

Strengthening the Family Business

Stuart Rosen, *vice-president*
Highland Baking, Inc., Northbrook, IL

Stuart Rosen, vice-president, Highland Baking, can trace his baking roots back several generations, but it's not the bread that gets him out of bed in the morning; it's the opportunity to be a part of the family business. Mr. Rosen likened his involvement with the family bakery as the occasion to "come home."

With the bakery as a home away from home, Mr. Rosen spent many hours there visiting his father Jim and later working alongside him.



"In a family business and in a bakery even when the work is hard, you know that the fruits of your labor are going to the people you care about," Mr. Rosen said.

With encouragement from his father, Mr. Rosen assumed tasks within the bakery such as installing its first computer system at the age of 19. These projects solidified Mr. Rosen's niche as a valuable member of the family business. While earning his undergraduate degree in management, Mr. Rosen sought out experiences and management opportunities that would ultimately prepare him to handle the financial and business aspects of Highland Baking.

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the highs are very high and the lows are low."

FULL CIRCLE. With many family businesses, it's difficult to separate where the family ends and the business begins. Philosophies passed down by multiple generations of the Rosen family have taught that customers ultimately determine what will happen to any business. The family also applies this long-term view to the baking industry as a whole. "The future of the industry depends on what happens to its customers," Mr. Rosen said. "It's not just in our industry's control. Ultimately, it's up to our customers to determine the future of the industry, so we must do our best to meet what the customer is going to require in the future."

The long-term approach also holds advantages for Highland Baking's employees. The Rosen family prides itself as an organization that places little emphasis on titles. Employees within the bakery are known for jumping in where they are needed to accomplish the job the best way possible. Underscoring the team atmosphere, Mr. Rosen said that although blood relatives comprise a small ratio of Highland Baking's employees, he relies on the managerial staff as much as, if not more than, he relies on actual family. "Other than having different blood, I consider them family," he said.

Mr. Rosen pointed out that family-owned businesses have the advantage of focusing on long-term rewards. Highland Baking chooses its staff and suppliers carefully, to make the company successful both now and in the future, as opposed to a short-term approach that fo-

cuses on quarterly gains and stock returns. "We make decisions that have effects one, five and even 20 years down the road," Mr. Rosen said. "We see people as a long-term commitment, something that deserves to be invested in, and the people who stay build a family."

Many employees come to work for Highland Baking based on word-of-mouth recommendations from friends or family, and the Rosen family likes that. The family approach has also proven successful in an industry that struggles to attract a younger generation. "Family can give a different selling tag to a job in the baking industry," Mr. Rosen said. "The combination of a strong industry and a strong family business hopefully appeals to a part of the workforce who looks to make baking their long-term career."

Highland Baking continues to experience growth as it expands within its newest plant. Mr. Rosen has witnessed the company increase from a staff of less than 100 to more than 400 employees presently. The growth has been built on the family's approach to running the company like a team, which Mr. Rosen jokingly described as a "benevolent monarchy where my father gets the tie-breaking vote."

Company wide, Mr. Rosen and his father encourage upper-level management to cultivate a right-hand man approach so there is always someone who can substitute in the case of an emergency or staffing change. Mr. Rosen admitted he is still working on his delegation skills.

The right-hand-man concept is designed to prepare the bakery for the future, making the business more valuable because the bakery is train-

ing people to be better at their jobs and managers are learning something new from the people they are training in the process. "I look at this like raising your children — you want them to be better and have more opportunities than you had," Mr. Rosen said. "I believe that supervisors have failed if they don't create people better than themselves. And then, by not creating a better workforce, we ultimately fail as a company."

CREATING A BALANCE. Mr. Rosen is the first to credit his father Jim as the driving force in his life and in Highland Baking. "Don't mistake my words — the real story is next door," he said, gesturing toward his father's office. Both men firmly believe that it's possible to teach baking but impossible to import good values and strong work ethic.

In an effort to recruit employees who possess these stellar qualities, Highland Baking invites new management hires and their families to visit the bakery. Mr. Rosen explained that it is important for its employees and their families to understand that Highland Baking expects everything an employee can give to the company, and at times that commitment demands the employee will be "taken" from the family in the form of longer hours or middle-of-the-night phone calls.

In terms of balance, at times the family must take priority over the bakery, and employees need that flexibility in a business that runs 24/7. "If it applies to Jim and Stu, it applies to others," Mr. Rosen said. "You need the freedom so you don't get burned out, and you can avoid short-sighted gains if you cultivate balance in your life."

TEAM WORK. Mr. Rosen accepted the *Baking & Snack* Leadership Award on behalf of Highland Bakery. "Stuart has grown into the position at Highland Baking and in the process has learned a lot about himself,"

Solving Problems

This poem hangs in the office of Jim Rosen and will one day hang in Stu's office. It was cited as a philosophy that both Jim and Stu Rosen practice.

If — Rudyard Kipling

If you can keep your head when all about you
Are losing theirs and blaming it on you;
If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,
But make allowance for their doubting too;
If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,
Or being lied about, don't deal in lies,
Or being hated, don't give way to hating,
And yet don't look too good, nor talk too wise:
If you can dream — and not make dreams your master;
If you can think — and not make thoughts your aim;
If you can meet with triumph and disaster
And treat those two imposters just the same;
If you can bear to hear the truth you've spoken
Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools,
Or watch the things you gave your life to, broken.
And stoop and build 'em up with worn-out tools;
If you can make one heap of all your winnings
And risk it on one turn of pitch-and-toss,
And lose, and start again at your beginnings
And never breathe a word about your loss;
If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew
To serve your turn long after they are gone,
And so hold on when there is nothing in you
Except the will which says to them: "hold on!"
If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,
Or walk with kings — nor lose the common touch,
If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you,
If all men count with you, but none too much;
If you can fill the unforgiving minute
With sixty seconds' worth of distance run —
Yours is the earth and everything that's in it,
And — which is more — you'll be a man, my son!

Jim Rosen said. "He's learned that things are not just black and white."

For Stuart Rosen, it's difficult to separate personal goals from business goals because the personal goals learned from his father are also the goals of the business. "A lot of my job is not to screw a good thing up. Because when you let down your

dad, you also let down the company, your mentor and your best friend," Mr. Rosen said. "It's all tied together, so how could I separate it out? Hopefully, I can assist in bringing some positive light to the bakery so that our employees continually feel proud to be here and more potential partners want to work with us." ■