing a mission for your farm are as important as the written statement. This is an opportunity for everyone to talk about what matters most as they work together in your family farm business. Once you have written your mission statement, place it in prominently in your home and farm to remind you where you want to go as you make decisions about your family farm.

Worksheet 1: Understanding What You Want From Your Family Farm Life

Jot down your brief responses to these questions. Then get your family together to share what each other wrote down.

1. What is most important about working on a farm?

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2. What do you value about family life?

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3. What do you want to experience in your working relationships with other family members?

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4. What do you want to stand for and preserve as a family?

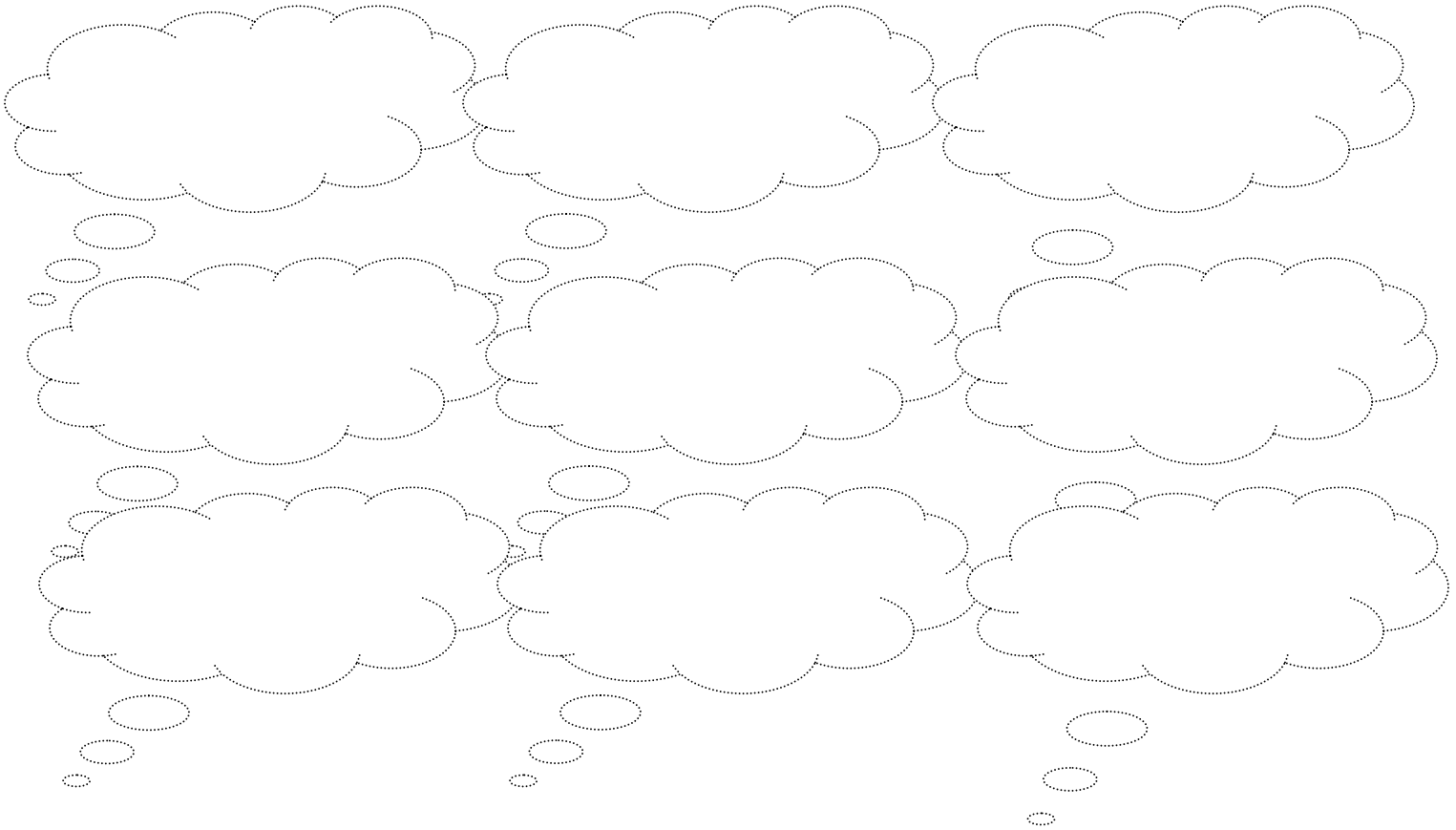
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5. As you visualize being in the twilight of your life rocking on the front porch overlooking the farm, what accomplishments would give you great satisfaction?

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Worksheet 2: Organizing A Family Farm Mission Statement

After your family has talked about their responses to the previous worksheet, encourage each individual to use a copy of this worksheet to answer the following questions about your farm business: “What are we building?” and “Why does this farm business exist?”



In the box below, combine these thoughts into a list or a paragraph that summarizes what you have written above. This should describe what you want to build and why. Or to view this process another way, think of your farm business as a journey and the mission describes the destination - not the route.

Worksheet 3: Writing Your Farm Mission Statement

After you have collected all the thoughts of individual family members, discuss with them those goals that are shared by everyone. Then delegate to the best writer within the family the responsibility to draft a written statement that summarizes the long-term purpose of your farm. This statement should answer “What are we building and why does it exist?” This mission statement should be clear, concise and inspirational for the family. Hopefully, it will provide guidance and bring the family together during times of conflict and indecision over what course the business should take in an ever-changing world. The mission statement should be outcome-oriented and allow flexibility for changing business strategies. Your family may likely review and refine several drafted mission statements before finally coming to an enthusiastic agreement. Please use the rest of this sheet to draft your farm mission statement.


References

Collins, Jim. 2001. *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap and Others Don't*. HarperCollins Publishers. New York City, New York.

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Horan, Jim. 2004. *The One Page Business Plan*. The One Page Business Plan Company. Berkeley, California.

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