

# Family/Business Communication: When Siblings Are Your

## Co-Workers

By Joel Levitt

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Joel Levitt

Joel@Sibling-Revelry.net

<http://www.sibling-revelry.net/> <http://www.sibling-revelry.net/>

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In this world of super-mergers and mega-corporations, it seems like "family businesses" have become harder and harder to find. However, when it comes to Internet businesses and business opportunities, there are still many cases where families work together.

Working with family, especially brothers and sisters, poses some interesting communication situations. Because there is another relationship (the sibling relationship) that is interacting with the business relationship, unique problems can arise. However, these problems are not insurmountable. In fact, with a little work, the problems of working with your siblings can be turned into strengths for your company and family relationships.

The keys to transformation are understanding and good communication. In a book I've recently completed with my sisters, Jo Ann (Atma) Levitt and Marjory Levitt, we explore how to break through the barriers that can get in the way of a loving, supporting sibling relationship. Many of the lessons that are covered in our 8-step plan can be translated to family business situations. Here are just a few lessons that can help improve your family/business communication and help turn business problems into business strengths:

\* Examine the effects of old rivalries. It is important to understand that old sibling rivalries can manifest themselves as business rivalries. By understanding the issues and concerns you have had with your siblings in the past, you will have a much better chance of resolving them.

\* Explore new modes of contact and communication. Remember that, while there may be similarities between your family and work situations, they are DIFFERENT. In fact, by being in a new situation, you might be able to break some of the patterns that have been destructive to your sibling relationships. In other words, simply seeing your siblings in a new situation may cause you to see them in a whole new light. Capitalize on this as an opportunity for understanding.

\* Make room for differences. In any successful organization, different personalities come together to reach a common goal. This means that you need to be aware of how your siblings are different than yourself so that you can accept, embrace and utilize those differences in your endeavors. This also means understanding and honoring everyone's strengths -- including yours.

There are many advantages to working with your family -- you often have a common bond that many companies are missing. This bond, however, is not something that you should take for granted. It is something that must be created, cared for, and nurtured. Through understanding and communication, you can create something truly special, both for your business and your family.

Author Joel Levitt is currently the President of Springfield Resources, a management consulting firm that services international clients on a wide range of maintenance issues. Joel is also co-author of a new book, "Sibling Revelry - 8 Steps to Successful Adult Sibling Relationships." To find out more about this enlightening book, or to subscribe to his FREE newsletter, please visit <http://www.sibling-revelry.net/> . Joel can be reached at Joel@Sibling-Revelry.net.

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