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Wholesome, Quality, Continuity

Have you noticed lately the ads on TV and radio highlighting not only what companies sell or the services they offer, but also stressing that they are a family business and for how many years or generations?

This phenomenon may have started with S.C. Johnson The Family Company,

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VIEWPOINT

but I have noticed it is rapidly seeping into our local family-owned business advertisements.

Why are they doing this? Basically, it is about the title of this article: “Wholesome, Quality, Continuity.” These words are associated with family-owned businesses. A research study that S.C. Johnson The Family Company partially funded at Oregon State University revealed that these are the first words that come to mind when you hear “family-owned business.”

Dr. Joanne Norton from the Family Business Consulting Group came to Syracuse this past February and held a forum for the New York Family Business Center specifically on this topic. The research that Justin Craig, Clay Debrell, and

Peter Davis of Oregon State University conducted found that family businesses have a big advantage. Their research not only shows that businesses that promote their “familiness” positively influence customers’ purchasing decisions, but also lets us, as the consumer, feel we have a connection to this business because we also have a family. It is something you feel you can trust.

Branding your business as a family business reminds consumers that there is a family behind the business and not a faceless corporate entity. The authors note that family businesses are ultimately the backbone of most economies throughout the world; family businesses contribute to the economic and social fabric of their communities. Family businesses are proud of what they do and what they contribute. They also state: “It is our belief, which is supported by our findings, that they should communicate this pride to their customers because, as we have shown, it does produce competitive advantages.”

The New York Family Business Center (NYFBC) is a not-for-profit membership organization that holds forums

about specific family-business dynamics for our upstate New York family businesses. We started the NYFBC, knowing that our local and regional economy relies on family-owned businesses. We are doing our small part in helping family-owned businesses begin, continue, and strive for open discussions regarding leadership development, succession planning, and longevity of the family business.

Our membership is quite diverse and includes growing family-owned businesses of every size and industry. We have a strong non-solicitation policy for all of our meetings, which creates a relaxed confidential atmosphere. All of our sponsors and supporters are happy to uphold this policy for the big picture of creating a community where family-business leaders come together to share and spread their wisdom to help others explore the complex dynamics of owning and managing a family business.

Donna Herlihy is executive director of the NYFBC. For more information and to view upcoming programming for family-owned businesses, visit www.nyfbc.org