

MULTI-GENERATION SMALL BUSINESS IN RURAL COMMUNITIES
WREN MONTGOMERY AND M. GORDON HUNTER

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CENTRE

Multi-Generation Small Business in Rural Communities

Wren Montgomery
Queen's University
Goodes Hall
Room 200, 143 Union Street
Kingston, Ontario K7L 3N6
CANADA

M. Gordon Hunter, Professor
Faculty of Management
The University of Lethbridge
4401 University Drive West
Lethbridge, Alberta T1K 3M4
CANADA

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Abstract

Successful small business tends to be determined by performance and growth. However, this is not always the case. In this research we contend that longevity via multi-generation existence also represents a measure for successful performance. This research determined the unique management issues of multi-generation small business. The emerging themes are based upon interviews with representatives of 11 small businesses in the Lethbridge, Alberta area. Also, a replication of the earlier project was conducted in eastern Ontario which involved seven small businesses. The research participants are from subsequent generations following the founding of the small business. Comments are included regarding initial issues, as well as current and future issues.

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1. Introduction

This project investigated the histories and issues of multi-generation small business in rural communities. The focus of this project was on rural Eastern Ontario. This project represents the continuation and extension of an earlier project conducted in southern Alberta.

The small business sector represents an important segment of most economies. In Canada, for instance, approximately 43% of total economic output is generated by about 2.5 million small businesses (fewer than 100 employees) representing 60% of the total work force. These numbers are similar to other countries (Hunter and Kazakoff, 2012a).

The goal of this project was to identify those characteristics which not only contribute to the current success of the small business, but also those that have contributed to the survival of the small business beyond the tenure of the founding entrepreneur. The majority of investigations into multi-generation small business have focused upon factors surrounding succession planning. This is an important aspect to consider for multi-generation small businesses and, indeed, consideration for succession emerged from this investigation. However, succession planning is just one, albeit an important issue, relating to the success of small businesses over more than one generation. Thus, what attributes can be identified which support the intergenerational transition of small business? This investigation delved into more detail regarding those issues that have allowed some small businesses to continue for more than one generation.

This exploratory investigation documents the comments of a family representative regarding their interpretation of the experiences of their intergenerational small business. A qualitative approach was adopted, employing Narrative Inquiry to document these interpretations through interviews. The structure of the interviews followed a chronological sequence across the generations of existence of the small business. Historical, current, and future issues were pursued. The resulting interview transcripts were analyzed to identify emerging themes.

The result of this investigation is a more thorough understanding of the important aspects of intergenerational small business. This understanding may be employed to assist other small businesses as well as to provide an enriched applied educational experience to those individuals who plan to become involved in small business.

This document is organized in the following manner. To begin, the current literature about small business is reviewed. This review leads to the contention for longevity as an alternative method to interpret success. Two projects are then reviewed which employed multi-generation as a measure for longevity and subsequent interpretation of success. Emerging issues are presented in a chronological order based upon the participation of the owner/managers in the multi-generation small businesses. Finally, conclusions are presented in support of the contention for longevity as an interpretation for success.

2. Literature Review

Most research investigations and many government agencies employ the number of employees as a way to define small business (Longnecker, Moore and Petty, 1997). This statistic is readily available because of the income tax remittance requirement of most payroll systems. There are, however, inconsistencies in how this statistic is employed to define small business. In Canada the number is 100 employees for goods producing firms and 50 employees for service firms (Industry Canada 2010). Firms employing between 101 and 499 persons are considered medium sized. Perhaps the most specific definition of small business is provided by the European Parliament (2002). They define micro businesses as having 0 – 10 employees. Small businesses include up to 50 employees, and medium sized businesses have up to 250 employees. Because of these inconsistencies researchers tend to take a contingency approach to defining small business based upon size (number of employees) for each research project.

Managers of small business adopt a perspective and make decisions which are different from those made by administrators of large companies. The concept of “resource poverty” (Thong, Yap and Raman, 1994) reflects the perspective taken by small business managers. This term suggests that small business managers lack important resources associated with skills, time, and finances (Stevenson, 1999). First, small businesses employ few people who may not possess all of the appropriate skills to support the entire business operation. Second, with fewer people and available skills the small business manager will be limited in the time available to devote to decision making activities. Third, as most small businesses are privately held, they tend to be financed with a limited supply of money (Ang, 1991).

Small business owner/managers deal with information in a very informal manner. They may possess a very basic understanding of accounting and financial systems (Halabi, Barrett and Dyt, 2010) and only when necessary prefer to rely upon external services for general business advice. The small business owner/managers’ work day is hectic as they continually shift their focus to different issues (Floren, 2006). Overall, they prefer informal communication (Halabi, Barrett and Dyt, 2010).

It is imperative for the success of a small business that attempts are made to improve performance and in turn gain competitive advantage. Small business owner/managers who attempt to create a positive work environment by adopting attitudes of flexibility and learning will facilitate competitive advantage (Wyer, Donohue and Matthews, 2010). Performance may also be improved through the appropriate use of intangible resources (Huybrechts et al, 2011). They propose four major categories of intangible resources. First, Organization Culture involves a group oriented internal perspective with a focus on the long term. Second, Reputation is reflected in the stakeholders’ interpretation of the small business. Third, Human Capital includes the application of knowledge, skills and capabilities of individuals within the small business which will lead to long-term commitment and lower turnover rates. Fourth, Networks involve the on-going relationship with external entities such as financial institutions, suppliers, and customers; and internal entities of partners.

Sound marketing practices positively contribute to improved sales and earnings (Zinger, LeBrasseur and Zanibbi, 2001). This finding supports the contention by Pitt and Kannemeyer

(2000) regarding the key role of a marketing strategy in an early stage enterprise. Small businesses tend to have a relatively small customer base (Zontanos and Anderson, 2001) within their local area (Weinrauch et al, 1991). However, this limited focus may affect performance during economic downturns. This potential issue suggests a marketing strategy involving a more diversified approach to customer relations may be beneficial.

Growth of small business creates economic value (Tan et al, 2009). The most common means for measuring growth is change in employment (Hoogstra and van Dijk, 2004; Chaganti, Cook and Smeltz, 2002; Smallbone, Leigh and North, 1995; and Davidsson and Delmar, 1997) or change in sales (Kelley and Nakosteen, 2005; LeBrasseur, Zanibbi and Zinger, 2003; and McMahan, 2001).

Small business growth will be affected by four related categories (Dobbs and Hamilton 2007). First, growth will be related to management strategy. That is, to begin, a strategic decision is made that growth will be an objective. Second, in conjunction with this decision is the character of the entrepreneur who must be motivated to exploit the opportunity to grow. Third, the small business must be in a specific industry where the market provides the prospect for growth. Fourth, the small business profile (size and age) will contribute to growth. Thus, initially, small business will grow quickly to a certain size (Dobbs and Hamilton, 2007). Then, a divergence of growth paths occurs (Tan et al, 2009). This divergence results not only from the small business environment but also management strategy decisions.

The resulting divergence of growth paths suggests the consideration for an alternative interpretation of success. That is, a small business may be considered a success beyond growth. It is proposed that longevity could be a consideration. Longevity in the form of multi-generation existence is suggested here. In general, the literature suggests issues which are related specifically to the multi-generation situation.

An issue that has received a great deal of attention relative to multi-generation small business is succession. Eventually, a decision has to be made about who will take over the family business when the senior generation reaches retirement age. If the small business is sold to someone outside of the family there will be no concern for succession. However, in a multi-generation small business this issue becomes important by the very fact that the business will be passed on to another family member. There are further issues to be addressed which contribute to the success of multi-generation small business including a succession plan and responding to siblings.

Bjuggren and Sund (2002) discuss succession employing the term “transition” regarding the passing of ownership from one generation to the next within a family business. The concept of “knowledge idiosyncrasy” is introduced to support their discussion of intergenerational succession. This concept incorporates the idea that learning occurs through watching and doing. Thus, within a family run business significant learning about the business occurs as the younger generation associates with the older generation in the working environment. Inside knowledge is passed from one generation to the next in either a tacit or explicit manner. In similar ways attitudes and ethics are developed and transferred.

A good written succession plan is necessary to provide for continuation of the small business (Manthey and Balhoff, 2002). The plan must take into consideration the specific situation of each small business (Barach et al, 1988). Thus, there may be many ways to address succession (Fiegener et al, 1996). In general, a succession plan should attempt to pass the ownership of the small business from one generation to the other without interfering with the operation of the company. What this usually relates to is financial implications. There are two major areas here. First, the succession plan should attempt to minimize any tax implications (Narva, 2003). Second, the exit strategy (BDC, 2006) of the senior generation may also have a financial effect on the small business. This strategy should attempt to provide a sufficient retirement fund while not impinging upon the financial resources of the small business.

Much research has been conducted into succession planning. There is a significant amount of academic and practitioner information which addresses the types of financial implications outlined above. Unfortunately, very few small business owners prepare succession plans (Brown and Coverly, 1999). A Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce (CIBC) small business survey (CIBC World Markets, 2005) suggested that over the following fifteen years over one half of Canada's small business owners plan to retire. The document also suggested that very few of these individuals have definite plans for succession. It seems that it is a difficult matter to consider that one day the owner will die (Brown and Coverley, 1999). Dealing with the issue of one's mortality tends to be ignored.

Another issue relates to sibling accommodation. Once the multi-generation small business passes to a subsequent generation there usually is more than one of the founder's offspring involved. Also, there may be siblings who are not involved in the business. Some form of accommodation will have to be made for these non-participating siblings. Handler (1991) suggests that ways must be determined to minimize any form of conflict. She states, "In successful family businesses, both siblings and parent-owner work to make sibling rivalry positive rather than negative in effect" (Handler, 1991:22). Friedman (1989) studied sibling rivalry by applying conflict management theories. Potential conflicts amongst siblings must be managed. Ward (1987) suggests sibling rivalry must be managed within a positive rather than negative context. Thus, businesses may publicize their philosophy on salary and promotions, ensure that participating siblings have separate and distinct roles within the business, and adopt a code of conduct, whether explicit or implied, regarding sibling interaction. It is important that this accommodation be extended to those siblings who are not participating directly in the business. As a member of the family they will have rights to the assets of the business when viewed as an asset of the family or estate. Documenting these rights and a method for sharing in them must be addressed and resolved. They will be concerned with the equitable share of the family asset. These potential sibling tensions may be anticipated and resolved through the adoption of a stewardship approach. Handler (1991) further suggests that positive sibling accommodation will result in a team approach taken by family members involved in operating the business.

Overall, the literature indicates the importance of small business to the economy. However, there are issues with small business failure. Suggestions are proffered regarding improving performance and gaining competitive advantage. While growth is possible in the short run, long term growth may not be feasible or desired. Thus, success may be interpreted through longevity

in the form of a multi-generation situation. Multi-generation small businesses possess unique issues such as succession and sibling accommodation. The project reported in the next section investigated the unique management issues of multi-generation small business.

3. Project Description

This exploratory investigation documents the comments of family representatives regarding their interpretation of their experiences of working (and living) in their multi-generation small business (Hunter and Kazakoff, 2008) and expands these findings to include an interpretation of small business success. A qualitative approach was adopted, employing Narrative Inquiry to document these interpretations. Narrative Inquiry involves documenting stories that are contextually rich and temporally bounded. The term contextually rich relates to a research participant's account of experiences that are vividly remembered. A story is temporally bounded when it is structured in a sequence with a beginning and an end. The structure of the interviews followed a chronological sequence across the generations of existence of the small business. See Appendix A for the Interview Protocol. Historical, current, and future issues were pursued. The resulting transcripts were analyzed to identify emerging themes.

The interview technique is based upon McCracken's (1988) 'long interview' which allows research participants to reflect upon the domain of discourse in a relatively unbiased and free-flowing manner. The four-step technique involves first, gaining an awareness of the relevant literature; second, to introspectively understand one's own awareness of the research question; third, to conduct the interview during which participants have an opportunity to tell their story; and fourth, to conduct analyses of the interview data to identify emerging themes.

McCracken's (1988) Long Interview technique supports the Narrative Inquiry approach to conducting qualitative research. Narrative Inquiry involves the recording and subsequent analysis of research participant's personal account of an event or a series of events. Narrative Inquiry is defined as, "... the symbolic presentation of a sequence of events connected by subject matter and related by time". (Scholes, 1981:205). Thus Narrative Inquiry, implemented through the Long Interview technique, facilitates the documentation of the participant's story. Swap et al (2001) have determined that when participant's relate their own personal experiences these recollections, "... would be more memorable, be given more weight, and be more likely to guide behaviour". (Swap et al, 2001:103). Tulving (1972) had suggested earlier that events, which had been directly experienced, would be most readily remembered. Further, research employing Narrative Inquiry suggests the sequence of the story elements (Vendelo, 1998, and Bruner, 1990) contribute to the appropriateness of the method. Also, Czarniawska-Joerges (1995) supports the technique of documenting a sequential account of events when employing Narrative Inquiry.

Potential participants were identified through personal contacts in the local community. The "snowball" technique was employed to identify subsequent potential participants. Interviews with those individuals who agreed to participate were recorded. A transcript was presented to each interviewee for their approval. The approved transcripts were reviewed to identify emerging themes. In the first project twenty individuals were interviewed representing eleven multi-generation small businesses. The types of small businesses include the following:

- Caterer
- Car dealerships
- Integrated farm
- Funeral chapel
- Home builders
- Jeweler
- Land management
- Radiator repair

In eastern Ontario nine individuals were interviewed representing the following businesses:

- Integrated farm
- Veterinary services
- Construction services
- Grocery
- Pharmacy
- Farm and food production
- Home goods retail

4. Results and Discussion

Within each interview the research participants were asked to describe their interpretation of issues related to past and current experiences as well as those issues they anticipate in the future. We divide our discussion into these three broad categories and identify several sub-themes for each. In addition, we include several additional recurrent themes identified in our analysis and discuss each of these. These themes include the role of broader socio-economic trends, the role of community, the role of the business' history and owner pride, and observations of differences between our Ontario and Alberta research findings.

4.1 Past Issues

We began our interviews by discussing the participant's personal history as well as that of the family business. Issues discussed here relate to the participants' initial training and education, career choice decisions, involvement in the business, and how they were integrated and accepted by others involved in the business. The past issues identified by the participants, while varied, were mainly about establishing their presence and identity within the business. Other issues deal with responding to the competitive environment, establishing new facilities, and planning and implementing an expansion program.

Education and training

Most of our participants had very early associations with the business often working part-time while attending elementary and/or high school. One participant notes that he *“was probably ten years old when I started getting paid something...for doing it. So that's...it's been a long time.”* Another notes the all-consuming nature of a busy family business for a young family,

“And I guess there’s not a time I don’t remember being at the clinic and just working. My Mom was the office manager so we were very focused...it was twenty-four hours, seven days a week. And my Dad worked very hard. So in order to spend time we kind of did spend a lot of time at the office with him”

This ‘watching and doing’ involvement provided an initial, and valuable, learning experience about the attitude, atmosphere, and work ethic of the small business and later helped to facilitate the transition into full-time involvement and ownership. Three of our interviewees were interested in entering the family business from a young age and, even when they went on to further education or training, it was specifically with the business in mind. However, for the majority of our participants the family business was met with some disinterest in their younger years and their early role did not inspire the same passion, although their early experiences still helped to aid their eventual entry. One participant sums up his attitude in his high school years as,

“And at that time I don’t really think I wanted to go to [business related professional] school. I had a great time in high school, I spent most of my time having fun and not concentrating on what I was going to do later in life; I didn’t really care, really.”

All but one of our participants, even those who intended to return, did gain outside training and education. The majority hold a Bachelor’s or college degree while three also hold graduate level degrees.

Career choice

For those who did not initially think of the family business as their career of choice the decision to enter the business is an interesting one. A few began to see the appeal of the family business as they considered other career options, looked at the challenges of the economy and job market, worked in other roles, or began to consider settling down. For example, one participant remembers,

“I couldn’t stand working for those guys. I thought, ‘Jeez, I used to make twice as much on the farm and I didn’t have to drive all over the place to get work.’ So I worked for just a couple years.”

Others felt a sense of obligation to a family business that had supported them and needed help,

“And ya...I had every intention of coming back and working for my father because he paid for my education, I couldn’t very well skip off to California ... which crossed my mind a few times.”

While interviewees had different levels of early passion for the business and entered it for different reasons, our interviewees did not indicate any subsequent variation on level of interest or motivation, and none expressed regret at their decision.

Integration into business

Once the decision to enter the business was made, other challenges arose. The participants all desired to be accepted by both their parents and other employees as competent contributors to the

operation of the business, not simply a family member. While there was a strong sense of family there was also a desire to prove, both to employees and themselves, that they held a specific position on merit and could perform it well. This integration and sense of competency and inclusion was a source of pride for many of our participants who remember fondly times when their role and contribution was recognized by the preceding generation and by other employees. For example, one participant remembers an older family member saying to others at the business,

“Oh let [interviewee] manage this, let [interviewee] manage this. Make the guys check with [interviewee], he knows what to do,” he was really, in those days, complimentary.”

In most of our interviews we see that an important point in this integration process centers on change to the business. Change is an opportunity for the solidification of the new employees' role and position, and a chance to demonstrate competency and their skills. This change might occur when a novel approach is required in response to the emergence of a new competitive environment, a move of business premises, or in the planning for the direction of future operations. In our interviews we frequently see the new entrants instigating change based on ideas they have gathered from their education, from other training, or from more current technical and other skills. These ideas are met in different ways by the current generation of owners. In many cases we see support for new ideas which helps smooth the new employee's integration into the business. For example, one employee recalls a father's response,

“He's always been very open to new things and new ideas, so the fact that I didn't walk in and he said, “No, this is how we do things,” was helpful, and we kind of just grew that way. And I was interested in things and we grew the practice in those directions, so that was helpful.”

However, many others were met with significantly more resistance. One respondent reports his Father's attitude to change as being,

“I'm good, I don't want to expand and do this right now,” like he was close to retirement, so it was a good...”

While some new entrants simply moved ahead with change despite some initial protests, for others this early conflict was enough to consider moving elsewhere,

“When I first came and worked for my father I wanted to make all these changes and he did not want to make any of them. And we had...we butted heads regularly over this stuff, to the point I actually thought, “Am I going to stay here and work with him, or is he going to capitulate and let me do certain things?”

Still another respondent reports not conflict but simply neglect and lack of guidance from the existing business owner, which made integration into the business stressful,

“I was floored, I mean this is a very large store, and I had no business background. I think I felt paralyzed at first.”

All of our respondents were able to eventually overcome these conflicts with family to allow the business to make changes and to continue to thrive while involving and integrating a new generation. Overcoming these past issues facilitated the participant's move into full time involvement as they served to establish and validate the new entrant's role within the small business, and eventually led to a discussion of ownership transition and succession.

Business transition and transfer

Almost without fail our participants note that transition of the business from their parents to the current generation was facilitated by keeping it as a business transaction rather than an inheritance. This is especially true when there were other siblings involved who may have been resentful had one child simply inherited the business. We note several instances of this as illustrated in the comments below from various participants,

“No we purchased it at market price, we did the whole thing, so it was a business transaction that wasn't an inheritance sort of thing...”

“I purchased the business, I took everything but the building; the goodwill and the stock I purchased in the first year.”

“So they got married and ...my parents bought the farm, like they paid what was due.”

“I came back in (the 1980s), we worked together until (the 1990s) and then I bought the business from him and he retired.”

While several of those business owners we spoke with reported what are surprisingly smooth transitions, we certainly found exceptions. Half of our interviews included discussion of difficult transitions which went on for lengthy periods and put stress on both family members and the business itself. Sometimes financial discussions and the value of different aspects of the business, as well as the value of the prospective new owner's past contributions, caused resentment which was eventually overcome,

“And it's just...he didn't talk a lot...he didn't talk at all for a couple days after that one meeting, so that's why it just went stagnant for a couple of years and then he had some health issues, and then we said, “Okay, we have to do this,” and we went ahead and I just did it, and paid him.”

For another now successful business owner, dealing with this type of family conflict for several years pushed him to eventually leave the business. It appears that this move in turn pushed the owners to finally find a resolution to the succession question and bring him back on board,

“And they lost money, prices were down ... and we were having all these legal bills and fights, and nobody wanted to work with anybody.” Participant continues later, “And so I quit, I just gave my notice. I said, “You know...” So I left in the spring of [year]. And almost immediately then – sometime over the summer, father was able to convince him”

Family relations

One recurring theme we hear from all of our participants are the stresses and pleasures of

working with family members, or deciding not to work together. Our interviewees recount how closely they worked and continue to work with siblings, parents, aunts, uncles, grandparents, cousins, and now spouses. In past, determining when parents retired from the business and how and what type of ongoing assistance and advice they provided to the business was a key factor. Many former owners made a clear break from management and the business once it was sold to their children, and this appears to be a very successful approach. However, many current owners also refer positively to the occasional advice, support, and even temporary or part-time work their parents did, or continue to do, in the business. Another past family issue is determining which siblings were interested in taking over the family business. In our interviews all of our business owners had siblings but in each case these other members were uninterested in the business, unsuited for it, or chose other careers – thereby limiting a potential area of family conflict. One owner explains his sisters’ reasons for leaving the family business,

“They tried, and they hated retail; they just didn’t have the aptitude...they didn’t like the people telling them off – they couldn’t deal with it.”

While many of these family transitions were smooth, one business owner who took over the business from dual owners (his father and sibling) illustrates some of the challenges these more complex succession arrangements often pose. As we move into the present our participants also face emerging challenges around family as new spouses are often integrated into the family business.

4.2 Current Issues

We next asked our interview participants to consider the key current challenges they were facing in their businesses. These issues relate to finding and working with employees including training and retention; responding to market conditions; planning and implementing information technology; and organizing and planning for potential growth.

Employee recruiting

The participants care a great deal for the employees who often become integral members of the business team and almost like family. As a result, owners attempt to ensure those individuals they hire agree with the philosophy of the small business, and look for someone who focuses on quality and customer service. However, finding these skilled employees in a rural area is challenging for many businesses. This is especially true for our businesses that require skilled work (professional training) who had trouble attracting staff to their rural locations, or that require heavy or challenging labour. Several of these businesses commented to us on the challenges of finding and hiring qualified and willing staff,

“...So ya there were challenges getting people to come out here for sure.”

“There seem to be fewer young people than...when I was a kid my friends all said, ‘Gee, can your father or uncle hire me for summer work?’ No young people come and apply anymore it seems.”

Others with stricter requirements (i.e. retail) find they have several interested parties but still find it difficult to find the right fit for their business and someone they hope to retain and integrate into the business longer-term,

“Like I had ten resumes, I could’ve hired full time guys, but they weren’t the guy for this store.”

Only one of our participants commented that they had had good luck with staffing. Although in a small community hiring choices can still be a challenge due to the fact that many friends and acquaintances may not be offered a position. As this owner explains,

“We’ve gotten so many resumes, I feel bad to say that I know a lot of them we never really reply to just because we had so many, and we would know this person might not be suitable, things like that.”

Employee retention and integration

Once hired these businesses appear to treat employees very well, recognizing that good employees and good service are a large part of what sets these business apart from larger or urban competitors and online offerings. After searching for a skilled professional to fill a vacancy in the business one owner captures this sentiment,

“I’m going to treat the guy like gold, and hopefully we can keep him. It’s just, he can’t believe what I’ve got going here, and you know he’s a big part of it now; our sales are going through the roof....He’s valued.”

In order to show employees this value they are often given a great deal of freedom and responsibility as well as the ability to try new ideas of their own and to innovate – all factors that have been shown to lead to employee satisfaction, meaningful work, and employee retention (Hackman & Oldham, 1976; Wrzesniewski, McCauley, & Schwartz, 1997). This relationship also means that owners are often quite loyal to keeping employees in times of lower revenues and compensating them for the rural location where possible. They watch workloads very closely and strive for a work/life balance. A commitment to extensive training often results in a positive attitude at work, a low turnover rate, and seemingly high employee loyalty.

However, even despite training and a deep commitment to and investment in their employees, many of our businesses find it hard to keep some employees, especially younger ones. This appears to be due in part to the rural setting, in part to natural attrition to other careers and education, and in part due to the challenging physical nature of the work some of these businesses do. For example,

“It’s a hard trade; it’s a hard working trade; it’s hard to keep anybody. We’ve trained people and then all of a sudden they leave; it’s too much for them.”

At least three business owners commented that the quality of the training they provide makes these employees quite valuable both to them and others. As a result, some leave to competitors or to set up their own, often competing, businesses. For example,

“But certainly I can remember my parents investing in [employees], but always people want to move on and do their own thing, so that’s hard in terms of losing people that you kind of want to stick around – enjoy and stuff.”

It is clear that this is difficult for our participants to deal with, both from a business standpoint and emotionally due to the tight and almost familial relationships that are often formed. One owner comments on an employee being trained then leaving to a competitor, *“It was kind of hurtful too.”* This emotional connection is also illustrated by another owner who has kept on an ageing bookkeeper despite the fact that she is unable to use a computer. Still another owner, who was forced to lay off a few employees for the first time in a particularly difficult winter, comments,

“Like one fellow that we had here, he couldn’t afford because he’s on unemployment – we had to put them on unemployment – we covered...personally covered his benefits for him.”

It is clear that employees are a key part of these multi-generational family businesses. However, riding out the vagaries of the employment market and changing broader market conditions presents ongoing challenges for hiring and retaining good employees. Not wanting to let go of good employees, even when business conditions might suggest this is the better financial decision, also presents its own challenges.

Market conditions

As with any business, but particularly small businesses, invariably market conditions are taken into consideration. The Alberta portion of the study showed that the down turn in the local economy may result in less activity for these businesses. However, during the 2008-2009 financial crises the small businesses were able to retain all employees (Hunter and Kazakoff, 2012b). Further, some out-sourced activities were brought in-house. The general consideration was to remain profitable rather than retain market share. Although we spoke with our Ontario participants well after the deepest portion of this crisis we found at least two businesses still struggling with lower revenues and increased competition. In one case this has led to a few lay-offs (as mentioned above), in another an owner is actively considering shuttering the business and moving on. Therefore, we do not see the same resilience to market conditions overall. One owner who is struggling comments,

“Look at the prices of fuel, it’s killing our business. This last year...this year, like this winter, is the first time we’ve laid any of our men off in fifteen years.”

However, the majority of our participant businesses were doing quite well despite the downturn and are growing or maintaining their market positions. With an increase in local economic activity, growth was considered where appropriate. In most cases an increase in activity may be dealt with through increased volumes within existing facilities. In some cases increased activity may necessitate a large step increase in capacity and may result in a negative financial situation.

From a longer term perspective another current issue relates to the acquisition or improvement of information technology infrastructure to facilitate future more effective operations. Consideration is given to the adoption of state of the art information technology, where

appropriate, to support such functional applications as inventory control, customer service, and daily accounting processes. Two of our participants are researching online options for selling some of their products and for reaching customers who are not able to travel as frequently to the rural location of the business. None of our participants had an active web or social media presence and only half maintained a website with basic business information, although others were in the process of adding one.

Regulatory environment

Almost without fail the business owners we spoke to are deeply engaged in the requirements of and changes to their regulatory environment, government policies, licensing and insurance, and taxes. The majority suggest that the regulatory environment they operate in is becoming increasingly complex and onerous and is therefore becoming more of a burden on small business owners, draining both their time and resources and requiring costly outside professional advice. The comments below summarize these sentiments well,

“The insurances are going up, like our...we have to have environmental insurance, you have to have [industry] insurance, well it’s killing the small businesses.”

“That would be a current issue because there’s so many new regulations and things you have to meet, and standards. [Spouse] said it’s almost like they don’t want small businesses to expand because they make it so expensive and so hard, and so many regulations.”

Although the burden of regulations was generally seen as onerous, two owners expressed some support for rules in their industry that kept lower quality or less ethical businesses out of their fairly specialized fields, and thereby assured consumers of quality products and professional services.

In our analysis we also noted the impact that the regulatory environment has on business growth and strategy decisions. One owner comments that on the advice of a lawyer they are trying to keep employee numbers below a certain threshold as going above that threshold would entail significantly more regulation to comply with. Another notes they would like to produce a given product, which customers are requesting, but that they are unlikely to make this expansion in the near future,

“That’s just a lot more red tape, and regulation, and equipment, and stuff that we don’t...we’re just not ready for that yet I don’t think, so maybe down the road.”

Business stresses

A final issue that almost all of our interviewees mentioned was the stress of running a small family business. The stresses of small business ownership are well documented (Jex & Yankelevich, 2008). Here, these stresses included working long hours; worrying about employee issues; working extra hours to replace employees as needed; stresses over declining traffic; worries over expansion; dealing with regulators and suppliers; considering new competitors; paying increasing bills; and last but certainly not least finding enough time for family, friends, and outside activities. One owner and office manager summarizes,

“But try being a small businessman. You see this phone, this is how it starts; I’m up at six o’clock, my husband’s up at five o’clock, he’s doing books in there at five o’clock in the morning. I’m up and I start from morning till night, okay?”

Even our participants who had successful businesses related many of these worries and the stress they invoked. Only one owner admitted that stresses were relatively low, *“we’re really lucky right now, we’ve kind of built a really good team,”* although admitting that this stability increased fears of losing a member of that team which would be *“devastating.”*

4.3 Future Issues

In addition to their concern about what is happening currently we found each and every one of our participants had a keen eye on the future, what it might bring, and the opportunities and challenges that it offered for the business. Generally, these issues relate to share of existing market; expansion into new markets; diversification by developing and providing new products and services; improving the current levels of stress through seeking better work-life balance; and addressing or contemplating business succession planning. The available literature suggests small business owner/managers take a near term focus preferring incremental financial commitments. This is most certainly not the case for those individuals involved in this project in both Alberta and Ontario. Issues in support of future operations are continually being assessed, researched, and revised.

Business opportunities and challenges

Several of our participants are actively considering growth opportunities for their businesses, where appropriate. Frequently, growth in the form of market share is planned through maintaining a relationship with loyal customers by continuing to provide quality products and exceptional post sales service. As a result, expansion considerations are evaluated on an individual basis relative to the impact on operations and the small business’ financial situation. Growth opportunities currently being considered by these participants seem to be not solely for financial gain, or ‘growth for growth’s sake’, but also for personal reasons. Two owners mention the need for expansion to limit the potential for competitors to enter the market – a feeling of ‘if I don’t do it someone else will’. Two owners mention that the growth in the size of the business has been in past, and may be in future, dictated by the number of family members interested in being involved, suggesting that growth is dictated more by personal reasons and family need than growth for growths sake. For example,

“Well a few more people to pay that means a few more [animals] to keep, so you know they expanded.”

Another owner with a growing family also mentions growth and expansion as a means of guaranteeing future security of income,

“But I just couldn’t say no to something like that, you just have to accept it, and like I said, hire the right person, try to limit my exposure and duties and just run with it because then you’d be really secure, you know what I mean.”

As that owner expresses, sometimes these opportunities seem serendipitous to our interviewees. Several owners mention that the choice to grow is often dictated by an unexpected good opportunity, the failure of a competitor, the opening of a new space, or a new government program that allows them to diversify and innovate. In the successful businesses we spoke with we see that, like any successful entrepreneurs, they are actively scanning the environment for new opportunities and considering how they can assemble resources and skills in bricolage activities to take advantage of these evolving circumstances (Corbett & Katz, 2012; Phillips & Tracey, 2007). One owner remembers of a government grant program that stimulated a dramatic business change,

“And so that kind of gave us the nudge that we needed, and we jumped in and it’s kind of been crazy ever since.”

Within the context of growth, diversification of the core business is often a key component of success. However, as diversification and innovation activities span across the past, present and future, we discuss these in more detail in the next section.

Of course, despite promising opportunities our study participants are continuing to deal with a number of challenges. Many of these have been mentioned earlier but general themes tend to focus on rising expenses and regulatory pressures that these owners foresee only increasing in future. Another dominant theme is increased competition from large corporations buying out small businesses across many industries. Several of our participants have considered what they would do if offered such a deal in future. Some seem amenable to it, although it is not their first choice. Others have actively turned down lucrative offers in past instead choosing to continue as a small business owner. Still another suggests that they would similarly be likely to turn down such an offer and explains her thinking in more detail,

“One of the big things that’s happening is that corporations are buying up a lot of the [business] and just running them through their management, with our...you know for instance if I decided to sell we would stay under contract but it would be owned and managed by another large corporation. I don’t think that’s something that we would be interested in; we still want to keep it a small business.”

Work-life Balance

Although our participants are generally very proactively trying to ensure the continued success of their businesses, and are quite innovative in doing so, we saw again and again that success was multi-faceted and means different things to different people. Several participants mentioned to us that their future planning included making more time for family and non-work activities and finding more balance in their lives. One explains how this decision may impact financial success,

“Again we try and balance having enough and a lifestyle choice too. You know if it was just the two of us here then we’d probably make more money because we’re not paying as much staffing costs, but we’d be here twenty-four hours a day.”

In many cases owners are beginning to think of other projects or career ambitions they may have overlooked as they built the business in their early ownership of it. One owner explains that he now better understands why his father was not as proactive about changing and expanding the business as he might have been,

“Now I know exactly why he didn’t want to expand because I want to go fishing, I want to spend more time with the family, you know, that’s probably what he was thinking.”

Succession Planning

One of the more important aspects for a multi-generation small business is planning for succession. An issue that makes this process difficult is the reticence of the older generation to recognize their mortality and to decide to pass on control of the business. We see this occurring repeatedly in our interviews. For example one owner admits,

“In terms of progression I guess we’re living in a dream world, we still think we’re young and we don’t have to worry about that right now, so we haven’t really looked at that yet.”

Many of the current owners we met with were in their late 40’s or 50’s so succession was not an immediate priority but was beginning to enter their thoughts. For a few, their children are still so young that determining whether they may be interested, and whether to hang onto the business for them, is next to impossible at present. For example,

“Like you want to hold onto it in case our boys are interested...I mean we’ve told them whatever they want to do in the future that’s great, and they’ve come up with all sorts of things – being a Jedi, Pokémon trainer, like I mean they’re young, right?”

Another shares a similar sentiment regarding teenage children,

“You know and I can’t say where my boys are going to be in two years from now, so I just don’t know.”

The fact that several owners mention this challenge suggests that the trends towards having children at an older age may enhance the challenges of training and integrating the younger generation into the business, and teaching by doing and by example, as these owners’ parents had done.

Another complicating issue is the very fact that this process of succession only takes place once per generation. One of the guiding principles found to contribute to the success of developing a sound succession plan is to be fair but not necessarily equal for both participating and non-participating family members. If the multi-generation small businesses are going to remain with family members, there must be a consideration for subsequent generations. This sibling accommodation involves two aspects. One relates to those family members who will be involved in the business. Their experience and knowledge will hopefully contribute to the future operation of the small business. The other aspect relates to those family members who will not be involved in the operation of the small business. It must be recognized by all of the siblings that the small business is a family asset. Everyone should be able to share in the financial assets

of what is essentially the estate of the prior generation. Thus, accommodation must be established and maintained so that individuals may acquire their fair share of the asset without jeopardizing the on-going operation of the small business. This, amongst other issues, is dealt with in succession planning. As one young family member notes when considering possibilities for dividing the parent's business with a sibling,

“And I have no concept of this kind of financial realm, like how that would happen, so it's...but we're just kind of taking it day by day and looking at it for now.” And continues later, *“But I guess I just worry like what if that ever happened to us? Like we didn't want to get along or like, how do you split this up 'cause it's all one package.”*

While lack of knowledge of the future and challenges with planning are one type of hurdle, others have much deeper problems with succession planning. These include lack of interest or ability on the part of offspring. One farmer reports an interested and talented son whose severe allergies may make him unable to take over the family business,

“But if he does, if he can control the hay fever, then he certainly I think is interested in the business; and he was always very good at it.”

Still another reports that the very nature of small family businesses, especially skilled trades, may make the family business seem unpalatable to the next generation,

“The kids seen their parents go through what they did and they don't want any part of it - I'm just hearing this from other people...Like the brick-layers and the dry-wallers of the world, you know what I mean? It's just young people, it's hard work, and there's not a lot of people that want to do it anymore, it's really sad.”

The participants we spoke with all seem to suggest, although often subtly, that their children succeeding them would be a best case scenario which allows them to pass along the business, their hard-work, and the family history to another generation. However, without fail they are all clear that their children are free to do what they like and hope not to pressure them. As a result, of this, and the succession challenges outlined above, our analysis showed what may be an emerging trend towards considering non-family succession from an early stage. The majority of our respondents had clearly been considering more distant family members or loyal employees as future business owners should their children not choose to inherit the family business. The comments below from various owners illustrate these sentiments,

“And I have a man here who's worked for me for twenty years and I really refer to him as my lead man, he's in his forties now, and I've asked him, “If I can devise a succession plan which involves you buying out my shares gradually over time, are you interested?” And he has said, “Yes.””

“But we have certainly one [employee] that I think would be interested in at least taking on a portion of the business at some point.”

“But my oldest sister's boy...he may actually...he actually works in London, but there is an interest for him to come down here.”

It is clear that, as in so many aspects of their business, ongoing success and survival of these small rural businesses is about being flexible and adjusting with the times and circumstances – succession seems to be no different even though it may end the family history in the business.

4.4 Additional Themes

In this section we turn to several themes our analysis identified that crossed over the sequential and temporally based categories above. These include general attitudes to the model of the business and change, the role of community, the business history and pride in that history, emerging business trends, and differences we detected in our two provincial research sites.

Business model and diversification

The participants were very clear about their business model and this appears to have endured through the tenure of these businesses. Employees are considered valuable assets and treated like family members. Every effort was made to ensure continuity through training and the establishment of a positive work environment. There is also a focus on customers. They work hard at developing a trusting relationship with the customer. There are many points of contact for a potential customer. It could be a sales person, the small business manager, or even an accountant. Any of these points of contact should be able to address a customer's issue and resolve it as promptly as possible without passing responsibility for resolving the issue to someone else.

The business models reflect an emphasis on quality interactions with various stakeholders through providing superior products and exceptional service for the long term benefit of the business. This model continually impacts business growth and strategy decisions as one owner explains,

“I know. I don't want to be too large; I want to keep that family atmosphere, so I'm really trying hard. It's not the twenty employee thing, but just keeping me at a certain size too, you know what I mean? So that's another reason, just I like that size.”

As mentioned above, at every stage of the businesses we see indications and hear stories of constant innovation and diversification. This occurred in each and every one of the businesses we interviewed, often several times over the history, and many are planning for continued change in future. This diversification occurs in many ways, it includes geographic diversification to new locations or to new buildings, as well as the development of new products and services. However, diversification plans were considered within the small business' established niche or expertise and in response to identified market needs. Businesses may consider secondary related yet complimentary products or services related to their primary reason for existence. That is to say that these long-term businesses have proven to be very good at recognizing what is termed their 'core competencies,' or what they know and have skills and expertise in. Each of the diversifications we noted drew on existing knowledge, customer relations, suppliers, equipment, or the business' unique location and assets to drive expansion. These two owners are examples,

“Another revenue stream; it’s a diversification and it uses all the existing equipment that I’ve got.”

“And all I do is keep trying to change...I just keep trying to find new and interesting things.”

In addition, these efforts at diversification are often based on a close relationship to the customer, discussions with them, experimenting with products, and understanding their community and clientele’s needs. This is not to say that these efforts are always successful. Despite the best plans some of these diversifications fail. However, this is generally seen as just a part of doing business and we heard no deep regrets about trying something new. In the one business we spoke with that had done little to diversify its core business over the years, lack of imagination was certainly not the root cause. Instead, the business owner expressed to us concerns that they would cannibalize the business of their friends and suppliers by doing so in the one aspect that made financial sense,

“And you hate to do it, but if we have to we have to. And these people recommended us and they give us jobs.”

The role of community

Several of our interview subjects point to the vital role that the local community plays in the successes and challenges of a small rural business. The connection that individuals have to geographic locations and to the history of both a town and even a particular space or building is well documented in geography literature and elsewhere as a ‘sense of place’ (Relph, 1976; Tuan, 1977). It is therefore not surprising that our participants note a deep connection between their own and the businesses identity, the place in which their business has grown, and the people in that place. Two owners describe the deep and mutually beneficial relationship that a multi-generation business owner often enjoys in the community, as well as the benefits these businesses bring community members,

“So currently everything has just gone so well; we’ve had amazing support from the community, and response, and it kind of just took off right from the beginning and like, either stayed constant or grown from then.” And adds, *“Ya we just...we really try to give...you know boost the local economy and support as many people as we can.”*

Another adds,

“I think it’s extremely important that they know me locally; they trust me. A lot of the times they may not even write a prescription they may just say, “Go down and see [interviewee].””

However, while this is more often than not a positive connection, the role of community and close personal ties with many of the customers can also be a challenge for a small business and is seen as a mixed blessing at times. While enjoying community support one owner describes the challenges of billing and collecting funds in a small town,

“I mean it’s an interesting dynamic because I do know many of the people and I’ve know them for years, which is good and bad because I know, for instance, that this person can’t pay for that treatment, and so there is that part. I’m unfortunately a bad business person and more of a [professional] I guess.”

Business owners also noted the important role of relationships and networks in rural governments and decision-making, and that these may not always be positive due to the need to play ‘politics’ in order to get things done. One explains, *“But politics are involved in that, and we’re not very schmoozey.”* Another challenge the local community sometimes presents is resistance to change as the business adapts to the business environment, the times, and competition.

Business history and pride

Without fail our interviewees take profound pride in their business history and how their family has done business over its tenure. This is represented both in words and the way they conduct their business as well as in attachment to the physical artifacts of the business. Many continue to maintain original buildings and fixtures despite ongoing challenges with upkeep, high utility prices, or the ongoing need to expand beyond what these spaces permit. In our interviews, we were shown boxes of newspaper clippings, old photographs, receipts, and original business licenses. Others, without prompting, simply commented on these items and noted that they continued to preserve them. One participant, a fourth generation owner, noted that his Father has several of these artifacts and *“likes to protect them with his life”*.

This historic connection means that many of these owners see their businesses as an extension of themselves, and express this repeatedly. This process of individual identification with a job or business role or organization is not new (Albert & Whetten, 1985) and is often seen across employees, professionals, and other business owners. However, here we see this identity is also tied to a sense of keeping up the family history. Several owners have clear perceptions and recollections of how their predecessors used to conduct business. One owner recounts the integrity he remembers his Father for,

“And that’s how my dad...there’s things I never forget, it’s just he was never greedy and had a fair mark-up on stuff, just fair, you know what I mean, he never gouged. And the only times I ever...if there’s something in there that’s over-priced, it’s a mistake; somebody just priced it in error.”

Although this sentiment is common, and contributes to much of these businesses’ success and customer loyalty, others note that it can also incur costs. Some of these costs are easily bearable. One owner notes that bringing out some historic furnishings back into the store was met with excitement from elderly customers, and that even though it may not have increased revenues it provided other non-financial benefits to the owner as well, *“so that’s not financial success, but it’s the human success which is my thing.”* Others note that keeping up these standards of quality and integrity in business dealings may be increasingly challenging in a more competitive business environment. An owner who recounted a story of being pressured to do substandard work on a large job, and refusing it as a result, notes the impact this has,

“...when you lose your pride in your job and you lose your pride in working and that, then it’s time to get the hell out.”

Several others note the challenges of conducting a traditional, small, and service intensive business in times of increased competition and a changing business environment, as discussed below.

Emerging business trends

Earlier we discussed the role of market conditions on our study participants. Here, we also note that our businesses are aware of, considering the impacts of, and preparing for, broader business trends. Small rural businesses recognize they will be impacted by these broader socio-economic trends and changes beyond their immediate community and industry. For example, in a world of online shopping and low-cost competition from large retailers in nearby urban centres, many small rural businesses are shuttering their doors. Speaking of the challenges facing small business one successful owner makes an observation about other small businesses,

“It’s dying for sure. I know home bakeries – we do a lot of business with them in here, and they’re shutting down, they can’t get anyone to buy it apparently.”

Several businesses also told us about increased pressure from large businesses entering their markets, buying up competitors, or simply driving them out of business with lower cost products and services. However, several of the businesses we spoke to have also found significant success from more positive business trends. For example, the emerging trend towards buying local, buying artisanal products, and an interest in supporting community businesses has been extremely positive for many of these multi-generation family businesses. One notes the vital importance of this movement for small rural businesses in the food industry,

“Everyone I think is becoming more aware of...like the local food movement has been huge in [Eastern Ontario] over the past couple decades. The NFU, National Farmers Union, has done great things in the community and across Canada to help create awareness about agricultural issues, and organic versus conventional, and local versus across seas.”

Provincial comparisons

While this project began in Alberta, continuing it in another location for comparison provided interesting insights to our analysis as well as a more cross-national perspective. Despite many similarities across our respondents’ experiences in these businesses, we did see some important differences. First, reflecting the longer history of population and more dense economic development in Ontario, our Ontario businesses on average had a tenure of just over 3.2 generations. This resulted in what appears to be a slightly deeper connection to the historic artifacts, buildings, and history of the family business. However, we do note that we saw this attachment in both locations and would suggest that this is simply a matter of time rather than a more material difference in attitudes toward business history.

A second and more major difference we identified is the role of regulation and its impacts on business. Ontario is currently governed by a long-term Liberal regime whereas Alberta has had more conservative oriented parties at its helm. Possibly as a reflection of this, our Ontario

participants seem to find their regulatory and tax burden somewhat more onerous, as well as fuel and utility costs. However, on the flip-side of this have been the emergence of several positive business trends in Ontario, many supported by government initiatives that are not yet as strong in Alberta. Foremost among this are the interrelated buy-local, organic, and 'foodie' trends that have aided several of our Ontario participants more so than those in Alberta. This is likely also in part due to the fact that the areas where our Ontario participants were located enjoy frequent tourist traffic and cottagers from large urban centres such as Toronto, Ottawa, and Montreal. Finally, as a larger population centre we believe that the entrance of large competitors seeking to purchase rural business, which four of our participants had direct experience with in various industries, appears to be more prevalent to date in Ontario.

5. Conclusion

In general, small business performance is associated with growth. However, as determined by Dobbs and Hamilton (2007) and Tan et al (2009) over time small businesses tend to grow slower than when they were initially formed. Further, while performance may lead to competitive advantage, other management strategies may also be involved. Thus, it is proposed that longevity represents an interpretation of successful performance. The term longevity was operationalized through the identification of multi-generational small business and their unique management issues.

A positive culture within a small business will contribute to longevity, as well as a caring and nurturing approach to employees through training and attention to work/life balance. There is a focus on quality customer service in order to develop a trusting and long term relationship. The business model is focused on the inherent expertise of the owner/manager. While diversification may be considered it is done so within the niche established by the small business. Longevity of the small business leading to subsequent generations is facilitated by an individual who steps forward and offers to not only run the business but to act as a steward for the family asset. This means making decisions which maintain the asset as well as addressing issues of sibling accommodation.

This report bridges the gap between research and practice. A generally accepted qualitative research approach, Narrative Inquiry, was employed to identify issues from owner/managers of current multi-generational small business. If longevity is the focus, then multi-generational small business provides examples to other small businesses regarding the management issues which must be addressed.

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Appendices

APPENDIX A Multi-Generation Small Business Rural Communities Eastern Ontario INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1. Personal Comment
 - a. Personal History
 - i. Where were you born?
 - ii. Where did you grow up?
 - iii. Please relate a personal interest story.
 - b. Family History
 - i. Parents
 - ii. Siblings
 - iii. Where you lived
 - iv. Married - children
 - c. Education
 - i. Where and when did you go to elementary school, high school and university?
 - d. Previous Work Experience
 - i. What companies have you worked for?
 - ii. What positions have you held at these companies?
 - iii. What were the highlights as far as tasks performed and major accomplishments?
2. When did you become “officially” involved in the company?
3. What were your impressions about the firm before you became “officially” involved?
4. Major issues in the past
 - a. Describe the issue.
 - b. Discuss what you did.
 - c. Discuss the final result.
 - d. Repeat the above for another issue.
5. What issues are you currently addressing?
 - a. Describe the issue
 - b. Discuss the status and anticipated outcome.
 - c. Repeat the above for another issue.
6. What issues do you foresee addressing or requiring your attention in the future?
 - a. Describe.
 - b. How do you plan to address the issue?
 - c. What is the anticipated outcome?
 - d. Repeat the above for another issue.
7. Business Model
 - a. Describe the company’s approach to conducting business
 - i. Strategy
 - ii. Organization structure
 - iii. Risk
 - iv. Focused vs. diversified
8. Succession
 - a. Has this issue been considered
 - b. How has it been considered?
 - c. What has been the result of this consideration?
9. General comments
 - a. Do you have any other comments about your business?

Tables

MAJOR THEMES	SUB-THEMES	SAMPLE QUOTES FROM INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS
Past Issues		
	Education & training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •And I guess there's not a time I don't remember being at the clinic and just working. My mom was the office manager so we were very focused...it was twenty-four hours, seven days a week. And my dad worked very hard. So in order to spend time we kind of did spend a lot of time at the office with him •So I was probably ten years old when I started getting paid something, do you know what mean, for doing it. So that's...it's been a long time. So my dad started it in sixty-seven, so we're coming up for our fiftieth year in a couple of years. •And I graduated high school and I'm fortunate I guess to get into [program], but I lasted two months, because I worked and I didn't do homework in high school. •I think it just more gives you time before you were full out here to have a little bit...to have to grow up and have experiences. •Okay, I was trained as a social worker, so working in the business didn't really occur to me. •The difficult part is that I'm not pumped. You give this talk, it's difficult because I'm at a time that's saying, "I can't keep it up the way it is." And I think that when I said the nuts and bolts, the organizational details, staff meetings, job description all that stuff, that's not my skill set, and so that leaves holes •I've gone to school in the area and then I went to [university] for four years and took [program]. And then as soon as I was done in [year], I came home here and we opened....So since then I've been working full time at home, and it's going to be two years this July, and it's going really well. •And at that time I don't really think I wanted to go to pharmacy school. I had a great time in high school, I spent most of my time having fun and not concentrating on what I was going to do later in life; I didn't really care, really.
	Career choice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •I couldn't stand working for those guys. I thought, 'Jeez, I used to make twice as much on the farm and I didn't have to drive all over the place to get work.' So I worked for just a couple years. •And because I saw how hard he worked I don't know that initially that was something I wanted to do,

		<p>and so as I grew older and saw the options within the business then I came back to wanting to do it.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •But then towards the end of my schooling again decided to come back here; as I got older and more ready to settle I guess probably. •You know what, it's funny because when my dad...when I graduated from college, or even before that, he says, "You need to work for somebody else, you really need to." But it was just...like I said, it was getting busy at the time and they were getting tired, and I just basically came right into the business and you know, I know that was his intentions for me to work for somebody else but...formally I didn't. •And at that point I just had a thought that I had never worked in the family business.... And I thought, would I regret never doing that? And I decided I could, and I can't live with regret. •And then [sibling] and I both wanted to stay at home and continue with the farm, like that was kind of what we decided we wanted to do....So then we decided to include all of us in the farm; we would add value and create this [new line of business]. •And I'm glad too that I had an immediate job out of school. Like I have a lot of friends who are still struggling to find a job in their fields, right, because that's just the world we live in right now. •So I discussed this with my parents because at the time my father wanted somebody to kind of help him out in the [business]; and so lo and behold, they offered to finance my education down south....And ya...I had every intention of coming back and working for my father because he paid for my education, I couldn't very well skip off to California and be a [profession]- which crossed my mind a few times.
	<p>Integration</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •I had worked for the business for over ten years full time, and you know, even X was good enough to say, "Oh let [interviewee] manage this, let [interviewee] manage this. Make the guys check with [interviewee] he knows what to do," he was really, in those days, complimentary. •Good, it was good, actually. I'm sure there were blow ups and issues but for the most part it was pretty good to work so closely with family, which isn't always the case. •He's always been very open to new things and new ideas, so the fact that I didn't walk in and he said, "No, this is how we do things," was helpful, and we kind of just grew that way. And I was interested in things and we grew the practice in those directions, so that was helpful. •And I think you knew it was time because you had a lot of ideas but, "I'm good, I don't want to expand and do this right now," like he was close to retirement, so it was a good... •I was floored, I mean this is a very large store, and I had no business background. I think I felt paralyzed at first. •I think my parents were really happy that both of us wanted to be part of the farm. Like I just think it's such an amazing way to grow up and raise your kids and raise a family that I think they're glad to give that opportunity to us. So that transition was really quite smooth. •So that was all pretty smooth really, and then I just came back home after school and fell right back into

		<p>work, like it just...it just felt right and made sense.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Well I mean the first big issue was probably a succession issue. When I first came and worked for my father I wanted to make all these changes and he did not want to make any of them. And we had...we butted heads regularly over this stuff, to the point I actually thought, "And I going to stay here and work with him, or is he going to capitulate and let me do certain things?"
	<p>Business transition</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I just simply wanted to know where the company was going. Oh but, "You just want to be able to tell X what to do, blah, blah, blah." It's just not the point; the point is the company needs some kind of management, some kind of driving course. So he refused to change the share structure of the company at all. He finally told me he didn't want to discuss it anymore and it would have to go to the lawyers, which is fine. • It weighed on us all...You know despite the fact that we weren't getting along you know the company itself was what should have been our focus. And they lost money, prices were down in the nineties and we were having all these legal bills and fights, and nobody wanted to work with anybody. • And so I quit, I just gave my notice. I said, "You know..." So I left in the spring of [year]. And almost immediately then- sometime over the summer, my father was able to convince him. • No we purchased it at market price, we did the whole thing, so it was a business transaction that wasn't an inheritance sort of thing...I do have a brother and he is allergic, and was here very, very rarely there as a child and just never had any interest in it at all, which is fortunate for him. • We worked, he and I started job sharing maybe four or five years ago, and then he retired fully last May so it's been a year now. He still comes and does, fills in when one of us needs to be away which is great. I think he had a hard time letting go, but I think he's also realized that he kind of enjoys not being here all the time now and being able to come when he wants to; it's great. • So that's the part like I said, just forget goodwill so that...there won't be with my kids but...you know obviously if some corporation wanted to take me over I'd get all the goodwill I could. • I purchased the business, I took everything but the building; the goodwill and the stock I purchased in the first year, and then a few years later I bought the...when I wanted to expand-really was looking for an expansion. It was time that we sat down and worked out another deal for the buildings, so that's what we did. And I purchased the building and then went ahead with my first major expansion. • I have two sisters and they worked here as kids but they became [other professions], so their lives are complete and they didn't really want to work [in the business] after that. • The hardest part was, like I said I worked with my dad and I worked crazy hours for him, but when the time came that we had to come up with a deal, that was the hardest part, I didn't...the goodwill, I didn't like that goodwill part, you know what I mean. "I'll work another two years and lets just forget goodwill," well I ended working a couple more years and there was still some goodwill involved. But you know, he

		<p>was old school and that's the way it was, and you know what, maybe it was the best thing for him because it made me hungry; when I took over I just really wanted to succeed and you know work hard, and I was able to do that.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •And it's just...he didn't talk a lot...he didn't talk at all for a couple days after that one meeting, so that's why it just went stagnant for a couple of years and then he had some health issues, and then we said, "Okay, we have to do this," and we went ahead and I just did it, and paid him. •Mom stayed on for a year or two, but she wasn't the business person, she just was mom and staff, you know, which that's her reason why it worked because she wasn't the boss, my dad was the boss. •X's father was an engineer and I think he probably would've gone into engineering, but after the war his dad said, "I could use your help." But it really wasn't as much in his blood as my husband. •So they got married and ...my parents bought the farm, like they paid what was due. And so it was really a done transition, but it was definitely...like you know my grandparents got what they needed to start their own [business], right, like they can't just give it over kind of thing. •So I feel very fortunate in that my parents have given me the opportunity to transition into this, especially when a lot of kids aren't interested in keeping up the [business] you know, and then you have other kids that aren't from that kind of background and they want to get into it but it's nearly impossible. •Ya my grandparents on my dad's side were not impressed. Ya, they...I know my dad's dad thought it was pretty much the dumbest thing we could've done, 'cause he's completely conventional, and you know he's doing his way, and the [ancestry] are a little bit hard headed, right? •I took...I came back in eighty-five, we worked together until nineteen ninety-one and then I bought the business from him and he retired. •I think my father just finally had enough of the changes in nineteen ninety-one and he retired, so that kind of gave us an open reign. And immediately after that I worked out a deal to enlarge our premises because we needed to be able to offer more services, more space, and I bought the building next to us. •So you know, I discussed this with my father, I think he's a bit sad that maybe the [original] location is going to move...but in reality I think it's probably the proper move for me.
	<p>Family relations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •We spend an awful lot of time together, and we have different approaches, but I don't think any more than with any other colleague, but ya, certainly we butt heads at times. •People asked the minute we got together, I said, "No, I have my own career, this is X's career." But after two kids together and different things, you learn how to maneuver a lot of things together, so this is probably a better time in our lives to try it. •And I guess he gave me free reign but he didn't want anything to do with it, so that was the other part that's really hard is that I totally functioned as an isolate; so he didn't want to talk about it...So I think I

		<p>felt in a lot of ways just in a strait jacket and so afraid of what I could do.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •X was the only one who remained in [the business], and was interested in the store. •And my mom's oldest brother...her older brother, he works for X actually, and her younger sister works for X; neither of them are really interested in the [business], so that kind of made things easier. •They're usually a month or two late with my paycheque and I don't really care; my brother not so much because he has his car and things like that he needs to pay for. Ya so I know that they'll pay me when I...and they always helped me if I ever needing anything, so it's nice to know that. •They tried, and they hated retail; they just didn't have the aptitude...they didn't like the people telling them off- they couldn't deal with it. I may be unique that way, I mean I'm kind of like my father, he had the disposition that you know, nothing really upset him and he didn't take anything anybody said personally and he tried to help people; so I'm a little bit like that.
Present Issues		
	Employee recruiting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •We're happy to train, but there's ...I wouldn't say tremendous difficulty, it's a whole shift I think. There seem to be fewer young people than...when I was a kid my friends all said, 'Gee, can your father or uncle hire me for summer work?' No young people come and apply anymore it seems. •It's a hard trade; it's a hard working trade; it's hard to keep anybody. We've trained people and then all of a sudden they leave; it's too much for them. •So obviously we can't offer as much money here, and you couldn't offer an emergency clinic, so ya there were challenges getting people to come out here for sure. •Like I had ten resumes, I could've hired full time guys, but they weren't the guy for this store. •It really is about the right staff, and that's hard to find. And there's cultural differences too, like things come up and I'm like, "What?" Like the younger generation, and I hope...I thought I'd still relate, like they come up to X and go, "There's a keg party tonight so can I get off early?" •And I've also...I never could find...it was really hard to find good staff, I would just find part time people, but it was always...I couldn't really pay them much- a whole bunch more than minimum. And so the people that are available only want to work two or three times, but you know the Monday person didn't know what the Wednesday person...so it just felt like one more job for me 'cause I never knew who knew what and who was going to do what. •Ya so um, a lot of our employees were our friends- friends of family, or acquaintances, or people we kind of knew. •So I don't know, we've been pretty lucky with our employees; we've just had good luck and everyone's been really nice. We've gotten like so many resumes, I feel bad to say that I know a lot of them we never really reply to just because we had so many, and we would know this person might not be suitable,

		things like that, when you go through.
	Employee retention & integration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •And most small businesses that are failing business or something like that and they feel for their people. When you've got to lay a guy off and he's got a family, you know what I mean? Like one fellow that we had here, he couldn't afford because he's on unemployment - we had to put them on unemployment - we covered...personally covered his benefits for him. •But certainly I can remember my parents investing in [employees], but always people want to move on and do their own thing, so that's hard in terms of losing people that you kind of want to stick around-enjoy and stuff, so there were those kinds of problems. •But you know fortunately he's on board here; I'm going to treat the guy like gold, and hopefully we can keep him. It's just, he can't believe what I've got going here, and you know he's a big part of it now; our sales are going through the roof....He's valued. I mean whenever you make a decision there's input, there's questions. •And I had a nice young guy, but then unfortunately he started his own store across the way here, so that kind of left me in a really big bind because people...he had a great personality, and like I said... •It was kind of hurtful too. (on losing an employee) •And the freedom to try it, like if you want to run with it and it loses money and it doesn't work, I'm okay with that because it could make money, and you're trusting your instincts, which kind of gives a little bit of leeway. (on giving employees freedom) •I tease them all the time, I say, "You should pay me 'cause there's some of them that have left here that are just going to have wonderful careers, and I'm not saying 'cause they're here, but a lot of it was because..." •So going back to the beginning part is I had some inherited staff at the beginning - that's my word, "Inherited staff." That's made it very, very difficult. So one left - I still have one as a book keeper who doesn't know how to use a computer, so...right? So it's just hard; it's been really, really hard." •And in the store we've had a few ladies; a couple have since retired just...one lady had carpal tunnel, just things like that - it was hard on her. Another, she's an artist and she got too busy with her work, that kind of thing; so she's kind of retired out. •(speaking of tight integration of staff) So it's all...like a soap opera here, but no. •And we try to do everything by ourselves too, like my parents, besides delegating to us, they don't know how to tell anyone else what to do, you know like they have a really hard time asking, "Can you please do this, and this, and this," like they feel bad.
	Market conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •What will the market pay? Can I keep my costs low enough to have a dollar or two left over? Do I want to get bigger or smaller, or whatever? •Increasing competition and price-cutting "And like my husband said, "No, I'm not interested. I'll do the

		<p>job right, this is my price; I'll do the right stuff." They got somebody else, go for it hon. Go for it, you know?" Small businesses who are very proud of their work and quality may have trouble competing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look at the prices of fuel, it's killing our business. This last year...this year, like this winter, is the first time we've laid any of our men off in fifteen years.
	<p>Regulatory environment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The future issues will probably be more driven by provincial laws....So municipal law...provincial law will affect our operations in the future. • But it just...no, they're killing the small business with fuel. The insurances are going up, like our...we have to have environmental insurance, you have to have [industry] insurance, well it's killing the small businesses. • There aren't a lot of government regulations specifically that apply to us as veterinarians, like that I run into anyway. We're governed by a governing body and they're pretty stringent regulations so we go through inspections regularly. In terms of management, no I haven't really run into many. • We belong to an organization and they had a lawyer come in once to speak to us and he's saying, "If you can do it, stick with twenty or under." But I've been trying to do, and it just means more work for me. But ya, I don't know that's...it's an issue but not a... • That would be a current issue because there's so many new regulations and things you have to meet, and standards. X said it's almost like they don't want small businesses to expand because they make it so expensive and so hard, and so many regulations. • But having the DFO behind us I think was a really big help because if they had not been they would've made it so much harder for us, because they're supporting this and really pushing us to do this; it made it a lot easier and a lot less red tape than there could've been. • (about choosing products to sell by regulatory burden...) But for [product] you do need to have quota and that's just a lot more red tape, and regulation, and equipment, and stuff that we don't...we're just not ready for that yet I don't think, so maybe down the road.
	<p>Business stresses</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • But try being a small businessman. You see this phone, this is how it starts; I'm up at six o'clock, my husband's up at five o'clock, he's doing books in there at five o'clock in the morning. I'm up and I start from morning till night, okay? • You know we're really lucky right now, we've kind of built a really good team, and so it would be devastating if we lost someone right now, but at the moment I think things are static. Challenges are just anything...challenges...making sure there's enough coming into pay the bills, and paying your staff. • I've only moved once in my life, so...basically you work eighty/ninety hours a week, and a little house close to your business worked out quite nicely, so that's why my parents never moved till later in life too, so it's just close and handy; so I've been basically all my life. • So I think for about two months you lived here and we would visit you, and it was crazy at home and it

		<p>was crazy busy here, and I think you lost about ten pounds; it was crazy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •But it just costs a lot to live anymore, everybody knows that. Like all our costs are going crazy with hydro and everything. •But all those things...I didn't have people buying one hundred dollar things, so I wasn't making...I didn't have enough traffic, and didn't have enough profit, but I also didn't even know all the lingo, so it took a long time to really understand the fullness of the problem. •Whereas I found I was so strapped that I would cut every conversation short because I had to do these forty-two things on my list.
Future Issues		
	<p>Business opportunities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Well a few more people to pay, that means a few more [animals] to keep, so you know they expanded. So I would say that at that time it was something around twenty thousand livestock, and it grew from there, and then of course it retracted quite a bit before. •But I just couldn't say no to something like that, you just have to accept it, and like I said, hire the right person, try to limit my exposure and duties and just run with it because then you'd be really secure, you know what I mean. •I know. I don't want to be too large; I want to keep that family atmosphere, so I'm really trying hard. It's not the twenty employee thing, but just keeping me at a certain size too, you know what I mean? So that's another reason, just I like that size. •We do have a great location, like I'm not saying we...we do, but there's stores that have a great location too. There's stores on X highway that have a great location, but they don't...they're missing something, you know what I mean? So like we've maintained good service and that country atmosphere. •I have people coming up to me all the time saying, "I just love your store." And part of me thinks, "Man, you haven't seen nothing yet," because my next expansion I'm really going to focus on something, like this is going to be..." •Getting into technology, which is...well we don't have a store website and things like that. •And there's a pilot project put on by the [government]. And so that kind of gave us the nudge that we needed, and we jumped in and it's kind of been crazy ever since. •So that was a big part of us actually going into this in the first place, knowing that we had such good traffic. •I started a consulting firm in [the 1980s] that was part of [business], to do with long term care and nursing homes. And at one point we had built it up to you know, doing ten homes in the local area and some of them were like a hundred kilometers away. And my father bucked that thing the whole way as well.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •And then [brother] and I both wanted to stay at home and continue with the farm, like that was kind of what we decided we wanted to do. ...So that was kind of the progression of that. So then we decided to include all of us in the farm.Well with the business we're doing now, how do you fit that into it? •So now I'm in negotiations with my parent company to buy out that [size] square foot store.
	Business challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •So yes, the future issues will always be that, it will be what the market will pay and how much production can I get? •And so initially they go there and they get the treatment they need right away at a more reasonable cost, or less expensive, but they come back because they realize they can't count on the backup they need. And that's...that we're always proving to people that it is worth paying a little bit extra because you need us we'll be here. •One of the big things that's happening is that corporations are buying up a lot of the clinics and just running them through their management, with our...you know for instance if I decided to sell we would stay under contract but it would be owned and managed by another large corporation. I don't think that's something that we would be interested in; we still want to keep it a small business. •But just even sales were down, traffic was down, probably in two- twelve/ two-thirteen was most noticeable. Because I think people aren't buying as much, and they are buying online, and they all sell the same stuff, so why the hell do you...? So that's the other part of what was my discussion with Sandra, "What are we trying to do?" because I don't think it's the item, I mean you can buy that anywhere •I think they got paid close to two million dollars each for their [business]. At the time I had a long way to go, and I didn't want to retire, and I didn't want to work for somebody else so I stuck it out. (large competitor coming into area) •So I actually wanted to produce something that people had to come to me.
	Work-life Balance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •And I could never figure out, "Why do you want to expand this store, it's just crying for an expansion?" But now I'm fifty and I'm going to do one more expansion then I'm tired out; I'm done with it, you know what I mean? Now I know exactly why he didn't want to expand because I want to go fishing, I want to spend more time with the family, you know, that's probably what he was thinking. •Again we try and balance having enough and a lifestyle choice too. You know if it was just the two of us here then we'd probably make more money because we're not paying as much staffing costs, but we'd be here twenty-four hours a day. •You're really getting me...I'm the guy at the bar, I'm telling you this, like I have given it everything and then some. I mean I've just really got to that stage, 'Well what do you want to do? You're healthy, what else do you want to do?' And then I realize that my passion is in my creativity, so I've got to go there.

	<p>Succession challenges</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I would like to think that my son could take over, or even my daughter could take over a portion of the business. • (Talking about his father working into his 70s) But active and mentally focused on all of the costs and ya' it was great, and I'd like to do the same, but I think what my father also got stuck in kind of having no succession plan. • Well I think obviously we're not going to run it forever. I don't know that...I guess we've never discussed it, but I don't know that our thought would be necessarily that our children will take it on; maybe at some point they'll have a role here...Our children are still so young that I don't know...it's something that we've never really talked about or thought about at this point. • I don't think that's something that we would be interested in; we still want to keep it a small business. In terms of progression I guess we're living in a dream world, we still think we're young and we don't have to worry about that right now, so we haven't really looked at that yet. • Like you want to hold onto it in case our boys are interested...I mean we've told them whatever they want to do in the future that's great, and they've come up with all sorts of things- being a Jedi, Pokémon trainer, like I mean they're young, right? • I have a son who he's been in [country]... he's now working with my husband in [the store], but exact words haven't been spoken, but it's looking like that he will stay and he will work over there. • So you know at [age] he's going to make mistakes, so I don't know how easy it is for X to pull his hands off because he doesn't strike me as that kind of guy, so I don't know how well that will go. However my son- not that long ago, about a month ago, I don't know how it came about but I said, "We've got to get X to work less," he works six days a week and he has from day one. • Well the biggest thing in my mind right now is just...because my brother and I are both in it, is how to separate it if need be. You know, like do we just keep it all together, like...we've thrown around a lot of ideas but we don't really talk about it a lot either, we're just so focused and so busy, and it's not really a worry at the moment.... So that's kind of the thing I'm trying to figure out. Like if I get married then do I stay here and kick my brother out or do I...do we find a house, you know in the area, right? • Well I don't know, like I mean we both...we're all living at home right now; we all work together. And I've looked at a couple of houses to buy myself just 'cause I'd like to kind of start my own independence in a way and just have that opportunity. But at the same time it seems kind of silly when I can live at home for free and just save up. • And I have no concept of this kind of financial realm, like how that would happen, so it's...but we're just kind of taking it day by day and looking at it for now. • But you know in the next ten years I'm thinking about it, how is this going to all play out? When do I want to retire? Am I going to have a happy business to retire? Should I be selling now? You know I'm
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		<p>weighing all those things really. You know and I can't say where my boys are going to be in two years from now, so I just don't know.</p>
	<p>Succession problems</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •But [son] is very allergic to hay and dust, and pollens, so he has not lived here for about ten years, and we don't know if he'll even be able to survive. But if he does, if he can control the hay fever, then he certainly I think is interested in the business; and he was always very good at it. •(Asked if they would pass on to kids) I don't know. Why do you want my kids to continue if there's no money in it? •The kids seen their parents go through what they did and they don't want any part of it - I'm just hearing this from other people, I don't know them personally, but I'm just...it's sad. And it's not just them; there'd be dozens of businesses that way. Like the brick-layers and the dry-wallers of the world, you know what I mean? It's just young people, it's hard work, and there's not a lot of people that want to do it anymore, it's really sad. •(Speaking of an example of a friend's family business succession problems) But I guess I just worry like what if that ever happened to us? Like we didn't want to get along or like, how do you split this up 'cause it's all one package.
	<p>Non-family succession</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •And I have a man here who's worked for me for twenty years and I really refer to him as my lead man, he's in his forties now, and I've asked him, "If I can devise a succession plan which involves you buying out my shares gradually over time, are you interested?" And he has said, "Yes." Now my son would also be part of that succession plan if he shows any interest. But I have a great admiration for those companies who manage to work with employees that take on the business. •But we have certainly one [employee] that I think would be interested in at least taking on a portion of the business at some point. •So I still care about it, but...I would love it to continue, but it needs to continue with somebody else so that they...it's in someone else's reigns. If I had to come in and...we now have a computerized system - I don't know how to work it. But if I had to come and work I'm okay, it's just I can't wear the head, I can't be the CEO, that's what I want. And I'm not sure that that can happen. •Well I don't know. I mean like...they've shown no interest towards it, and you know it's been hard for us to get them to be even interested in post-secondary education. The real one would probably be X, the younger one, but he wants to go off and do something totally different, so I don't know. I mean I wasn't interested in it at the beginning, so I don't know if they are interested. But my oldest sister's boy...he may actually...he actually works in London, but there is an interest for him to come down here. •And you know, maybe if they aren't interested then [business] could actually be sold to somebody else that's outside of the family, so...

Additional Themes		
	<p>Business model and diversification</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Another revenue stream; it's a diversification and it uses all the existing equipment that I've got. • (failed due to gov't) So you've got to do this course, and you've got to buy this, and do this, my husband said, "Forget it, I'm not doing it; it's not worth it." • (limited by community loyalty) Now maybe down the road we might have to start, but you hate to do that because we've got people that we deal with, local people - we give local people, right? And you hate to do it, but if we have to we have to. And these people recommended us and they give us jobs. • But in terms...because of the bigger space there was more staff - more [professionals] were hired and stuff, so it expanded just in terms of staff, and I think it was about that time that there were no more large animals. • I'm aware that over the generations the store has changed. • And all I do is keep trying to change...I just keep trying to find new and interesting things.
	<p>The role of community</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No they've been pretty supportive. I mean it's an interesting dynamic because I do know many of the people and I've know them for years, which is good and bad because I know, for instance, that this person can't pay for that treatment, and so there is that part. I'm unfortunately the bad business person and more of a doctor I guess. • Just I think the worst thing for me because I am a softy unfortunately is the accounts receivable and chasing people for money. And again I think that's knowing people and being in a small town, in a larger center I'd call someone I didn't know and say, "Look you have to pay your bill," and not feel at all badly about it, but if I happen to know this has happened to them and...which unfortunately I do know much of the time in this area. • But politics are involved in that, and we're not very schmoozey. • I think that's like carrying out the groceries, knowing people - like X goes to every reception and wake imaginable in the community. I just think it's about really knowing, and being there, and helping out. • Well it's done tons for the village. There's actually people down there worked here as teenagers. So the...inbreeding of a small town...so the employment opportunities have been phenomenal, but let alone people being able to get things. • So people will come in, they go for him as opposed to the big box stores...so they go to him and he troubleshoots, and he says, "You need this and this," but that stuff is small town. • But ya, it's just...I don't know, a lot of us have become closer with our neighbours too that way, and come to gain more friendships, and again the foodies and the eaters are behind you too because they want to support that. • So currently everything has just gone so well; we've had amazing support from the community, and

		<p>response, and it kind of just took off right from the beginning and like, either stayed constant or grown from then.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Ya we just...we really try to give...you know boost the local economy and support as many people as we can. Like we've got a couple local kids working for us too now... •Just I think like you know a big part of the reason we got into it was just wanting to provide that local, wholesome, organic foods for people, and have organic not be an elitist type product, and have it be something that's accessible to everyone. •I mean [the business] has built a tradition on customer service and the doctor's knowing me, and I think it's extremely important that they know me locally; they trust me. A lot of the times they may not even write a prescription they may just say, "Go down and see Dave."
	<p>Business history and pride</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •And when you have to lose your integrity in a small business to make money...like that's a big job in there, I think that job would've been a three hundred thousand dollar job, but is it worth losing your integrity and worth doing a lousy job, because the other guys cut the price, and they do what they told them to do? Well no, that isn't us. You know that isn't us. If you've got to make money on somebody else's job and don't care about...when you lose your pride in your job and you lose your pride in working and that, then it's time to get the hell out." •And that's how my dad...there's things I never forget, it's just he was never greedy and had a fair mark-up on stuff, just fair, you know what I mean, he never gouged. And the only times I ever...if there's something in there that's over-priced, it's a mistake; somebody just priced it in error. •I mean this ice cream parlour was here in the thirties and not now, but in my time, the woman who used to live across the way, and in her nineties she came over and she could say, "Well I remember coming and sitting at..." these are all the originals. ... So like that was just kind of magic. So that's not...but that's because...so that's not financial success, but it's the human success which is my thing. •I'm wondering...I know my father does, he likes to protect them with his life, but I don't know whether they're worth anything or not but...or for sentimental value.
	<p>Emerging business trends</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •It's dying for sure. I know home bakeries - we do a lot of business with them in here, and they're shutting down, they can't get anyone to buy it apparently. •And then there's a lot of support too from the local community as well. Like everyone I think is becoming more aware of...like the local food movement has been huge in Kingston over the past couple decades. The NFU- National Farmers Union, has done great things in the community and across Canada to help create awareness about agricultural issues, and organic versus conventional, and local versus across seas. So it's helped us that way too, being such a good community and their so supportive. And we do have about four or five other organic dairy farmers in our area as well, so I think that goes to show it's worthwhile.

