

# Passing the torch to the next generation

BY STEVEN HILE

All businesses start somewhere. And in the case of many of the companies in our Top 100, those beginnings came in the form of family-owned companies.

Decades later, when those business owners found it was time to pass the leadership torch, some handed it off to their children to keep the company running.

Two York County companies — Transply Inc. and G.A. & F.C. Wagman Inc. — both have found that keeping it in the family is the way to go.

In September 2004, Transply co-founder Ray Gross passed the company reins to son Brian Gross, making him president and CEO, and to daughter Susan Crone, making her vice president of human resources.

In July, Wagman President Rich Wagman named son-in-law Michael Glezer president and CEO. The shift made Glezer the fourth generation to take the helm — a feat accomplished by only 3 percent of family businesses, according to The Family Business Institute.

## TRANSPLY INC.

**BRIAN GROSS, PRESIDENT AND CEO**  
**SUSAN CRONE, VICE PRESIDENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES**

### How did you keep the company running during the hand-off?

**Crone:** The transition was a long one, and our parents were very involved. We had lots of time to gain experience before taking over.



Crone

**What advice would you give to other companies who**



Rich Wagman, right, passed the gavel to Mike Glezer on July 10. Glezer became president and CEO of Wagman Cos. and CEO of G.A. & F.C. Wagman Inc., marking a leadership transition from the third to fourth generation at Wagman. PHOTOS SUBMITTED



In 1977, Francis C. "Bud" Wagman, right, part of the second generation of Wagman, passed the gavel to his son, Rich Wagman.

### might be hesitant to pass the reins?

**Gross:** Whoever is taking the reins has to know specifics before taking over. We are a small company, so I was taught the basics of each operation from the bottom to the top.

**Crone:** (You) should know the financial side. How and where the money (is) being spent, and is it being spent wisely.



Gross

### Is it easy to draw a line between family and other employees?

**Gross:** They can't be part of the family, but they can 'be part of the family.'

**Crone:** Over half of our 70 employees have been with us 10 or more years. One quarter of them are with us 20 or more years. (We) started full time with Transply immediately after high school

**"So we've grown up and grown into the business with many of these people. We are in essence a family."**

Susan Crone,  
Transply Inc.

but worked in and 'lived' the business since we were kids. So we've grown up and grown into the business with many of these people. We are in essence a family.

### With so many businesses having sunk during the recession, what has your company done to stay afloat?

**Gross:** We didn't lay anybody off. We realized that when things turned around, having to hire new people would only slow us down. (That) really helped us when things picked back up again. It was the best thing we could have done.

## G.A. & F.C. WAGMAN INC.

**MICHAEL GLEZER, PRESIDENT AND CEO**

### How did you keep the company running during the hand-off?

Years of planning and preparing

were involved. (Rich and I) ran beside each other for a couple years sharing responsibilities and relationships with business associates. I have been taking over responsibilities incrementally and the team we have in place has been aware and supportive the entire way.

### What advice would you give to other companies who might be hesitant to pass the reins?

Succession doesn't just happen. It takes planning, foresight and support from leadership, board members and employees.

### Did you play any sports growing up and, if so, how did these experiences influence how you handle your business today?

I played soccer, football and tennis. Tennis is an individual sport (where) you are often challenging yourself. I am probably my own worst critic and challenge myself every day to make the best decisions for the company.

Soccer and football are team sports, and here at Wagman we have an amazing team in place.

### Did you always see yourself as one day managing the family team?

I recognized an opportunity to be involved in something great. I started in the field and quickly realized that I had a lot to learn. I took on greater responsibility as opportunities presented themselves while the organization was growing and (eventually) a more formal path was discussed.

When Rich started introducing me as his "ticket out," I felt like things were going in the right direction.

### With so many businesses having sunk during the recession, what has your company done to stay afloat?

Staying true to our vision, mission and values, significant strategic planning, and our great people. ●