Episode 14:

When Success Stops Working: Purpose Drift, the Self-Awareness Gap, and Governance Risk in Family Enterprise

StoryLens Podcast One-Sheet Snapshot

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Founders, trustees, and rising-generation family members often arrive at the same inflection point: the wealth has transferred, the estate plan is in place, the business has scaled or been sold, but decision-making is still not working the way it should.

In this episode, the StoryOne team sits down with Dan Deeble of Lost Ball Consulting to examine **why purpose drift creates governance risk inside family enterprises,** and what it takes to close the gap between financial structure and operational alignment.

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When Success Stops Working

- Many founders, patriarchs, and matriarchs reach a plateau after achieving financial success, not from lack of effort or capital, but from purpose drift.
- What drove the founder's performance and focus no longer produces clarity for the family system that inherits the enterprise or wealth.
- Purpose drift produces reactive governance: inconsistent decision-making, competing priorities across generations, and succession plans that exist only on paper.

According to the J.P. Morgan 2026 Global Family Office Report, **41% of business-owning families rank internal conflict as a top-three continuity risk**, nearly double non-business-owning peers.

This episode addresses the behavioral and relational dynamics behind that number.

The "Lost Ball" in Leadership and Wealth

- "Lost" refers to something you own but no longer possess: your purpose, your direction, your influence in the family system or enterprise.
- In family enterprises, this surfaces as next-generation disengagement, a lack of shared governance values, and wealth structures that function technically but lack family unity.

Fragmented vs. Aligned

- **Fragmented:** disconnected decisions, misaligned goals, competing priorities across generations.
- **Aligned:** clarity of purpose, consistent decision-making, coherence across family, enterprise, and wealth.
- In wealth management, true success is not accumulated. It is alignment across capital, people, and purpose.

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The Self-Awareness Gap

- Harvard Business Review research: 95% of leaders believe they are self-aware, but fewer than 15% demonstrate it in practice.
- This gap is structural in family enterprise. The primary decision-maker's blind spots become embedded in governance design, succession planning, and next-generation relationships.
- **Leadership blind spots are among the most underestimated continuity risks for multi-generational wealth.**

Why Financial Success Can Mask Deeper Risk

- External success hides internal fragmentation. The greatest continuity risks are not financial but are relational, behavioral, and rooted in how decisions are made.
- Leaders may continue performing while drifting internally; issues go unaddressed because "everything looks fine on paper."
- According to the J.P. Morgan 2026 Global Family Office Report: 86% of family offices lack a clear succession plan for key decision-makers.

Purpose as a Strategic Advantage

- Purpose is measurable and neurological. Dr. Vic Strecher's research (University of Michigan) shows leaders who can name their purpose see resilience increase by 54%, life fulfillment by 60%, and inclusive decision-making by 400%.
- In family enterprises, **purpose-driven leadership reduces governance fragmentation and improves decision consistency under pressure.**
- Without shared purpose, well-structured estate plans and governance frameworks break down under the weight of family dynamics over time.

Nice vs. Honest: The Hidden Governance Risk

- "Nice" avoids tension; honesty creates clarity.
- In families of multi-generational wealth, avoided conversations compound into structural governance risk: succession delay, next-generation disengagement, and ultimately, family dysfunction.
- Brené Brown: "Clear is kind." Protecting harmony by avoiding honesty is not kindness. It is unmanaged risk.

Sources: J.P. Morgan, 2026 Global Family Office Report (as reported by The Wall Street Journal); Dr. Vic Strecher, University of Michigan, research on purpose and health outcomes; Harvard Business Review, leadership self-awareness research; Brené Brown, Dare to Lead. Statistics and interpretations are used for illustrative purposes in the context of family enterprise and governance.

Notable Quotes

"Nice makes me nervous. There's a big difference between being nice and being honest."
-Dan Deeble

"Have you ever thought about what it's like to be on the other side of you? It's never what we think."
-Dan Deeble

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