

Executive Coaching: Camosse Masonry Supply Prepares the Next Generation

[Camosse Masonry Supply](#) has a vibrant history. Founded in 1948 in Worcester, Mass., the company is still family owned and operated. In its 71-year history, it has experienced amazing growth and transition, including opening a second retail store in 2014 in Charlton, Mass., and closing the manufacturing facility at the Worcester retail location in 2013 to refocus the business entirely on the retail masonry and landscape supply operation. It is currently operated by the third and fourth generation of the family.

But, as many family businesses can appreciate, there are often unique issues and challenges that arise in family-owned companies that can be a struggle to overcome and solve, particularly when those challenges involve the relationships between family members.

The Challenge

In September 2016, Henry Camosse, Jr., the third-generation president of Camosse Masonry Supply, decided it was time to start his transition out of the business. At 62 years old, he was thinking about slowly phasing himself out of the company, which meant giving more of the management responsibilities to his sons: Christopher and Henry III, nicknamed Jay.

Henry knew there was some tension between the brothers. Not only were they not on the same page on many issues, but he sensed they weren't even reading the same book. Both Christopher and Jay had been working at the company since they graduated from school and were aware of the unique requirements of working in a family business. As Henry started the transition, however, he realized he needed some help to manage their differences to ensure they could work together to successfully run Camosse Masonry Supply.



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"Before Jay Forte came on board, we experienced quite a bit of conflict. Meetings turned into shouting matches," Henry said. "There were a lot of differences in opinions, especially about the long-range direction of the company, and in some of the general day-to-day operations. I knew I needed outside help to get this squared away."

The Solution

In January 2018, Henry hired Jay Forte of The Forte Factor to conduct executive coaching sessions to assist in a successful "meeting of the minds," which would pave the way for a smooth transition of the management of the company.

"Within the first few minutes of our first meeting, Jay [F.] hit the nail on the head. Everything was personal and not objective. People were talking but no one was listening. He saw the conflicts between Christopher and Jay and he knew this wasn't going to be a quick fix," said Henry.

For the next four months, Jay F. worked closely with Henry, Christopher and Jay to complete weekly coaching sessions, and brought them all together every few weeks to meet as a group to explore how things were going.

“Jay was incredibly patient with all of us,” said Henry. “It’s one of the things about working with him that I was most impressed by. He always encouraged us and guided us to be better and to be accountable to ourselves and to each other.”

The Results

After four months of coaching, Henry saw great improvement in the family dynamics and cohesiveness of the two siblings. The coaching program taught each of them to become self-aware and self-managed, recognizing that their own strengths are often accompanied by liabilities, both of which need to be managed.

“What we have now is productive conflict. We can talk through disagreements in a positive way and our regular weekly staff meetings are true ‘give and take’ discussions about short term goals and long-term strategy. It’s something I don’t think would have happened had it not been for Jay F.’s efforts to coach all of us to be better.”

The ability to stop and notice a situation, to stay above the line, and to ask what’s working and what’s not working, are a few of the primary tools taught during The Forte Factor’s coaching program. These tools, among others, helped guide the team at Camosse Masonry Supply in seeing the business in a new light. To start, Henry, Jay, and Chris identified a new way of running the operations of the business. Instead of Christopher and Jay each operating an individual retail store, almost on a competitive basis, they now manage components of the overall company together, one focusing on the internal activities, and one on the external activities.

“What Jay F. taught us how to do, how to run the company and manage ourselves, has made us so much more productive,” said Henry. “I use many of the tools Jay F. taught us during our coaching sessions daily. I’m a firm believer that when you have an open mind and remind yourself that there is always something new to learn to be better, you can be pleasantly surprised by the outcome. I strongly believe that without coaching from The Forte Factor, we would not have seen a real, productive, and successful change in how this fourth generation sees both their own relationship, and their long-term commitment to the business.”