



Dr. Karsten Schween, Managing Director of Schween Inhaber Strategie Beratung GmbH

***“The actual process is at least as important as the end result documented in writing, because it creates a shared understanding and commitment between everyone involved when it comes to implementing the joint goals.”***

**Which issues have the greatest potential to cause conflict and how can you as a mediator help reach an agreement?**

There's no straightforward answer to that question, because each family business focuses on different matters during the discussions. Some families argue fiercely about who gets how many company shares when handing over to the next generation, or about who is allowed to join the management board. Others use the process to resolve basic issues relating to values or to establish a professional board structure with clear roles and responsibilities. Discussions also sometimes revolve around the company's fundamental strategic and business direction. If differing views exist in this regard, the consultant's role is ensuring a more in-depth, shared understanding, getting everyone on the same page to arrive at a solution and, if necessary, helping to mediate a compromise.

Often, though – as in the case of the Rampf family – no potential for conflict exists. It's a case of taking a step back and working together to develop a long-term strategic framework for both the family and the company. That often releases a lot of positive energy for the family and the company alike.

**Are some parts of a family constitution also relevant for companies that are not family businesses?**

While some matters are relevant for family businesses only, others are not. Key issues that are specific to family companies include who receives company shares, the associated rights and obligations, how a growing family is organized, and how to ensure shares remain in family hands in the long term. Since the vast majority of family businesses want to keep company shares within the family, a clear and sound shared system of values for the family and the business must also be established and followed, and this must additionally ensure the cohesion of the growing family. Businesses such as stock corporations that belong to anonymous shareholders who can buy and sell their shares on the stock market at any time have no need to consider any of these issues. However, that also makes it more difficult for them to develop and implement very long-term strategies.

Other matters, especially a professional governance structure – that is to say clearly defined board structures, rules, and role descriptions for shareholders and members of the advisory or management board – are vitally important to any company, regardless of whether or not they are family businesses.

**How would you rate the family constitution of the RAMPF Group? What are its key points in your view?**

The Rampf family was in a very favorable situation when it started the process of drawing up a constitution. The transition from the first to the second generation running the business had gone smoothly, there were no conflicts within the family or the company, and it was well positioned and financially successful.

In my view, important matters for discussion included confirming and refining a strong system of values, defining clear guidelines for further business development, setting up a professional advisory board, and establishing rules to be applied if Michael and Matthias Rampf ever fail to reach agreement on key issues. Looking much further ahead, how to prepare for handing over to the third generation of the Rampf family is another important consideration.

**Dr. Schween, thank you very much for the interview!**