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Transition Planning: Step 12 – Putting the Plan into Action

In eleven news columns over the past year, I've tried to break down K-State's *Transition Planning: 12 Steps to Keep the Family Farming* reference into smaller pieces. Putting a plan into action is the final one, and while reaching the finish line is a good thing, it can be uneasy as well.

This stage is when the farm's successors should be taking over the majority of the decisions. Asset 'separations' occur and suddenly the 'look' of the farm may change. While the passing of the torch is exciting and comes with a hopeful look towards the future, it's also good to note how each party might be feeling as it's done.

For the party taking on greater responsibility for day-to-day operations, pressure can mount. Do I have all the tools in place to make this work? Am I going to step on toes if I take the operation in a different direction? It might even feel some days like 'what have I done?!' All those feelings are normal even as no two situations are the same. Part of putting the plan into action is understanding there will be rough patches even as excitement about the future grows. Plans aren't perfect and there *will* be waves to ride out.

For the generation stepping back from the farm, what you've done every day for a long time may change and that may be uncomfortable. That, too, is normal and when possible, retiring operators should consider how those feelings of belonging, self-esteem and self-fulfillment previously tied to the farm will be met when our job is not the farm. It may not seem like a big deal, but failure to do so can lead to fear, annoyance, confusion, and even sadness.

If the transition plan is still taking place, try to address some of these feelings by stepping in/ away in steps. Along the way, both parties should engage in deliberate conversations about what the transitional steps should look like. Does the senior farmer-owner want to step away all at once? Does the succeeding generation want them to stay on as a mentor or advisor – and for how long (formal arrangements are always preferred...)? These questions need clarification just like business plans and asset transfers so neither party is left surprised, hurt, or lost.

It's been said that transitions will happen, one way or another. How proactive we are can make a big difference in how smooth and ultimately successful it might be.

For a summary of this series' references, visit our Meadowlark Extension District Crops & Soils page at: <https://www.meadowlark.k-state.edu/crops-soils/>. Resources from the K-State Office of Farm and Ranch Transitions and be found at: <https://www.agkansitions.org/>. For this step, see a University of Wisconsin resource entitled *Control of Farm Management Decisions* - <https://farms.extension.wisc.edu/articles/control-of-farm-management-decisions/>. It's a quick read for anyone interested in what the first steps in the process might look like and includes an accompanying worksheet to help you think through things from both sides of the equation. Please reach out if you need additional assistance getting access to any of the above.