



Hosting a family meeting

Facilitate a thoughtful conversation about your family's wealth, values and future with this comprehensive guide.

More than sharing wealth, estate planning encompasses the passing down of your family's values and history to the next generation. While selecting and implementing the appropriate financial strategies are crucial to ensure your family's long-term financial well-being, it will be just as important to facilitate open conversations with your loved ones to prepare them for the responsibilities of managing the wealth they're set to inherit. Whether involving your charitable goals, your plans to distribute significant wealth, or your wishes for passing on the family business, these discussions are an opportunity for your family to address concerns, find common ground and plan for the future.

Broaching these sensitive conversations can be a challenge, but it's one you don't have to face on your own or all at once. It could very well take a handful of conversations – some with your financial advisor present to serve as a sounding board or mediator – to get everyone on the same page. This guide offers several starting points, but keep in mind that every family is unique, and the approach you choose to take in communicating your wishes for your legacy will reflect that.

CONVERSATION STARTERS

First, figure out what needs to be said. There is a wide range of topics you may wish to cover with your family. Some may be harder to talk about than others, but that just means they're that much more important. Below are some suggestions. Mark the ones you think would make a worthwhile talking point for your discussions with loved ones.

- THE IMPORTANCE OF A JOB WELL DONE**
Many families value hard work and integrity as antidotes to a sense of entitlement.
 - INTENTIONS FOR YOUR FAMILY WEALTH**
Develop a mission statement together so you all know what values you hope to promote through philanthropic endeavors.
 - THE VALUE OF HIGHER EDUCATION**
Family support can help the next generation reach their educational goals.
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□ POTENTIAL BUSINESS VENTURES OR INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES

One family member may be interested in stretching his or her entrepreneurial wings or investing in a growing business. Do you have the means to help, either financially or through introductions and networking?

□ BUSINESS TRANSITIONS

If you're a business owner, have you made plans for the succession of your business once you retire? If not, here are a few questions to consider. How might your family or children play a role in this transition?

- Will the business continue or be sold?
- If the business will be sold, who will handle the process?
- If the business will NOT be sold, who should step in?
- If the business will NOT be sold, who should NOT step in?

□ HEALTH AND MOBILITY CONCERNS

Whether you're the matriarch or patriarch or a concerned son or daughter, these very real issues should be addressed before they start taking a toll. Do you know who will take care of whom? And for how long? Where will you live? What renovations may need to be made? Who will need to be contacted? Share your wishes and listen to each other as you navigate this topic.

□ CAREGIVING

Whether for a disabled, elderly or special needs family member, it's vital to discuss how your loved one will be cared for and how to fund the care well before it's needed. It's important to proactively put plans in place while not under duress. For certain families, special needs trusts may be helpful, but you'll need to choose a trustee and make some decisions as a family, addressing the financial, physical and emotional needs of the person who needs care.

□ ESTATE AND LEGACY PLANNING

You yourself may be uncomfortable talking about money, even with family, but the "you'll know when I'm gone" stance is a disservice to your heirs, who may be ill-prepared to serve as good stewards of your legacy and wealth. Talk about your wishes early and often.

□ POINTS OF TRANSITION

Family changes affect the conversation. How do you want to address survivors or changes in beneficiaries after births,

marriages or divorces? We may all like our problems to be as easily resolved as they were on the "Brady Bunch," but in reality, blended families can lead to uncomfortable discussions about inheritances for children, stepchildren or half-siblings. The point is to talk it through together and decide what makes the most sense for your situation.

□ OTHER ISSUES MAY CROP UP, TOO

A ne'er-do-well cousin or one struggling with addiction may need an intervention or financial support. Determine where the line between enabling and support lies for your family and put a plan in place to protect and care for your family members – even if it means making difficult decisions.

SETTING THE STAGE

AN INVITATION TO THE TABLE

Depending on the topics you chose, you may wish to delineate who should be at the table for the discussion. Very personal matters may need to be addressed with immediate family first. Eventually, you may want to invite in-laws and grandchildren into the conversation; then include your professional advisors to help you take action on follow-up items. The point here is to define for yourself who needs to know what and when they should be privy to the information. Sensitive subjects should be broached carefully in order to build consensus among decision makers.

As you invite the relevant players to the table, consider what role they'll play. Is one more financially savvy,

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one the family historian, one more responsible than others? You may want to assign a different person to communicate with the family attorney, accountant or trustee; to update your financial advisor; to spearhead the family's philanthropic endeavors; and to serve as the family educator. Capitalize on each person's skill set to keep the lines of communication open, lend a sense of accountability and keep everyone engaged during the meetings. You can always switch up the roles in subsequent get-togethers so no one feels unduly burdened or left out. Consider assigning a family secretary to keep track of action items and to document what decisions were made.

<i>Name</i>	<i>Role</i>	<i>Assigned Task</i>

Notes

All too often,
**family wealth deteriorates
in just three generations.**
But it doesn't have to.

WHEN AND WHERE

If you and your loved ones live near each other, picking the time and place for your family meeting may be as straightforward as inviting them over for an extended dinner. However, if everyone is spread out, finding a time to get together may take a bit more planning. Do you have a family reunion coming up or are you due to schedule one? Consider tacking on a day to your vacation to talk about the future and your wishes.

When choosing the location for your meeting, think about where you all will feel most comfortable. Perhaps it's somewhere familiar like your home or a more formal setting like your financial advisor's office where he or she can serve as mediator. Maybe you'd prefer someplace completely neutral like a hotel or an intimate restaurant or coffee shop.

How often will you – or should you – meet? As with many of the variables at hand with these family meetings, this will depend on your family's unique

situation and needs. You may find you need one or two longer meetings to get going, followed by shorter gatherings held semiannually or annually. Or perhaps you'd prefer casual but regular meetings held monthly or bimonthly. You might find that after your initial conversation you're better able to gauge what will work best for you and your loved ones.

These discussions are an opportunity to **address concerns, find common ground** and plan for the future.

Potential Locations / Notes

SHARE YOUR HISTORY

All too often, family wealth deteriorates in just three generations. Part of the problem is that younger generations don't understand what it took to build wealth in the first place – so use these conversations as an opportunity to tell the story. Before delving into heavier territory, set the tone with a little family history. Share how your family's wealth or business was built, what worked and what didn't. Not only will the details create understanding, but hopefully, they'll inspire the next generation to uphold what your family stands for and prepare them to be good stewards of family wealth.

OPEN MINDS, OPEN ARMS, OPEN DISCUSSIONS

Now comes the harder part. Actually having a purposeful discussion. It's important to create a safe haven – a place where questions and concerns can be raised. A place where all voices will be heard. It's unrealistic to expect everyone to get along at all times or to assume every family member will be level-headed

and pragmatic when making important decisions. Take some time to think of the main points you'd like to discuss and make a checklist or agenda as a point of reference.

Discussions about money and family can be a volatile mix. Some families use money as a form of control, for example, engendering resentment and creating a divisive atmosphere – running counter to the point of a family meeting that is supposed to inspire unity and understanding. Expect and allow for the expression of emotion, to a point, then rein it back in so the meeting will be more effective. Of course, all families have their skeletons, black sheep or favored children, but everyone will appreciate an effort to keep the discussion forward-looking. Should your conversation remain heated, consider taking a break and regrouping later with a neutral third party – a family friend, a psychologist, your financial advisor or an estate attorney – to help referee the conversation.

Meeting Agenda / Notes

For family harmony,
be mindful, be respectful and
come from a place of love.

