

All In The Family

by Laury A. Kassell

Hap Boening represents the third generation to work in his family's 100-year-old beer wholesale distribution company; three of his five children representing the fourth generation also work for Boening Brothers.

Rona Silver bought what is now Rona Silver's Huntington Townhouse five years ago, and is growing her catering hall business with her children, who have developed the same passion for catering as their mother.

Marie Zere founded Long Island's first commercial real estate company, Zere Real Estate Services, Inc. Her two sons are brokers and managers in the firm.

Michael Kaufman is a partner in the Jericho-based employment and labor law Firm of Kaufman, Schneider & Bianco. His father Arthur is a founding partner.

All of these people know the pleasures of working in a family business. They also know the pitfalls that can occur when trying to strike a balance between home and family. Who has the final say about a business venture? How do you introduce new ideas when the old ones seem to be working just fine? What if some children choose not to join the business? How do you maintain the success of the past and prepare for the future simultaneously? What is the fairest way to divide the assets and business ownership?

For some, common-sense parenting and interpersonal skills take on important roles. Boening believes that for a family 'business to succeed, "you have to love what you're doing-and there has to be one boss. Of course, the other members have to have an opportunity to be heard, tho being a good listener helps."



Marie Zere, president, Zere Real Estate Services, Inc., with her son Michael Zere, executive vice president and her daughter Michelle, corporate communications

Boening lets family members have "their space. It's more like teamwork. Running a family business is like coaching an athletic team-there is no 'I' in 'team.'"

Silver agrees. "I feel we are a team working together. Every family has competition -that's healthy. I've done a fine job, but my kids have surpassed me."



The Silver Family: (left to right) Christine, Matthew, Rhona, Rebecca and Elliot

Because Silver always brought her children to catering jobs, they "learned to live and love the business, and to know that clients are number one - information they can import to new employees."

Adhering to the "roots and wings"

philosophy-giving your children a firm foundation, then letting them fly-Silver believes "a parent should not take sides. Kids should work it out. Always be there for your children, but let them be adult children. Respect them for who they are, and for their opinions and feelings."

Kaufman knows first-hand how important it is to be taken seriously as an adult. "As the second generation, you know that people think you're entitled to things," he says. "You have to do it on your own merit-it's something you always have in the back of your mind. You're always putting in the extra effort because you don't get respect from a title and a name. You get respect from your decent actions."

Kaufman has had to overcome the feeling of being "afraid to make decisions. That's why you need an open and honest relationship." He has also "learned to listen better, and to have more patience. Being the next generation, you have aspirations to make the business bigger. Every generation aspires to grow the business."

As the first generation, Zere attributes her success to ongoing dialogue with her sons, whom she says "keep me on the