



FAMILY BUSINESS (434D1A)

NAVIGATING SUCCESSION IN A FAMILY BUSINESS: A CASE STUDY OF PERRY'S ICE CREAM

Background

Perry's Ice Cream is a longstanding, family-owned business poised at a critical juncture in its history. As one of the two largest ice cream manufacturing plants in New York State, it boasts significant operational scale with a 120,000-square-foot plant and a 40,000-square-foot storage facility. Its market reach extends across the East Coast of the United States and to over 35 countries internationally. The company is currently led by its fourth generation (G4) of family leadership and is actively preparing for a transition to a fifth generation (G5). The three current family members in the business are acutely aware of the high failure rate of family-owned businesses during succession, often due to internal conflicts, diverging visions, and complex family dynamics. To combat these risks, they have proactively undertaken a rigorous introspective process, analyzing lessons from their own past to create a formal succession roadmap titled "**Sustaining Generations.**" Despite this diligent preparation, the G4 leadership is self-aware enough to question whether their internal focus has caused them to overlook external factors or alternative perspectives. To address this, they are seeking fresh, external analysis from business students.

Introduction

Perry's Ice Cream has successfully created an internal succession plan but is concerned about potential blind spots. Your task is to analyze the company's situation, evaluate the strengths and potential weaknesses of their current approach, and provide recommendations to strengthen their succession strategy. You must consider the unique challenges of a family-owned business, the pressures of operating in a competitive manufacturing industry, and the complexities of transitioning leadership across generations while maintaining both family harmony and business growth.

Questions for Analysis

Students are asked to address the following key questions in their analysis:

1. **Risk Assessment:** Beyond the internal family dynamics they have identified, what are the top three *external*/business threats (e.g., market, competition, supply chain, global trade) that could jeopardize Perry's Ice Cream's success during the G4 to G5 transition, and why?



2. **Plan Evaluation:** The "Sustaining Generations" document is a "living document." What specific mechanisms or policies would you recommend they build into this plan to ensure it remains relevant, adaptable, and effective for future generations? Consider governance, conflict resolution, and criteria for family member entry.
3. **Strategic Expansion:** Given their existing international presence in 35 countries, what strategic growth path would you recommend for G5: deepening their penetration in existing markets, or aggressively expanding into new international regions? Justify your recommendation with logical reasoning.
4. **Non-Family Leadership:** How should Perry's Ice Cream integrate non-family executives and key professionals into the leadership structure to complement the family members and bring in outside expertise, without diluting the core family-owned brand identity?

What Students Are Asked to Submit

Students are required to submit a **Professional Case Analysis Report** (approx. 1,500 - 2,000 words) that includes the following sections:

1. What is the central challenge and objective facing Perry's Ice Cream?
2. Beyond family conflict, what is one significant external business threat that could disrupt their succession plan, and why?
3. What is one specific feature or policy you would add to the "Sustaining Generations" document to ensure it remains effective for future generations?
4. What is one key action the current leadership (G4) should take now to ensure a smoother transition to the next generation (G5)?
5. How will succession challenge directly contribute to the long-term survival and growth of Perry's Ice Cream?