

SA GREAT BUSINESS FAMILIES

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Alumni from Coopers and Angove Family Winemakers relay the highs and lows of being in business with family.

Family business in Australia is serious business. Accounting for approximately two-thirds of all enterprise and contributing around \$4.3 trillion to our economy each year, the family business sector is undoubtedly thriving.

According to University of Adelaide's Family Business and Research Group Co-Founder and Director Dr Chris Graves, recognition of the family business sector's importance to our economy is increasing.

"What we are seeing from a government and policy level is a growing recognition of the family business sector, how important it is to our economy and also how different these businesses are.

"Consider a normal family – family relationships go through cycles, parenting, retirement, marriage ups and downs. Overlap these family stages with the responsibilities of running a business and the dynamic gets infinitely more complicated," he said.

The University of Adelaide also sees these challenges. Since starting the Family Business Education and Research Group (FBERG) in 2011, the University has introduced family business into the regular undergraduate program at the Adelaide Business School and is also offering a Graduate Certificate in Family Enterprise.

"Whether you are a family or non-family member employee, adviser or manager, everyone needs to know what makes family businesses unique and the challenges they face, as well as to provide insight into what innate strengths the family business has that can be leveraged as a competitive advantage," Chris said.

For more information about the University of Adelaide's FBERG, visit: business.adelaide.edu.au/research/fberg

Andrew Cooper, Coopers Brewery

Andrew Cooper recently made history by becoming the first sixth-generation member of the Cooper clan to work full-time for the 156 year old brewer.



And what a time to join the company. Late last year, the largest Australian owned brewer opened a \$65 million malting plant that has been hailed the most technically advanced of its kind in the world.

As account manager of Coopers' distribution arm Premium Beverages, Andrew started his career in banking. It wasn't until he was a few years into his career that he decided to switch things up and studied an MBA at the University of Adelaide.

"I was around 24 when I got a strong sense of clarity and conviction in what I wanted to do with my working life, and that was to join Coopers," he said.

Like Andrew, not everyone in the family starts out working in the business. Looking at Coopers' current management, there are family members who have studied incredibly diverse fields, including medicine, art, history and economics.

"The current senior management team is fifth generation, and there is certainly a diverse range of backgrounds, qualifications and skills. The different yet complementary skills, I believe, have been a strong positive contributor to Coopers' success in recent decades," said Andrew.



In fact, there is a policy that family members must work outside the family business first, and they must be at least 30 before they join the firm.

Andrew was 33 when he joined Coopers. “I would never give back the experience I gained, the people I met and the enjoyment I felt during those years working elsewhere,” he said.

“We actually have other sixth generation family members gaining experience outside the company in a vast array of areas right now,” said Andrew. “I find that exciting and encouraging for the future.”

Victoria and Richard Angove, Angove Family Winemakers

They’re the fifth generation Angoves continuing the 132 year old family business’ success, despite competition from commercial and industrial wine makers and a plethora of smaller wineries.

Victoria and Richard Angove, joint Managing Directors of Angove Family Winemakers, took the reins of the company when their father John retired in 2016.

As siblings sharing the top job, Victoria and Richard have a strong relationship.



“We realised very early on there was no room for egos if we were going to successfully work together,” said Victoria.

“The support and total trust I have in Richard and his decision making is the best thing ... and the worst. Siblings always know how to push your buttons!”

Both are University of Adelaide alumni – Victoria studied Commerce and Richard studied Winemaking.

After graduating, Richard didn’t think he would join the family business.

“However, the opportunity and privilege to work in such an old family business was something I realised was too good to pass,” he said.

Younger sister Sophie, a graduate of the University of Adelaide, has also joined the firm. But according to Victoria, being in the family is no guarantee of a job.

“It is essential that the person has a required skill set, family or not,” she said.

According to Richard, experience is vital too.

“I think experience outside the family business first is a very good way to see how others do things,” he said.

“You can learn a lot from others, make mistakes, learn from them and find yourself.” Victoria agrees. “While I did work outside of the family business, in Canada and the UK, in hindsight it wasn’t for long enough.”



So how do the Angoves balance family and work life?

“We do love work and we also love wine, but we have so many other things in our lives that there is always something different to talk about,” Victoria said.

Work life balance is a priority for Richard.

“At the end of the day, there is nothing more important than family,” he said.

“We have such trust and respect for our entire team that our business is indeed a broad and wide family.”

Story by Hannah Kilmore

Photos by Milne Smith Pictures and Meaghan Coles

Feature image: Andrew Cooper, photo by Mike Smith Pictures.

Second image: Andrew Cooper, photo by Mike Smith Pictures.

Third image: Andrew Cooper, photo by Mike Smith Pictures.

Fourth image: Richard and Victoria Angove, Warboys Vineyard, McLaren Vale.

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