

PERSONNEL CORNER

By VINCE ALFONSO JR.

Family-owned businesses are family-owned businesses. Pro-found, huh? I mean, golf course or grocery store, paving company or woodworking shop, what's the difference? The answer is, none.

Moms or Dads own businesses and their kids work for them from about the time they are 10 years old. They work after school and on weekends at first, then graduate to most of the summer through high school. But college, they're even working Christmas and Easter breaks. I know what I'm talking about because my Dad owned a grocery store during my youth. I was 10 years old in 1956 and loving every minute of it. Loving it, that is, until the day my Dad announced it was time for me to go to work in the family grocery store. It certainly wasn't like going off to war, but at the time I thought it was.

Dad explained that I would learn the produce business, the meat market business, the canned goods business, the dairy business, the stockroom, the ordering, how to take phone orders and our home-delivery system. He said I would learn the credit department and marketing and promotion, which consisted of distributing flyers door to door and painting beautiful sale signs on the windows of Weona #88 (Dad's store).

In two short years of part-time work, I was catching on. There were times I accused my Dad of only knowing one name: mine. It seemed no matter what needed to be done, I was asked to do it. From cleaning up a dozen eggs splattered on the floor at the sackers' station to building a canned tuna fish display that even Charlie Tuna would be proud of, to breaking down a side of beef, my Dad taught me how to do it.

One day, while grousing to the other employees about my wages (\$5 per week), they began to champion my cause of equal pay for equal work. They seemed to agree with me that even though I was the son of the owner, I deserved to be paid on an equal basis with the other employees. By Saturday night (pay day) a vote was taken and a strike was called. It was all agreed: I would strike for higher wages and equal pay. As each employee moved past my Dad, picking up their pay, I became more and more nervous.

I was shaking in my blue suede

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Family businesses teach much more than how to earn a paycheck

shoes when I said, "I don't want the \$5, Dad. I'm on strike."

He said, "You're on what!?"

I said, "I'm on strike. I'm not gonna work any more until I get paid like everyone else."

My Dad, who was and is the

coolest Dad on Earth, said, "Well, son, who do you think you should be paid like?"

I looked at the stunned employees frozen in place, with mouths uncharacteristically quiet and said, "Bobby, like Bobby."

Dad said, "I had no idea you were unhappy, son. I'll be glad to pay you the same wage as Bobby." Dad picked up the five-dollar bill I had refused and promptly counted out \$75, I thought to myself, "I should have

gone on strike a long time ago." As I reached for the pile of money, my Dad's hand reached the pile first.

"Son," he said, "now that you are gainfully employed in a full-time job, will you continue to want to live at home, or will you be moving out on your own?"

"What?!" I said.

"Bobby," Dad said, "You do

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Family values

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pay rent, don't you?"

"Yes, sir, Mr. Vince," Bobby replied (just a tad on the nervous side).

"Well, I'm sure if you want to continue to live at home we can come to terms on rent," Dad said. "Let's say, \$20 a week? How does that sound to you?"

"Sure, Dad, whatever," I said.

As I reached again for the money, minus the \$20 rent, Dad said, "What about food? Will you be eating all your meals at home, or will you be eating out?"

"Of course, I'll still be eating at home," I shot back.

"I think \$20 will cover your food each week. Oh, yeah, you will probably want your Mom to continue to do your laundry and ironing? And, of course, you'll

need new clothes for school this fall. Will you be paying your own doctor bills, or do you want me to take a flat amount to cover your medical expenses?"

"Let's see now," he continued, "that's \$20 for rent, \$20 for food, \$10 for laundry and ironing, \$10 toward medical expenses, \$10 toward buying new clothes for school. Oh, I almost forgot school supplies. That's another

\$5. I'm sure we've overlooked some things, but this is a good start."

I was in shock, and the employees were in shock. My \$75 was gone! There was nothing left. After a moment of silence, which seemed like an eternity, I blurted out, "Dad, now I have nothing!"

My Dad said, "That's not true at all, son. You have your rent,

food and laundry paid in full for a week, school supplies, medical coverage, and you will be able to sport some new clothes for fall."

"But, I have no money for anything else," I said.

My Dad's response still rings clear in my ears today. "Look, son, you wanted equal pay. Well, you got it and with it comes added responsibility. You must not have considered that when you went on strike."

Sadly, I said, "No, sir, I didn't."

Swallowing as much pride as a 12-year-old could stand, I said, rather sheepishly, "If it's OK with you, Dad, I'd like to forget this strike stuff and just go back to being your son. I'll be glad to take my \$5."

My Dad said: "You didn't ever stop being my son, Buddy. But I'll be glad to settle this strike by giving you back your \$5 spending money."

Maybe your son or daughter doesn't quite understand why they're not getting paid exactly like the other employees. I challenge you to help them see that more compensation creates more independence and more independence creates more responsibilities. As someone so aptly put it, there is no free lunch!

Some people would say I missed a lot from age 10 to 18. But, the time I spent with my Dad and the things he taught me about life and business, I wouldn't trade for a million bucks. Like I said, my Dad was then and is now the coolest Dad on Earth. Thanks, Dad.

IGM signs new S. Florida deal

WEST PALM BEACH, Fla. — International Golf Management, Inc. has been retained to provide maintenance services for the Palm Beach County-owned Okeeheelee golf complex here.

The complex is located in 900-acre Okeeheelee Park. IGM will provide turnkey maintenance services for the entire 188-acre complex, which includes 27 holes on three courses — the Eagle, Heron and Osprey.

Maintenance at Okeeheelee is being handled by a 13-member staff working under the direction of Dennis McNally, IGM's resident superintendent, and Jimmy Witt, IGM's South Florida regional manager.

Bobby Brown is Okeeheelee's head golf pro while Donna White, a former member of the LPGA Tour, is director of golf. Steve Cox is course manager.

Opened late in 1995, Okeeheelee was designed by Roy Case and features gradual elevation changes and abundant water, with 43 lakes scattered over the 188-acre tract.



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