

How A Freight Company Navigated The Road To Next-Generation Ownership



Snapshot:

Transport Express is a highly successful freight business. While they are the experts at getting from point A to point B, the move to second-generation ownership was a unique challenge. By taking a broader view, the executive team was able to improve revenues and strengthen the “win together” culture they needed to set the company up for success for generations to come.

Transport Express helps its clients find the best freight solution for their business,

whether that's a less-than-truckload regional shipment or an intermodal international one.

Whatever the need, the team prides themselves on "working smart and digging deep."

They recently faced the daunting issues many companies face when they prepare to transfer to second-generation ownership.

Founder and CEO, Nick Schultheis, summarized the challenge,

"It's not always obvious how everyone in the business can thrive together when the owner wants to sell the business. Just the mention of a sale makes some people excited, but most others suspicious and upset."

From commitment to culture

Fortunately, the executive team was intellectually honest, serious about accomplishing their goals, and thoughtful about the changes they would have to make to their business to encourage the profitable, scalable growth they sought.

This meant creating structures that would set them up for success—agreeing to a set of mutually rewarding commitments that would "keep the band together" as the company transitioned to the new owner. The founder rewarded and reinforced those commitments. He agreed to share a portion of the sale with the team—and to partner with the new owner to coach executives through the transition.

But despite their commitment, the Transport Express team still saw themselves, as individual employees, doing isolated jobs, focusing on their own clients. They didn't have a true "win-together" culture yet. Schultheis explained,

"As the founder and CEO, I know that leading a business is hard work. But it's much harder if you don't have an engaged team, who are all inspired by the same aspirations."

Tearing down silos requires powerful tools

They still needed to transform commitment into a culture. To do that, the team adopted Good Leadership's Aspirational Framework. Specifically, they deployed two tools which help executives see their efforts in a larger context:

- **The Personal Visioning Tool**, which asked them to look seven years back and seven years ahead and define where they wanted the company to be.
- **The Three-Year Planning Window**, which stimulated them to envision the specific items they need to accomplish to achieve the individual and collective success they would realize as a result of the sale.

These tools helped them see both the positive momentum they had already established and envision what they could achieve with the new owner—if they worked together better.

A Path Forward

While they always worked well individually, the team at Transport Express is now aligned like never before. Schultheis said,

“The leadership alignment work we did with Good Leadership put our firm on a path of industry-leading annual growth on the top line, and an even better bottom line. The coaching gave us control of the future we wanted to create together and painted a picture of how we could all succeed together through an ownership transition.”

Having implemented key changes, and instilled a “win together” culture, they are approaching the future with confidence. ■