



Generation game is not always the driving force

RUSSELL EMMERSON

FAMILY management of vehicle and agribusiness CMV Group may skip a generation but that is not necessarily a bad thing, joint managing director Paul Crawford says.

But for a company forecasting \$820 million turnover this financial year and aiming for \$1 billion turnover within five years, the introduction of professional management also has its advantages, he said.

"We have some of the best professional general managers in the industry and they can give everybody a lot.

"We compensate them for that but they can often lack a bit of the (family) culture.

"Ultimately, it should be the best person for the job."

CMV's five-year strategic plan involves extending its heavy-automotive operations in Perth and Brisbane and its light-automotive division in Victoria.

In addition, it has recently opened a new division focusing on servicing all brands – not just those it sells – for high-value clients such as Woolworths.

Relying on high-performing professional managers will support that growth and fill in where there are no family contenders but the family connection remains vital, Mr Crawford said.

"We think there is a role for a family-run business (in the automotive industry) in terms of customer care, especially in heavy trucks."

The family connection will also underlie ownership of the company in the near future.

Mr Crawford said private equity investments in the 1980s resulted in investors wanting financial returns to coincide with company reporting periods, rather than looking for longer-term growth.



FAMILY TIES: Paul, David and Michael Crawford in front of a portrait of their father, Jim.

CMV GROUP

■ Sidney Crawford set up CMV Group in 1934 with five employees, selling and servicing commercial vehicles.

■ Despite the Great Depression, the business continued to grow through sales of Diamond T and Leyland trucks and Case tractors.

■ One of Sidney's three children, Jim Crawford, took up the mantle and continued the expansion.

■ Jim's sons, Paul and Michael, now manage the group's extensive vehicle-dealership network as well as its furniture operation. Their brother, David, manages CMV's agricultural and horticultural interests.

■ CMV welcomed Michael's son, Jonathan, into the fold this year, with several cousins likely to have their slice of the action soon.

■ CMV's commitment to its staff started with Sidney who introduced superannuation and staff-shareholder schemes in the 1950s, besides establishing the CMV Foundation in 1946.

■ CMV Group is one of Australia's largest privately owned businesses with about 1000 employees and an annual turnover of about \$750 million.



Sidney Crawford