

I'M READY BUT I'M STUCK

by **Stacy Feiner, PsyD**
CASE STUDY

"I am ready but I'm stuck," she said

Laura envisioned a clear path ahead: at 55, she'd launch a ten-year succession plan, and by 65, she would step down as CEO of her second-generation company and transition to a role on the board—a timeline that felt achievable.

But now, at 58, Laura had not yet taken the first step in launching her succession plan. The vision that once felt within reach now seemed increasingly distant. Initially, she pointed to the pandemic as the main reason for the delay, seeing it as the culprit that had disrupted everything. However, as our conversation unfolded, Laura's reflections became more introspective, and she began to consider deeper layers of the situation.

Her self-awareness in this moment was striking.

Laura explained that she was stuck at a critical crossroads, torn between two major dilemmas: the ongoing, unresolved conflict with her younger brother, whose performance as a leader in the business had been lacking, and her growing uncertainty about how the shifting economic landscape would impact the future of her company. These two issues weighed heavily on her, and while she was able to articulate the reasons for her sense of being stuck, she couldn't figure out how to break free.

"It's just too complicated," she said. "And I'm sure my brother won't even want to participate in resolving any of this."

In her words, I heard a mix of frustration and helplessness, and it was clear that Laura had been carrying these burdens for some time. Despite her clarity about the roadblocks she faced, she felt trapped in a cycle that hadn't been able to break. It wasn't just the conflict with her brother that held her back—it was the uncertainty about the future of her company and her role in navigating its challenges.

This is where my process comes in, built on a powerful promise: once addressed the underlying issues—first with her brother, and then strengthening her mindset to lead the business with clarity and confidence—she would be on a path to uninterrupted growth. Once the pieces of the puzzle were in place, Laura could regain control of her situation.

So, we began. We started by assessing Laura's performance across the 20 universal priorities that every business owner must consider, spanning her leadership, internal operations, external headwinds, family, and the layers of people dynamics that directly impacted profits, long-term strategic planning and financial health. It was a

intensive assessment, and gave us a detailed map of where she stood.

Next, we organized all of this data into a flow chart to clearly visualize how these various priorities intersected. What became apparent was that Laura was at the center of it all—her actions, decisions, and mindset influenced the entire business ecosystem. This insight was powerful because it highlighted not just the challenges, but also the leverage she had in driving change and shaping outcomes.

With this visual map in hand, we then populated the identified priorities into a project plan, which allowed us to break down the larger objectives into manageable initiatives. This step was crucial, as it translated complex, abstract goals into actionable steps. We also fleshed out specific goals based on the data Laura had gathered and the insights we speculated on as a team.

The impact of this diagnostic was profound. It gave Laura the clarity she had been missing and confirmed that there was a way out—a clear path to achieving her expectations and objectives.

Her biggest takeaway from this phase was seeing how we could address multiple challenges simultaneously. The diagnostic process allowed her to see that, rather than feeling overwhelmed by the complexity of the issues, we could strategically solve for them in parallel. This wasn't an either/or situation—it was about leveraging the resources and tools she had at her disposal to tackle her brother's performance issues and the company's long-term strategy at the same time.

As Laura absorbed these insights, I could see the weight lift off her shoulders. The path forward was no longer shrouded in uncertainty. She was beginning to feel empowered again, knowing that there was a plan in place to guide her.

In my work, I often say, "When you have everything to gain and everything to lose, I'm here for you." This couldn't have been more true for Laura in this moment. She was at a crossroads, with the potential to transform her future and her company's legacy. With the right framework in place, the seemingly insurmountable challenges could be tackled head-on—and she was ready.