# INTERVIEW 11

## Interview Transcription

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| Line Number | Person | Dialogue |
| 1 | Researcher | Good day, how are you doing today? |
| 2 | Participant | Ahh, very well thank you. How are you ? |
| 3 | Researcher | I’m well thanks. Before proceeding, I want to confirm that you have completed the consent form and if you would still like to proceed with this interview? |
| 4 | Participant | Yes, we’re good to go. |
| 5 | Researcher | Thank you. I would like to highlight that this interview will be confidential and your identity will be kept anonymous through explicit and implicit methods. This implies that your name will not be used and further factors that could potentially lead to your identification will be eliminated. Do you understand this ? |
| 6 | Participant | Thank you, appreciate it. |
| 7 | Researcher | Okay. I request that you stop me at any given point where you are uncomfortable with the interview or questions posed. On that note, I would like to remind you of your right to withdraw from participation with no negative consequences which implies that you can at any point in this interview or research process convey the intention to withdraw your contribution to this study and there will be no penalty or disadvantage presented to you. Do you understand this right? |
| 8 | Participant | Got you. |
| 9 | Researcher | Okay, I am going to record this interview for record keeping and transcription purposes. Is this still okay? |
| 10 | Participant | Sure |
| 11 | Researcher | Okay, so that’s just admin we had to get through. Thank you for carving the time to speak with me today. So the intention of this is to have a free flowing discussion regarding your experience being placed in your family-owned business. I will now start posing the interview questions but please feel free to interrupt me where you feel it is necessary |
| 12 | Participant | Okay |
| 13 | Researcher | So I understand that your business has been established for over six years now and you have been working for round about three or four years. So let’s just delve into how you experience working here ? |
| 14 | Participant | Mm…so to be almost exact, this company was founded about 50 years ago |
| 15 | Researcher | That’s a long time ! |
| 16 | Participant | Ya, through God’s grace, it’s been able to look after itself and survive for 50 years and hopefully for the next 500 to come. Uhm…so… I joined the business roughly three years ago after having completed my studies at UP myself. Uhm…I studied finance and naturally so, I joined my family businesses finance department under the guidance of my uncle who is our CFO so to say. It’s been…well…it’s been great, the past few years have been very good. I don’t regard myself or didn’t regard myself as somebody who had the most naturally occurring business acumen but after being in the confines of this business, doing the groundwork as well as having my uncle and my grandfather to learn from, sitting in the room with them, talk to on a day to day basis, I’ve got to learn things and see things through their eyes which I think has been the best part of me being here for three years. So to simply answer the question, it’s been good. It’s been a good experience so far. |
| 17 | Researcher | Yeah and you talk about the fact that the business has been established for 50 years and that speaks to the sustainability and longevity of the business as well as to the family mindset of keeping things running no matter what hits you. It’s interesting that you acknowledge the fact that you weren’t naturally inclined to this business but in observing and getting that practical exposure, you kind of harnessed that. I’ve said this to other people as well but no degree or textbook can teach you what you can learn from your parents or family. It’s a different way of learning, the experience and stuff they have is priceless. I don’t think a textbook could begin to talk about it. So I am glad to hear that it has been a positive experience so far. I just want to get a sense of the pros and the cons of working here. |
| 18 | Participant | Mmmhmm…if you want to talk a bit more about the pros and cons, sure. Okay the first pro is it takes me exactly 11 minutes to get here from my house so that’s good. Uhm… so…. I am a Muslim male and obviously majority of the workforce here are Muslim men and women and its nice to be in an environment with people that share the same religious path as you because it just….influences you to try better. For example, when we have our afternoon prayers, we all read in conjugation and perhaps you pick up a good habit from somebody next to you, you don’t do it but you see this guy doing it every single day so you pick up a good habit. So from a religious point of view, I find it really good. From a convenient point of view, I find it really good as well. Uhm… the other pros well this is definitely a pro. The executives which are my father and my uncles, we have a strict no nepotism policy which I think we follow 95% of the time. So why I am saying 5% is a pro for me because as long as a member of the family is working hard and showing initiative, he will be considered for a promotion. Uhm…I may not…I definitely still have to try but I may not need to try as hard as the guy sitting next to me because I have a 5% advantage on him. To be frank, I know it’s not the best thing, I know I should be trying 20% harder than the guy next to me but I know I have a safety net. |
| 19 | Researcher | There’s that job security |
| 20 | Participant | There is somewhat of a security which is a pro right, you’re a little more relaxed. Also naturally, my conditions are a bit more flexible than what it would be if I were working somewhere else. Uhm… another pro is uh…this is very specific to me, by nature, I love fashion, I love clothing, I love material. Uhm… this business is …the foundation is fabric, fashion, trends so it works very well for me in that regard. Although my primary focus may not be so creative but I get to see it, kind of get to interact with it so it’s kind of a pro. Uhm…and I guess the biggest pro is at the end of the day, I know that I am working for a dividend and not just a salary so with that comes purpose, a little extra drive and a little bit more focus because I know what I am working towards and I know if I reach high enough, I can grab it and there’s not much in my way. The cons with any legacy business, family business or business that’s been around for so long is it comes with a lot of bureaucracy which does hinder certain things. Even while being a member of the founding family so to say… certain of your ideas will take very long to reach management, to get implemented if it is a good idea or not. I’m not saying every idea is good. But ya, I find bureaucracy is here. Another drawback that I find and this is specific to me, the people and culture are not very fitting to me in my opinion. Obviously, it’s not my team, people that I have hired. It’s people my uncle and grandfather have chosen to hire because my grandfather saw certain things in them when he was hiring them but I feel like…and majority of the workforce has been here for more than 15 years so that says something good about the company right, retains it’s employees but why I say it’s a con, these people have been here for very long and I don’t have much in common with my colleagues, I don’t have much in common with them. I am in my mid-twenties, average is mid-forties so they’re a lot older than I am, they’re at a different stage in life, there interests are different to what I have. So…culture wide, I don’t think I am the best fit for everybody else here. Uhm… I do think …what’s another con is we’re not very, we don’t like to adapt. Post COVID a lot of companies have opted to work-from-home or hybrid working which obviously is appealing to a lot of people, myself included. And uhm… I’ve found that it does work, there were instances where I was travelling overseas and nobody covered my duties but I was able to do it from where I was via Any Desk but I find that it works …I also find that this company does not look at these kind of new alternatives. It’s still pretty much run the way it was founded. Obviously there have been some changes but executives and management are stuck in their ways, who isn’t though right ? (side smile) I think that’s all I can think of for now. |
| 21 | Researcher | That’s interesting because from what I understand, the pros definitely outweigh the cons. So there is that element of religion where you feel like you can connect on a deeper level which is a very important element as a human in itself. Then having that flexibility in conditions regarding time, schedules, working for a dividend and having that job security in some sense. There is that flipside of bureaucracy where things to take long to get approved and sort of this reluctance to look into new ways. Do you feel that this reluctance to look at new trends within the employment market has fostered this mindset of having to keep things the way it is since it has worked for so long? |
| 22 | Participant | Uhm…so that being said. I think you hit is somewhat spot on. So I think…uhm… call it, I am the third generation in this family business and naturally, my grandfather did all the heavy lifting. I am very grateful for him for doing that. So I have grown up from a place of privilege compared to my grandfather and growing up from a point of privilege, I guess you do see the World a bit differently. You grow up more optimistic than realistic right. Maybe not be the best thing but not necessarily the worst thing either but uhm…when I say you grow up optimistic I mean you think that the world is your oyster and simply….even though you have been in retail and the family has been in retail for 50 years, you can or simply put… I can do real estate, why not? I could do hardware, why not ? I could do anything and I don’t know but I think there is enough capital. I must have went to my grandfather with countless countless endeavours, million dollar businesses and I am always met with the same answer – “let’s stick to what we know, it works, we are retailers, it’s in our blood, we stick to what we know because it works. You don’t need to re-invent the wheel” I have heard this many a times and the million dollar business has not been shaped as yet. Mmm.. so yes, I do think the reluctance to change, to implement new trends in the employment market etcetra etcetra, the reluctancy to accept that is because the current system works. It does work but…uhm….I think I’d be lying and management would be lying to you if they had to tell you that it couldn’t be more efficient. It does work, I am not saying it doesn’t but because the world is a different place today than what it was ten years ago, the advancements in the technology field or just the mindset and people field is so different. So much more is capable by looking at these changes. Uhm…I don’t know if its reluctance to change because you’re scared of changing what works or you’re reluctant to change because you’re scared of pushing control. |
| 23 | Researcher | Mm… that’s an interesting way of looking at it. Obviously with any change comes that teething phase and difficulty to adapt. The point that you bring up of relinquishing control is a valid one as well. It’s funny because while you were talking, I was thinking of something I experienced with my dads business. So we wholesale in gas, diesel and apraffin. Then oneday I woke up and suggested introducing solar to be a complete energy stop. That to me was a great idea because it’s getting with the times, with the fact that Eskom cant bear us and addressing the fact that some people are scared of gas and paraffin. Then he looked at me and said I don’t think so. Then I nagged him for an answer, pushed for my idea and he said that if he could make the profits that he is making selling the products that he knows, there is no need to do anything else. So I agree with you to a large extent. We grow up thinking of these endless possibilities and then our parents are of the mindset that this is in my blood, this is what I know, his is what I am sticking with. It’s interesting to see that no matter what industry you’re in, it’s still there. It doesn’t change. So turning back, this must cause a lot of frustration for you because you speak to collegial relationships where people are in different stages of their lives. I am also in a similar situation where I have worked with people in their 40/50’s and it’s difficult to relate to them because the challenges they are facing are very different to your own. They look at their sons not doing well at school but we’re almost consumed by someone brushing us off. So how do you think that influences your overall well-being? I am assuming from what I hear that you see the potential but can’t reach out for it as easily. |
| 24 | Participant | Do you mind repeating the punchline ? |
| 25 | Researcher | So in having the difficulty of having your ideas considered, and difference in generations within your workspace – how has that influenced your overall wellbeing ? |
| 26 | Participant | Mmm…okay got you. So I’ll address the question related to my colleagues first right. So…one…one positive that has come out of my relationships with my colleagues is the same way I have grown up with more privilege compared to my grandfather is I also…I live a different life compared to my colleagues. It’s not the typical life that you would live if you were simply an employee at a business because you and your colleagues would have similar access to resources whereas its not the same here, there’s disparity among us. Through Gods grace, I have access to a lot more resources compared to my colleagues and naturally speaking I live a different life compared to my colleagues which is the reason of the disconnect but through that disconnect I am able to see life through the lens and now I’m just speaking through the finance department which consists of about 40 to 50 people call it besides me and my uncle, 38 people. I get to see 38 peoples perspective from a much less privileged space than I am so when I hear them struggling, counting the days to payday, uh…or how they’re the only breadwinner out of eight people – I hear things like that and it impacts me. It makes me think that I need to be so grateful, firstly for all the great blessings that I have. It also gets me thinking of certain lifestyle choices that I maybe make too rash, that I should think about more. Then also to have a bit more empathy, a bit more empathy towards my colleagues. Sometimes, I may get a bit more frustrated because I don’t have any..any real connection to them, you get that frustration easily if you aren’t connected to them but I tend to have a bit more empathy and sympathy. With regards to my ideas or suggestions taking very long to come to fruition, at first, it was very demotivating and I guess, I’d become so frustrated that I would actually just leave it for a few months. Then as you get a bit. Older and start seeing the world for what it truly is, you come to realise that…people only well basically, you need to … earn validation. You’ve got to prove yourself before people take you seriously. If I have proven myself and I tell my grandfather that the sky is going to be purple tomorrow, he may just believe me but if somebody or one of my cousins say that it may rain tomorrow, it’s a lot more probable but they may not believe him because he hasn’t proven himself. So..naturally you realise that you’ve got to prove yourself, capture those small wins before those grand suggestions are looked at or you’re taken seriously as you’d like, you’ve got to prove yourself. So once I realised that, I channelled that motivation into my direct responsibilities, I haven’t forgotten about any of the ideas I wanted to push but it’s simply just waiting for the right moment to strike. Uhm…reminds me of a quote, I cant remember who said it but the difference between great people and ordinary people is – great people look at everything as a challenge and ordinary people look at things as blessings or curses. |
| 27 | Researcher | That’s spot on. It was nice to hear that despite the difference in lifestyle within your team, you see it as a humbling process and it’s kind of moulding you into this person who is a bit more empathetic and sympathetic. You have also owned the fact that you come from privilege, just that heightened awareness and willingness to address things in a different way shows a lot of development on your side as well. That’s nice to see. When you were talking about the ideas part of things, I think it also links back to what you said earlier regarding the no nepotism rule in the family where if a family member isn’t working as hard, they wont be considered. So even if you are a part of the family, even though the opportunities come to you easier, it is not given for free – there is still hard work, sweat and effort. You addressed that you had that 5% advantage over your co-workers, but has this put any pressure on you where you are a family member, you need to push and prove your worth even though you have this advantage there is still a lot weighing on you, still a lot at stake? |
| 28 | Participant | So I think just by my natural demeanour, I am a very calm person and I am an confident and optimistic a person s well. So I don’t think it’s ever put any added burden on me to prove myself. There are times where I have a little bit more urgency to prove myself and uhm….then there are times where I truly get comfortable because of who I am and I don’t put in as much effort. It alternates you know. I think…this is very personal but I have proven to myself to a lot of situations in my life that…or let me be more clear…I know I am a very determined person and if I set myself to something, I don’t care if I burn down every other aspect of my life to get the thing that I want…so it may not be the best things but if I truly want something, I go after it and I get it. Uhm…and that has obviously…forced me to look at how to do that and I have decided that I want…I want the financial gain that comes with steering the ship and I have also realised that as much as I want the gain, I also want the glory from steering the ship. It’s something I realised I want, I want it long term and I am motivated to get it….I just want to tie it up to your question…uhm…yeah I think you’ve just got to constantly, like I said before – I know what I want and I just got to remind of myself of that everytime I get too comfy. |
| 29 | Researcher | I completely get what you’re saying. Even just the reminders in itself. I mean you know that I am doing my masters and I am not going to lie, even though similar to you, I want this and will see it through but there have also been instances where you sit back and think it would be so easy to quit then taking that constant reminder of why did you start, how does it align with your being, what are you trying to prove to yourself, to the world. I think it’s good because I am getting a sense that with you working here there hasn’t been an overall influence on your well-being. Yes, it’s been positive but not so much negative only the demotivating part but you harnessed that so beautifully and turned that into motivation. |
| 30 | Participant | Mmm…okay so now you may just be opening me up a bit. No, the overall experience has been great over the past few years but there’s a different side of me…as much as I want the gain and glory of steering the ship and affecting that bottom line in a positive way, I can’t ignore the fact that something is missing from my own life and I think…that correlates to the very thing that I admired of my grandfather from the very time I could perceive things, I think I admired and respected the fact that he built something out of nothing and it’s something I always wanted for myself so early on I said that I earn a dividend and not a salary, sure but it’s not form something I built and uhm…I have this …I wrestle with myself and with my grandfather and with my uncle because I have made them aware of the fact that I would like to start my own business and they made it clear that while they would fund me, I would have to walk out of the current company. I would have to leave this business because the company policy which stands true to regular employees and family members is if you are working here, this should be your sole focus and should not necessarily have another job. Do I agree with that? Debatable. Do I see the wisdom in it? Sure. Sometimes I do view this job as something negative, something as just a job and I do lose sight of it because I think can I leverage all of this? Can I leverage all my time for something greater whether it be financial or from the success that is truly you, a company that is truly you, a business that is a spitting image of yourself, true to who you are, your purpose, values and your image. So yes, there are times where I see this business as something standing in the way of me reaching my potential and I think to myself, am I just here because number one, it is comfortable and number 2, there is a degree of family pressure who want me to be here, who want me to see this through and want a succession plan, am I just carrying out somebody else’s legacy at the expense of building my own? Or is this truly my own and I just have a head start. I do question this job function and something see it as negative. |
| 31 | Researcher | That’s interesting. So it has been great but there have been instances where you think this was created by your grandfather and you are carrying out his legacy, even though you have the pros and love working here. There still is that element of is it actually mine? We spoke about how you managed it, you are trying to find these answers. Let’s delve into the practical steps of you overcoming this because we have spoken to you wanting to start your own business which means leaving the current company. It’s not something you agree with but you do respect, you perceive it as wisdom. With that comes, emotions as well. How are you managing this ? |
| 32 | Participant | So…one of the greatest investors of our time is the man by the name of Ray Dalio and Ray Dalio says if a decision is not easy to make, you should put off that decision for as long as possible until you can have as much of both as possible. That’s something I have been going with and…I have been truly stalling to have as much of both as I possibly can because truly speaking – I want both. |
| 33 | Researcher | Okay so you’re giving it time. |
| 34 | Participant | I’m giving it time. I am giving it time and the angle that I have been trying to push for the last few months is I have gotten to be on the top of my game at the family business and I have got to be performing the best I have ever performed before…or …at the same time launch my own business and let the actions do the talking. I am hoping that it is possible to do what I am saying hopefully my family will see that but I still think hey maybe…just maybe…it can all be achieved. |
| 35 | Researcher | Okay so it’s inspiring to see that despite knowing this, you are still pushing on and you mentioned that you are confident and determined. So if you want something, you will burn everything in your path to get what you want and I think that’s commendable because in a time where people give up so easily, you don’t see this trait come very easily. So this is your plan, do you have a fear of failure or that pressure of if this doesn’t work then the family would look at you as less? Let’s talk a little bit about how the pressure is treating you, if any. |
| 36 | Participant | So I am a firm believer that with enough time and enough capital, you can make any business a success. Provided that your capital does not run out before your time though. So I am scared that…that…I may wet the bed. Right, it is possible, I don’t think it is impossible. But the way I see it is okay sure, it may be embarrassing to fail and oh boy it really would be embarrassing to fail. That failure is vanity, it’s surface failure. A mistake is only worth making if you learn from it and maybe I fail on the venture that I want to but I think and I know I would have learnt a lot and I know the mistakes I would have made, yes it’s going to be costly but I hope to mitigate the risks. Number one I want it to be a success and number two is if God wants my first venture to be a failure, I know my second will be a less failure to the first so I am not scared enough not to try. |
| 37 | Researcher | So I am getting a sense that you are aware of all of this, you know that there would be a sense of embarrassment and that uncomfort in it possible not working but you have adjusted your mindset to accommodate for a better well-being so…you’re saying that you have hope and you are thinking positive, you have faith in what you believe in. |
| 38 | Participant | So the reson I have so much of faith in this business is for two reasons. The first is uhm…I believe that success always follows passion and the venture that I want to go into is..it’s…what I am most passionate about, it’s what I am great at, it’s what people come to me for advice for, it’s what I am known for, it’s who I am and at the same time it’s who my family is. At the same time, I want to go into fashion, I simply want to speak to a different segment of the market than who we are speaking to now. The business maybe the same, the target audience is just different, the product is figgerent but it’s in the same industry. Why I believe that this venture will be a success is because I have industry giants in my corner, who can help me. |
| 39 | Researcher | Okay well that’s refreshing and the reputation in itself, the 50 year backing speaks for itself and I like that you brought the passion element of it because you also spoke to that as a pro where you’re happy to work here because it is something you are passionate about. So I think we’ve covered that well, the well-being part of it. Now I want to dive into how you experience the family dynamic of it? I understand you work closely with your grandfather and uncle specifically, how does that dynamic work ? Does it affect your personal relationship with them because you work together or do you think that this is how it should be? |
| 40 | Participant | So I may have given you the wrong idea, especially with regards to my grandfather. I don’t in a professional manner work closely to him. He is one of the key founders of this family, one of the most senior family members left who is still semi-active in the business. To put it in corporate terms, he is the director. He sits on the board of this company, he offers advice, he deals with the CEO and CFO and COO of this business. On a very professional level, I don’t have any reporting to my grandfather. The only way you would think that or why it would seem that I do is obviously because of the nature of our relationship. I tell him things, I tell him about my day-to-day stuff, I take it to him but my role here currently has nothing to do with it. |
| 41 | Researcher | Okay so it’s just that open line of communication. |
| 42 | Participant | It’s the open line of communication and the same goes for my uncle. My uncle is the head of the finance department and I am still, I am a newbie right so my direct work, I don’t report to him. There are still two managers between him and I who my work goes to but because of the open communication, the added benefit, I am able to speak to him, bounce off ideas with him, it’s something that my colleagues aren’t afforded – that open communication. Although his door is always open, as well as my grandfathers. They are open to speaking to whoever but obviously out of respect, culture then not everybody takes that offer up but…it…it can be said that working with family does influence your image or your respect for a family member in the sense that, you may see things in certain family members that you admire and in the same sense, you may see some things that you don’t admire and…that influences your decisions or perception of them which sometimes can get difficult to leave at the door before you go home. Uhm…so yes, working with family members definitely adds a layer of complexity to the relationship out of the office but uhm…one thing that I can commend the elders in my family about is they’re had this policy that you don’t speak business at the dinner table and uhm…I am confident that I could screw up, I could screw up and at the next family function, I wouldn’t be treated as a screw up. |
| 43 | Researcher | Okay so even though it does alter perception, it is not to the extent where it influences how you’re treated to, spoken to, or addressed at home or in intimate settings? |
| 44 | Participant | If I screw up within the business then yes, I wouldn’t have so much respect, people wouldn’t trust me in the business. But within the family, I’d still have respect and be treated with respect and it would not complicate anything. |
| 45 | Researcher | Mmmm okay so even though the family dynamics has an added complexity and does alter perception positively or negatively, irrespective of whatever happens at work then the family dynamic isn’t influenced to a large extent? |
| 46 | Participant | Uhm…within the past three years, I guess you having now being part of the business, obviously you interact with people a lot more and see how they react and uhm…see how yes they have certain roles in this business and this is only true…I don’t know why but it’s only true to one member of my family, the CEO of this business. There is somewhat of an intimidation in and out of the business. For some reason and uhm… I know, I know many people who are more successful by this uncle of mine but I’m not really intimidated by his success but because we’re in the same business maybe because of his demeanour, I tend to close myself off to him even out of this business |
| 47 | Researcher | There’s a level of.. I don’t want to say brick walling but there is a need to kind of distance yourself to some extent with certain family members? |
| 48 | Participant | I don’t think…it’s distance where I don’t want to get in his way or anything. It may be that I may not be on my A game every time I am around him and that is what scares me. |
| 49 | Researcher | Oh so it’s just that thing of you wanting to be on top of things all of the time when interacting with him ? (participant nods) and it’s just one family member ? |
| 50 | Participant | Yes truly speaking, one family member. The most senior member here who is not my grandfather and who maybe is a lot more impartial towards me and |
| 51 | Researcher | Why do you think this came about? |
| 52 | Participant | I guess because uhm…I think it came about because I see him uh…I see him reaping all the benefits, which he is entitled to. I see him in the driver’s seat, I see him reaping all the benefits, making all the decisions and I think ‘this is the epitome and it’s something I want’ and I.. it’s something that I want and it makes me question now obviously, I am not his grandson, I am not his son, and this is my mom’s …my maternal grandfather that owns this business. So this family member is cousins with my mom, they’re very close and it makes me this, what if he does not want it for me? As much as I may deserve it, I may earn it…what if he simply doesn’t want it for me ? Would I not get it when my grandfather is not around? I mean I don’t have his surname. |
| 53 | Researcher | That makes a lot of sense and I think I understand now why that guard is up and it’s interesting because despite the no nepotism rule, there is still a sense of even if you prove yourself then there is still a high possibility of this not materialising. How do you manage this? I mean this is not a pleasant feeling because you want it so bad |
| 54 | Participant | Mmm…I guess I manage it by constantly trying to evolve myself in what I think is the right direction and better reaction. I do what I can to become so deserving. I become so undeniable that it would be almost impossible for it not to happen |
| 55 | Researcher | So you’re turning that insecurity into a strong suit and making sure that at the end of the day, everything is done to make this something that cant be refused? |
| 56 | Participant | Correct. |
| 57 | Researcher | Okay that’s interesting and it shows so much of grace on your part as well. You mentioned that there is a rule of not talking about business at the supper table so let’s talk a bit about the work-family boundaries because working with family, going home to family, there is an overlap to some extent. How does this play out in your family ? |
| 58 | Participant | You know actually…wow…and this is all to my family credit right. They have formed this bond or norm within our family that we socialise a lot outside of business, we get with family and I’m not just talking about my immediate family or my dad’s brother and his kids. This business was founded by three brothers and we’re …these three brothers had two sisters and we’re about 150 people all together – I’m talking about these five siblings and their kids and their kids kids and their spouces and etcetra. We get together very very often and not once does anybody bring up money or business or markets. The bond that everybody shares is literally the bond of family and unity and they never go back on it and I actually at times, think to myself ‘why doesn’t anybody want to talk business? Why doesn’t anybody want to talk about money? Why doesn’t anybody want to talk about ideas ? why do they keep it so boring?’ But I think for that very reason, they know the harm in mixing the two. So because of them and their strict policy, and how they keep it and how it’s been – it’s just very difficult, very difficult. |
| 59 | Researcher | It also speaks to what you said earlier of if you mess up at work, it doesn’t affect you at home. So it presents that idea that a system was created in this 50 years of existence that is working so well to the point where family doesn’t mix, even though by nature it is mixed – it doesn’t affect conversations, it doesn’t affect relationships, it doesn’t enter conversations that should be about business. Given the dynamics we have just mentioned, you spoke earlier of having flexible working times and it is convenient for you since you work so close to the premises. Now I want to talk about the support you have in the work environment so we have also discussed that it is no nepotism so you still have to prove your worth. I also want to get an idea of the instrumental support you receive ? I am getting a sense that you are very comfortable with your grandfather and uncle that is within your division. Am I correct in saying that they provide you with advice and practical guidance on how to go about job responsibilities? |
| 60 | Participant | So… the uncle who is in my department or head of my department is actually brothers with the CEO and this uncle who I not directly but work under is someone that I’ve admired from the time I was a little boy, from the time I was 10 or 12 years old, I held him in high regard and thought ‘wow it doesn’t get better than this guy’, he’s got everything, he’s good looking, hes intelligent, hes driven, he’s kind hearted, he’s funny – he is everything I want to be or aspire to be and uhm… and knowingly or unknowingly he has had an influence in my upbringing or growing up to the point where it is evident that we are very similar and we get along where I understand him and he understands me because we’re very similar and he of late has proven to me that he really is truly in my corner and it goes back to me wanting to start my own business. I lean on two people being my grandfather and uncle – I lean on them for advice as soundboards and I think my grandfather can be a little bit bias because how we look at it in this business is - besides me, he doesn’t have anybody else from his house that he could pass the torch to. As much as he wants it to be me, there is a hint of desperation there where if it’s not me then it’s not going to be anybody from his family. SO sometimes I feel the advice he gives me may be bias, towards his own selfish needs. Uhm…but that’s that’s truly speaking with regards to the company. I truly love him and respect him and I think that…and it’s been more evident, the more I challenge him; the more he respects me or the more impartial he becomes. SO that’s with regards to my grandfather. Then with regards to my uncle, when I was given an ultimatum of if I want to start my own business, I would have to leave. He called me into his office and he said I want you to stay because I want you to stay in my team but that’s me being selfish but if you were to ask me what I would do if I were you? I would walk out now and go after my dreams and I put everything and more into it and he went as far to tell me what your grandfather is giving you is empty threats that if you fail, you cant come back here – I am telling you, I will open the door for you and get you back in here, I give you my word. Then it was further said, cant I do both let me stay here and do both. Then he asked, what are you worried about? Your salary? I’ll give you you’re salary whether you’re here or not, I will personally give it to you. This made me very emotional. He further went on to say that if your grandfather is being tight on you, I will give you funds to further invest but I want you to achieve your dreams and nobody nobody had ever stood by me like that ever. Till today, it’s one of the best memories I have and just that conversation knows that there is truly something special there and someone of value, someone I could count on for anything. |
| 61 | Researcher | That’s something. I think often with family businesses the mindset is you’re either here or not and to a large extent what you’re saying of imposing someone’s needs on you comes with corporal punishment.. It’s nice to see that you have someone not only invested in what they want but also what is best for you and what you need. Would I be correct in saying that you receive a lot of instrumental so job driven and emotional in terms of motivation from your uncle specifically? |
| 62 | Participant | Yes you are correct in saying that. Job security, emotional intelligence, relationship advice, diet advice – pretty much everything. |
| 63 | Researcher | Okay and is there anything else you do in your personal capacity like exercise to alleviate the pressure? I am sure that there is business, there is family but then there is also you. We’ve spoken of how you motivate yourself, how you think about things and your outlook. Are there any physical things you do to alleviate that? |
| 64 | Participant | So one thing I personally don’t hold back on is self care, I make sure I am well looked after. It comes at the expense of everything. For example, this morning well today, it went past the morning. Bear in mind, I made sure everything was covered, nobody was waiting for anything from me and I set it up that way where today I would have my morning open. I went from breathing coaching, breath coaching – it is not something I do often but that shows that I enjoy looking after myself and keeping myself fit and healthy and uhm… I train six times a week. I spend atleast two hours a day atleast six days a week at the gym. I do yoga now and again. Uhm…exercise has always been a very big part of my life. I think that I sactually where the determination comes from. I was very overweight as a child. Uhm… and within two years, I lost 40 kilos naturally and I proved it to myself that anything is possible and I thought I’d never loose weight but when I set my mind to loosing weight, I lost all the weight I wanted to loose and more by being strict on myself and disciplined and…I think that , that is what proved the power of determination to me. So I think exercise is a very big part of my life, my health, mindset. There are times where I have been on … the bicycle and I need to push to get up that hill and I think of a challenge I have at work and my legs just go round and round and round and round so yes, health and fitness plays a very big role in my performance. |
| 65 | Researcher | Shew that’s good so it seems that you literally go out to facilitate an environment where you are able to prioritise your well-being and having that break away from the mundane work and family environment. So that’s amazing to see and congratulations on loosing that much of weight, I would have never thought that. I think we’ve covered these aspects really well. The last thing I need to touch on is your career. You are in the financial sector of the business, what was your undergraduate degree? |
| 66 | Participant | I graduated with BCom Finance – it covered financial management, internal audit, tax and those were essentially the three main aspects of my degree. It is very complimentary to …to…my job function |
| 67 | Researcher | Your current position in the company is ? |
| 68 | Participant | I am a regular finance clerk. |
| 69 | Researcher | Okay and did the business significantly influence your decision to go out and study finance? |
| 70 | Participant | Uhmm… to be honest, I kind of ended up in finance by default. I was a very hardworking high school student but I cant say the same about a university student. I don’t think I was a hardworking university student, I think I kind of ended up in finance by default. I didn’t know what I truly wanted to do however, I saw the degree through and I finished but if you ask me now, now I have discovered what I would have truly liked to have done – it’s not finance. |
| 71 | Researcher | So what would that be ? |
| 72 | Participant | If we could do it all over – I would study marketing or interior architecture |
| 73 | Researcher | That’s interesting. So when you were making the decision of what to study, it was a default option – you didn’t know what you wanted to study, you saw the degree and followed it through and now you’re in this position. Let’s talk about satisfaction levels. We have addressed what you would have liked to have done. How satisfied are you with your current state? |
| 74 | Participant | So…if I have to look or evaluate my current career state independent of me being a part of the family, I would be very disappointed. |
| 75 | Researcher | Okay… |
| 76 | Participant | If my …if I currently was where I am currently at after three years of being here and not being a family member, I would be very disappointed but because I am a part of this family and it comes with perks , it kind of makes things a bit better and makes me feel like there is still hope. |
| 77 | Researcher | Okay atleast we’re hopeful. So you’ve been here for three years and from what I gather – it’s in the same position. Is there any processes and procedures in place for a promotion ? I know you spoke to the no nepotism rule so you’ve got to work hard and prove your worth but is there any kind of…timeline or structure on how to go about doing this ? |
| 78 | Participant | So from the way I understand it, yes, there is a promotion in the works and it all depends on my commitment level. I have similarly identified my greatest weakness in my professional life, my married life, just in my life on the whole – my biggest downfall or impairment is time management. I simply cannot manage my time. Sometimes I am too relaxed. I know that if I could just get my time management right and just have a little more urgency – a lot of doors would open for me. With regards to the promotion and work, I have spoken to my uncle and grandfather countless times and the promotions being held back because of my commitment in the sense that everybody doesn’t know if I am going to leave and start my own business or whether they can truly give me more responsibility and know that I am going to be here for them to rely on me or if I may walk out in the next month or two. So that’s where we are currently at. |
| 79 | Researcher | That’s a difficult position because you’re saying that you’re disappointed with where you’re at but you have personal goals. So if I have to ask you now – would you sacrifice your personal goals for the promotion? Or would you still push to have both? |
| 80 | Participant | I wouldn’t sacrifice my personal goals for this promotion. But if somebody told me – give up your personal goals, you’d be the CFO and get an X amount of performance bonus – maybe we could talk but for this current promotion no. But probably, now even that I am saying it, my dreams are not that cheap. Yes, it would startle me but I don’t think I would give it up. |
| 81 | Researcher | Yes because you’re determined. That’s something. This is actually so humbling to see that you aren’t getting stargazed by these possibilities at the doorstep but you’re more focused towards what you think you need and this undying want of establishing your own thing. It shows so much of strength. |
| 82 | Participant | I think it’s just because I have tasted what it is like to get everything you want..I have somewhat had that… I mean I’ve been told no for a lot of things. I still didn’t get my GTI that I wanted in campus so I have been told no for a lot of things. It’s not like I get everything I want. But grateful to God, I get most things that I want and I know what getting what you want feels like and I want to be able to give myself what I want. Yes, that’s the surface level financial needs and lifestyle that I want to attain but I think with having your own business, it goes beyond that. What I treasure and what I find so meaningful to me is meeting likeminded people and the symbiosis of what you can create from having like minded people with similar ambitions, values, goals on a project. I want to meet new people, I want to be pushed in a team, I want to lead people. Uhm… I want to show the World what I am capable of and I want to intricduct the world to me. I want to simply…like to leave a legacy and it’s very important to me often…it’s something I have on my mind all the time..I ..I read about all these successful people; Steve Jobs, Elon Musk, Jay Dario and I just try to look for…for…I know there is no formula but I look for habits, for peculiar things, failures, how they responded to failures and I think that the more I engross myself in those kind of things and put in hard work, I will get there. |
| 83 | Researcher | Mmm…100% and you also mentioned at the beginning that you look for habits and positive things that you can take from other people so that is interesting to see that you are observant and you use what you observe to improve upon yourself and your current state. |
| 84 | Participant | So…uhm…there’s a joke within my immediate house when I was drawing up my CV and drafting my LinekdIn, I was listing my goals well not my goals, my strengths. What I personally think I am very strong with is my people skills. I think I have excellent people skills, I can observe and absorb. I can read people well and I can tell why people do certain things, what are their innate wants and needs and vices. So yes, I am that person. |
| 85 | Researcher | That’s amazing. I think the fact that you are so emotionally intelligent and aware of yourself and other people is commendable. So we’ve covered everything beautifully. We have come to the end of our session, I would just like to check if there is anything else you would like to discuss or touch on before I let you go? |
| 86 | Participant | Mmm… we can leave it on the recording and in the next three years, you could play me this recording and hopefully I would have achieved both, everything I want. |
| 87 | Researcher | Yes, and hopefully by then I would also be a doctor. |
| 88 | Participant | There we go! There we go! |
| 89 | Researcher | Something to look forward to. I will set a reminder, I will remember and uhm…I just want to check if you would be willing to have a follow up interview if I need more information regarding certain issues discussed? |
| 90 | Participant | Sure. |
| 91 | Researcher | Perfect, thank you for taking the time to participate in this process. This was an insightful conversation. I appreciate your time. It makes me so proud seeing how far you’ve come and where you intend ongoing. |
| 92 | Participant | Thank you, thank you. |

## Demographic & Questionnaire Responses:

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## Notes

### Observation:

In terms of support, the participant appears to rely heavily on his uncle within his department. This is primarily due to the uncle being perceived as a role model to the participant from a very young age and in the uncle actively believing in the participant and pushing him towards his goals instead of advising the participant to follow a route that would be comfortable. The participant dwells slightly on well-being, he speaks to frustration in being placed within an environment where he works with an elder generation, the lengthiness of processes, reluctance to adapt to employment trends and so forth however, this could be evident within other contexts and is not specific to family-owned businesses. However, in speaking of these issues he does address familial aspects within it such as differing opinions and perceptions of potential when hiring talent, the thought of rocking the boat or relinquishing control. There is also a very particular frustrater specifically having to leave the current company in order to pursue his passion which can be seen as a common practice in family-owned businesses. He seems to have his well-being afloat through taking active steps to preserve his mental and physical state. In terms of career, he studied finance as he did not know what else to do at the time. He indicates that he would have chosen differently, a more creative field. He is honest in being satisfied with his organisational position primarily due to the perks he received attributed to him being a family member. However, if this was taken away, he would be utterly disappointed to be almost stuck in the same position for three years. There does not appear to be w work family overlap as the family has adapted practices over the past 50 years not to mic the two to avoid harm to relationships.

### Reflection:

Longest interview of all interviews conducted. There is some rich data available. Inspired to witness the individual’s growth and observe the participants thought process, gratuity, dedication towards goals and awareness. This candidate was the only candidate to speak to family dynamics (specifically with his uncle, the CEO) in it’s entirety.