CATHARINA DAUM

Family Business: Trust is the Framework

Whether in their private life or at work, the Wherrell family sticks together. The father, mother and three children run the company Lincoln Precision Engineering collectively and on an equal footing with each other – and the whole thing is based on trust.

Trevor Wherrell is a friendly, down-to-earth man who, like many of his fellow Englishman, loves to make a joke – even if it comes at his family's expense! During our interview he points to his son Craig, who has a cold, and asks if we can fix his red nose by editing it out of the photo later. "If not, then I reckon it's better to get a photo of just me and my lovely daughter," Trevor quips. His family is the most important thing in his life, just as it was for his own father, who founded Lincoln Precision Engineering 30 years ago. When he died, Trevor initially took the reins of the company on his own. But that didn't last long, because Trevor was adamant that the only logical step was to get his family on board and split the company between them.

» **I wanted to be their partner, not their boss.**

Trevor Wherrell, managing director of Lincoln Engineering

Today, he, his wife Janice and their three children Aron, Craig and Megan each own an equal share in Lincoln Precision Engineering – and Trevor is confident it was the right decision. He believes that family fosters a bond of solidarity and, above all, trust. "I wanted to be their partner, not their boss. And I was determined to turn Lincoln Engineering back into a family business, just like it was with my father and me."

Success based on trust

His sons Aron and Craig have introduced new, modern ideas to the company, including automated laser cutting that the two of them have established as an integral part of the business. Trevor greatly values their input and has no problem delegating responsibility. "Mutual trust is what makes a family work. We all know we can rely on each other," Trevor says proudly. Each member of the family owns a stake in the company and oversees a specific part of the business. Aron and his father are

company directors, while Craig is responsible for production and Megan heads up the administrative side.

Time to grow

Lincoln Precision Engineering specializes in manufacturing products for the agricultural, motorsport and construction sectors. The company has landed an increasing number of projects over the past couple of years. That, in turn, led to increases in headcount and machinery, leaving their old factory bursting at the seams. "We were constantly treading on each other's toes," says Trevor. A new factory was the obvious solution, and they were determined it should be exactly right, as his son Aron explains: "An architect's firm planned and built the facility to our exact specifications and requirements. We were involved in the design process – and we're delighted with the results."

A common goal

The company's new site came online in May 2018. It is 50 percent bigger than the old factory, so there is plenty of space for more employees and machines. "As soon as we moved in, we purchased two new TRUMPF bending machines. And we're already looking for new people," adds Trevor.

TRUMPF is an integral part of Lincoln Precision Engineering's machine park. For example, the company owns a TruLaser 5030 and two TruBend 3120. – Claus Morgenstern

The company Lincoln Precision Engineering is run by father, mother and three children together and on an equal footing. – Claus Morgenstern

He is convinced that Lincoln Precision Engineering owes its success to the family having a shared goal. "We're basically always here. We work around the clock," he jokes. In reality, the Wherrells understand the importance of taking time off but, even then, they spend much of it together. They all live close to the company, none of them very far from the 2,000-year-old town of Lincoln on the east coast of the British Isles. The family often meets up at the weekend to support Aron's nine-year-old son Lewis, who is a keen go-karter. He shares more than just his nationality and first name with the Formula One world champion Lewis Hamilton. Both of them took an interest in motorsport from an early age and quickly made a name for themselves. The youngest Wherrell is now one of England's most successful racing drivers in his age bracket. Trevor is proud of his grandson and shows us photos and videos of training sessions and races. What makes it even more special is that the family is Lewis's pit crew – and that they build his go-kart themselves on their TRUMPF machines.

Powerful machines for a successful company

Lincoln Precision Engineering started out as a machining company but has since built up an excellent reputation as a sheet metal fabricator. It all began with a second-hand laser machine, but the family quickly realized that long-term success would require a machine that offered consistently high quality. An internet search led them to TRUMPF and, seven years ago, the family invested in its first TRUMPF laser cutting machine. Since then, they haven't even considered switching to another

machine maker: “We would inevitably be disappointed because we are completely satisfied with TRUMPF and know we can trust our local TRUMPF sales rep. So why change?” says Trevor. Today, the company owns a fleet of TRUMPF machines, including the TruLaser 5030 2D laser cutting machine and two TruBend 3120 series bending machines.

Handing the baton to the next generation

The English company is determined to keep growing. Over the next five years, 58-year-old Trevor intends to gradually step back from the business and hand over even more management responsibility to his three children – not an easy decision for someone who enjoys his work as much as Trevor does: “I’m glad my family is already involved in running the company because that makes it much easier to hand over the baton to the next generation.” The main task right now is to recoup the investment in the new factory, which was a major step forward for the company and its 24 employees. But this is a family that knows its strengths – and that understands the importance of working together.

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