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Kin as managers can help companies thrive

By Mike Scott

Businesses that choose to maintain a family management team say while the juggling act isn't always easy, there are benefits to developing family members as managers.

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There are 27 Morse family members working at **Morse Moving & Storage**, a commercial and residential moving firm in Romulus. Dave Morse began working with his late father, Herb, who founded the company, in sales and operations during and after college. Today, Dave oversees day-to-day operations as president. Nine of his 11 siblings also work at Morse.

"We had a couple of other brothers work for a competitor for a short while, but really all (11 children of Herb and wife Vi) worked in some capacity for the family business while in high school or college" Dave said.

Today Morse Moving is a \$15 million company with 210 employees and four offices located throughout the Midwest. The 11 siblings and 80-year-old Vi comprise the company's board of directors, and Dave jokes that, "I must be doing something right because my family continues to extend my contract."

Detroit-based **Jenkins Construction Inc.** has been run by Jim Jenkins since he founded the company in 1989. Jim remains president and CEO but works closely with son James Jenkins III, the business development manager, and daughter Nieco Jenkins-Garner, the human resources manager.

Jim and James agree they need to leave their work discussions at work and not to take them to the weekly Sunday dinners the family has at Jim's house.

"There have been days I came home from work when my dad worked me so hard I had no interest in working for him again," James said with a laugh. "I even talked about not coming to the Sunday dinners. But my mom put a stop to that, and now we just leave work issues at work."

A family-run business also typically treats longtime employees as extended family, executives say.

"We promote families in our business both (Binson) family members and by the fact that we have 73 other families with multiple employees (as part of our team)," said Jim Binson, president and CEO of **Binson's Home Health Care Centers** in Center Line. "Our whole business is about people taking care of people, and there is a real family element to that."

Yet Binson never plans to sell the \$100 million company to nonfamily members because the family members have more at stake.

"The entire lifeblood of the family is in the company and vice versa," Binson said. "I think the pressure to have the family name be successful pushes (Binson family members)."

Nonfamily members also need to understand their roles, Jim Jenkins said. If employees understand the succession plan and what the future of the company will be, they have a greater sense of loyalty.

"If I get hit by a bus, I need to know that the growth and mission of the company moves on whether it is run by my children or other employees," he said.

Broner Glove & Safety and **Broner Hat & Glove** are two family-owned businesses in Auburn Hills run by fourth-generation Broners. The manufacturer of clothing, protective gear and gloves is managed by President Bob Broner and his sister, Stephanie Miller, vice president of purchasing.

"(Bob) and I have different strengths and abilities," Miller said. "And our other brother is now a lawyer and never showed much interest in working in the family business."

Their father, David, is the chairman and is in the process of turning control of the company over to his