

Separation
ELTON DISTRIBUTORS, INC.—PART 6

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The consultant continued working with Elton Distributors, Inc., for many years. Things continued to go well for the organization. The employee base grew steadily, the economy of the nineties dramatically increased revenues, the company remained in the forefront of technology in the industry, and everything seemed to be going well. A view of the financial statements would have suggested that everything was going very well, indeed.

However, the consultant was feeling great frustration. Issues that had been widely accepted by all members of the family had gone unaddressed. Commitments made at the cabin retreat and in subsequent meetings had gone unfulfilled. There was still a high level of dysfunctional interaction among the brothers that carried over into the business. When the business was going well and there should be an expectation of high morale among employees, the opposite was the case. Tension, stress, turnover, and absenteeism increased. In spite of strong language that the family needed to undergo significant family therapy, the suggestion was ignored. Couple and nuclear family problems were present in all of the brothers' and sister's families. And these problems couldn't help but be reflected in day-to-day business activities and decisions.

While the consultant believed that he could still have an impact on process improvement, performance appraisals, coaching, and other ongoing OD practices, he no longer believed that he could, in good conscience, continue to work with the company and the Elton family.

The contract had become an important part of his client mix, and he enjoyed working with the brothers on an individual basis. He and his wife had even developed a social relationship with John and his wife. Yet, he knew that something had to be done. He pondered what his next steps should be.