

20 Years of History

Prairie Family Business Looking Back...

The date was February 14th, 1992. The place was the Coyote Student Union at USD. The people were Jerry Johnson (Dean of Business School), Bob Tosterud (professor), Tim Habbershon (potential director) and the board members of the SA Education Foundation. Following a slide presentation to the SA Board, a request for seed money to start a family business education program was made. About twenty such programs existed in the United States at this time, all university-based programs that catered to the urban, large and established family businesses. The SD-FBI was to be a unique program in that it was the only rural, statewide program with the goal of reaching all sizes of family businesses at all stages of development and to become a model for other rural states to build from.

Twenty years and four directors later, the Prairie Family Business Association has grown into one of the largest family business membership programs in the world. Over 125 family businesses and professional firms participate in membership. Another eleven professional firms support the work of the organization as corporate and program sponsors. So just how did this success develop?

"I've never met anybody better at relationship building than Jerry Johnson. The special combination of his friendliness and professionalism built many bridges over the years between the business school and influential people," commented Bob Tosterud. Prior to the February meeting, Jerry, Bob, and Bob Reinke drove to Valley Queen Cheese in Milbank to meet with the company's co-presidents, Max Gonzenbach and Rudy Nef and requested funding. Two proposals were made, one for economic education, the other for family business education. Representing the second generation in a two - family owned business, the priority was family business. Bob Tosterud proceeded to recruit his minister from Virginia, Tim Habbershon, to come to USD and become the first executive director of a family business program.

Tim assisted in some of the groundbreaking research and compiling of statis-



Tim Habbershon



Robert Reinke



Bob Tosterud



Jerry Johnson

tics about South Dakota family businesses to present a final proposal to the SA Education Foundation.

A steering committee was formed involving eighteen family businesses from across the state to plan and market an initial conference. The first Prairie Family Business Conference was held in the summer of 1994 in Pierre with 153 attendees. Excellent reports from those attending and from the national presenters resulted in plans for the second conference. Nearly 80 percent of conference attendees supported the establishment of an ongoing university-based family business program and the Family Business Initiative was established in 1993.

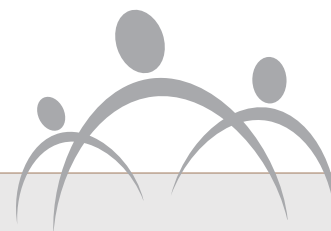
Sharon Casey was one of those instrumental in building this foundation. "I was an original member and served on the board for many years and especially remember being on the search committee for 3 or 4 directors. Tim Habbershon was so helpful for us in facilitating our family business meeting as well as several private consultations. It is the reason I have been committed to this organization missing only 1 or 2 conferences in these 20 years," commented Sharon.

Dr. Habbershon moved back to the east coast in 1995 to build a family business

program at Wharton University. Stan Mandel, founder of the Wake Forest Family Business Forum, led the organization through 1998, with Clark Hammond at the helm for the next two years. During these years, the organization continued to develop, changing as it strived to meet the needs of the membership.

National Family Business Consultants, authors and leading researchers in the field of family business development have traveled to the Midwest to present at conferences and workshops. "The annual conference began as, and continues as, the cornerstone of the success this organization," commented Beth Adamson, the current director of the organization. "As technology has allowed us new opportunities, we are better able to serve a rural membership today more than ever before. Many of our programs are offered via the internet, but the annual conference continues to be the ONE event everyone looks forward to attending."

In collaboration with the 2012 Conference, on March 29th, the organization will have a luncheon to recognize the efforts of the initial founding group, Dr. Jerry Johnson, Dr. Bob Tosterud, Dr. Robert Reinke and Dr. Tim Habbershon, as well as the founders of the SA Education Foundation, Max Gonzenbach and Rudy Nef. Original advisory board, founding family businesses and sponsors who supported the concept and worked to build a solid foundation will also be recognized.



20th Anniversary Celebration Luncheon
March 29, 2012
Ramkota Best Western
Grand Rushmore Hall
11:45 - 1:15

Luncheon is included in conference pricing.
Luncheon Only Tickets can be purchased
by calling 605-782-3225