

PARENTS RENEGE, DAUGHTER RESIGNS

by Stacy Feiner, PsyD

CASE STUDY

Until owners gain visibility into their entire ecosystem, they're shooting randomly at dusk—the time of day when you think you can see everything but really can't.

In Chicago, this well-run family-owned business was unexpectedly engulfed in conflict. Stepping mid-stream into what should have been a smooth transition of ownership to the next generation, I found a series of missteps that snowballed into an emotionally-charged disaster.

The owners, easing into retirement, turned most day-to-day operations over to their daughter. Gradually lulled by her effective leadership, they procrastinated on filling several key leadership positions.

When the pandemic brought intense pressure and upheaval, the daughter did not have the team she needed to navigate the crisis. As challenges intensified, the owners panicked, abandoned their retirement plans, and told their daughter they had postponed the succession plan until further notice.

She promptly resigned.

In an instant, everything they'd worked for blew up. The owners lost focus, and were desperate to save the relationship with their daughter, their company, and their future.

Their daughter, in separate conversations with me, was lost in disbelief and confusion. How could she let this happen? Could her parents lose everything?

All these emotions were raw, too fresh to have calcified into truths. I knew by moving fast and offering alternative perspectives, they had a chance

for exploration, resolution, and the self-awareness needed for healthy relationships in the future.

With this mess at their feet, the owners couldn't avoid looking at the steps leading up to it. They had to look at themselves, take accountability—or risk making reconciliation with their daughter improbable. They left her short-handed. Retirement was comfortable. They checked out too soon. Once they owned this pattern of behavior, they opened the channel for rebuilding trust with their daughter, creating the best possible outcome for all (which does come to fruition).

At the same time, the daughter was flooded by feelings of shame. When I suggested she look at her resignation as a heroic act to get out of her parents' way, it resonated with her deeply. Her perspective shifted and she acknowledged her disappointment that they were not careful to preserve her credibility so she could stay.

Now... Instead of lies, betrayal, and loss, we found misunderstandings, mistakes, and heroism. Our work opened the entire system up to the self-awareness needed for the company to rebound and grow.

The takeaway? Until owners gain visibility into their entire ecosystem, they're shooting randomly at dusk—the time of day when you think you can see everything but really can't. My process interrupts unconscious patterns and delivers real health into how you live your life and make decisions.