From Feedlot to Future: Succession Planning for a Large-Scale Operation

CASE STUDY

BACKGROUND

We were introduced to Jack and Donna Holt* through an existing client relationship. The Holts operate a large-scale, Midwest-based integrated feedlot and farming enterprise, managing 15,000 head of cattle across multiple feedlots alongside significant farm ground holdings.

As their operation and family enterprise grew, so did the complexity of their planning needs - spanning succession, ownership transition, and estate equalization among family members both involved and not involved in the business. The family also had a key employee with long-term ownership interest and a meaningful desire to support charitable causes as part of their broader legacy.

AT A GLANCE

OBJECTIVE: Provide proactive, integrated planning support to a large agricultural operation navigating succession, ownership transition, estate complexity, and charitable goals.

CHALLENGE: Growing operational and estate complexity required a coordinated, long-term advisory approach across succession planning, evolving legal counsel, and charitable giving goals.

OUTCOME: The family established a stronger foundation for ownership transition, estate planning, and charitable giving — remaining focused on their operation and the relationships that matter most.

CHALLENGES

We coordinated alongside the family's advisors to help implement long-term strategies surrounding succession planning, estate liquidity, ownership transition, diversification, and charitable giving.

Succession & Ownership Complexity

With children outside the business, a key employee seeking ownership required careful planning across legal, financial, and family dimensions to ensure a fair and sustainable transition structure.

Evolving Advisory Relationships

Over the course of the relationship, the family navigated multiple transitions in legal and tax counsel, requiring a steady partner to maintain continuity and identify firms with the depth to match their complexity.

Strategic Diversification & Liquidity

The family's net worth was concentrated in illiquid agricultural assets, making estate equalization among heirs and funding buy-sell obligations a critical planning priority.

Charitable Intent Without a Strategy

The Holts had a strong desire to give back but lacked a structured, tax-efficient framework. Translating philanthropic goals into an actionable plan required education and legal coordination.

*Names and certain identifying details have been changed to protect the privacy of our clients.

OUR APPROACH

We maintained a long-term, proactive relationship with the Holt family and their advisory team — serving as a consistent point of coordination across evolving business, estate, and personal planning needs over multiple decades.

1 COORDINATED SUCCESSION & LIQUIDITY PLANNING

We worked alongside legal counsel to help evaluate and structure buy/sell and estate liquidity strategies aligned with the future ownership transition of the operation. This included identifying life insurance solutions structured to align with the cross-purchase buy-sell agreement, supporting both business continuity and long-term estate planning objectives.

2 GUIDED ADVISORY TEAM EVOLUTION

As the family's planning complexity evolved over time, we helped the family navigate multiple transitions in legal and tax counsel. We assisted in evaluating and identifying advisory relationships with broader capabilities, deeper bench strength, and long-term continuity better suited for the family's growing needs.

3 FACILITATED STRATEGIC DIVERSIFICATION & TRUST PLANNING

We helped the family evaluate diversification opportunities outside of their core agricultural operation through specialty investment and insurance strategies held within trust structures — creating additional flexibility and complementing their broader balance sheet.

4 IMPLEMENTED CHARITABLE GIVING STRATEGIES

Working alongside the family and legal counsel, we provided education and implementation support for charitable planning strategies aligned with the Holts' philanthropic values. This included helping establish a donor-advised fund and identifying the platform and investment approach best suited to their giving goals.

OUTCOME

The Holt family was able to continue growing their operation with greater confidence in their long-term succession and estate planning strategies. Through ongoing coordination across their advisory team, they established stronger continuity in ownership planning and were able to remain focused on the business and the relationships most important to them.

HELPING FAMILIES NAVIGATE OPERATIONAL, ESTATE, AND SUCCESSION COMPLEXITIES THROUGH PROACTIVE COORDINATION AND LONG-TERM STRATEGIC PLANNING.

Contact us today to discuss how we can support your unique needs.

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