

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Jayasekera Management Centre (JMC) is a well-recognized private educational institution in Sri Lanka that aims to provide students with an education of the highest quality. Today, JMC has 21 branches in which they are providing services to more than 14,000 students. The business success of JMC is visible through the continuous growth of its top-line from 2013 to 2018. The growth is further supported by the increase in the numbers of students. This success, however, was secured amidst several critical challenges which originated both internally and externally. JMC is also a long-standing family business, having the second-generation family members join the firm in 2013 and 2016 respectively. Today, the daughter and the elder son of the JMC founder have become the top-executives of the organization. As such, this case study provides insights on how a family-firm can manage its business across generations to achieve continuous growth.

Based on preliminary studies on JMC and a thorough review of the literature, a case framework was developed. Accordingly, three drivers were identified as having an impact on JMC's continuous growth. These drivers were developing family business leadership, improving value proposition and adapting to an IT strategy. Family business literature supported the idea of developing family business leadership by presenting four learning phases for business leaders in family-firms. The literature on value propositions explained that firms configure resources and capabilities in fulfilling their promise of value creation. Furthermore, IT literature revealed that firms can leverage their IT assets and IT processes in order to yield business value. Industry competition was identified to have a moderating effect on JMC's continuous growth as well.

The study took the qualitative approach, in which 20 in-depth interviews and eight focus group discussions were conducted to gather primary data. The respondents of the interviews and focus groups were selected so as to represent the entire organization. As such, top-executives, heads of departments, middle and low-level employees, lecturers/ teachers and students were consulted. In addition, students from JMC's competitors, as well as senior industry professionals, were also chosen to enrich the discussion. The respondents represent a good geographical spread, covering important JMC branches across the country. JMC publications were used to gather secondary data. The data collected through primary and secondary sources were then analyzed using a qualitative analytic method.

The findings of the analysis provided an interesting reading into the story. This elaborated how the new Captains of JMC took over the responsibility of the ship's wheel to weather the storm in a voyage that would prove to be unfamiliar yet assuring to the ship's crew. The narration centered around the increasing involvement and influence of Jayasekera children within the organization. The role of JMC founder in facilitating this phenomenon from behind, exemplified the idea of 'passing the baton' in a family business. Efforts of the organization under the new leadership to continue and improve its service to the students of the country were also portrayed in the findings. In addition, how IT helped JMC to gear up to face the modern-day challenges of the business was also highlighted. The increasing competition faced by JMC however, was looming on the horizon as revealed in the analysis.

The development of family business leadership was made well-evident at JMC, in terms of preparing the successors to take up the future challenges as well as managing the departure of the predecessor. Proper knowledge and skills building of the successors as well as ensuring their acceptance of organizational values were seen as salient features of this process. Compartmentalization of the two constructs of family and business has enabled the successors to professionalize the business. These aspects validated the learning phases model of family business leadership presented in the literature. An exploration of practices of JMC revealed further that JMC has been consistently improving its value proposition, in alignment with literature findings. Furthermore, it was also possible to see a conscious and calculated effort to bring IT into the organization, creating more and more business value. With this, the base conceptual framework used in the study was proven to be in alignment with JMC's story. As such the theoretical underpinning was proven to be accurate.

The findings of the study lead the authors to the successful achievement of case study objectives. As such it was realized that JMC has, indeed, achieved continuous growth over the past several years. It was also evident that JMC has practised family business leadership within the organization to great effect. As such, it could be explored that JMC's continuous growth has been determined by family business leadership coupled with the organization's value proposition and the IT strategy. The success story of JMC also presents key lessons on how family businesses can effectuate a proper leadership succession plan. Firms with similar family configurations can focus on ensuring the legitimacy of the successor through strong academic and professional credentials, thoughtful adjustments to the new leader's behavioural traits to build acceptance within the firm and the protection of the original values of the business, so as not to unnecessarily challenge the firm's equilibrium.