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The Business of Engineering and Science Consulting - Part Two

By Lori Carucci

Since there has been a lot of interest in this series of articles, here are the next four rules that we thought were important to the building of our consulting business.

Fifth Rule: There is no 9 to 5 and 5 day work week in this business for you. Be willing to devote a lot of your time to this – especially at the beginning. One of our policies from the start (and continuing to this day) was that we were always available to our clients. Emergencies and problems don't wait for the office to open. Our clients have access to my cell phone number and I have access to 180+ top engineers and scientists. We have received calls nights, weekends, and while on vacation. And I can say that in 28 years, that perk of having my cell number has never been abused. Vacation, holidays, and weekends to us means away from the desk and office, and Blackberry and phone in pocket. While I am sure some will say that vacation should be completely away from work, that is difficult when it is your own company, or when you have lead technical support responsibilities for a large company. There is peace of mind knowing that you are still in touch, and we have found that if a client has an emergency, it can be quickly handled and it's back to the beach time.

Sixth Rule: Hire people who not only have strong capabilities, but that you like, respect and can count on. Your staff needs to understand what you are doing, and where you are going. If they do not understand or care about your plan for the company, they are not going to be much of an asset. You are not looking for a group of new friends, you are looking for people who you can trust and who are willing to grow along with you and your business. Sometimes they may have to step up for you – I had both knees replaced at the same time several years ago, and my staff never missed a beat while I was flat on my back trying to guide work from my sofa at home.

Seventh Rule: Grow at a pace and to a size that you are comfortable with. This goes back to your vision of what you want your company to look like. Running a consulting company, or any small business for that matter, is not for everyone, and a large percentage fail in a few years for a variety of reasons. How comfortable are you with hiring staff, managing people, marketing your firm, spending money on an office, furnishings, insurance, payroll? What is it that you want to get out of this? Are you doing this to have income now and some to tuck away for later retirement, or are you looking to set something up that your family can take part in and take over when you want to retire?

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Work Highlights

Civil Engineering

- Rob Hontz was co-author of the *Guide to Mobile Crane Safety Management* published in 2015 by the Specialized Carriers and Riggers Association (SC&RA) to fortify SC&RA's ongoing efforts to reduce crane and lifting accidents. This 104-page book reflects substantial changes in tools, technologies, and perspectives over the last two decades, such as new Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) rules and updated standards such as the American Society of Mechanical Engineers (ASME) B30.5 – *Mobile and Locomotive Cranes*.

Materials Engineering

- Providing essentially full time onsite materials/corrosion engineering support for a major US East Coast refinery.

Process, Operations & Safety

- Conducted a fluid coker reactor cyclone assessment and review of planned modifications. Provided miscellaneous process consulting, risk based work selection, and turnaround planning support.

Eighth Rule: This rule relates to Rule 7 and is one that I firmly believe in. We grew with what I call “step growth.” I don’t know where the term comes from, but I absolutely love the concept. ***To my mind, this is the best and most important rule of all.*** We started as a very small company and once we were firmly established as that, we added some more services, hired extra staff, and signed on more engineers and scientists. Once that was established and working well, we moved to the next step. That was a larger office, more staff, more computers, printers, etc., etc. Making each expansion a manageable piece, and making sure it was working perfectly before we moved on to the next expansion, was a key to our success. The payroll, insurance costs, etc., etc. never got beyond our control and were always manageable. Yes it takes longer, but we were always in control, could sleep at night, and the company has been successful from day one. There was never any risk of losing everything from too fast uncontrolled growth, which is one of the major downfalls of many small companies.

Thanks for the comments! There is a Part 3 of this series, with the last four rules to be published in a future newsletter. I can always be reached at icarucci@carmagen.com – and yes, my Blackberry and my phone are in my pocket.

About the Author

Lori Carucci is the Vice President of Operations at Carmagen Engineering. In addition to this, Lori has responsibility for contracts as well as responsibility for all personnel, business, and marketing needs of the company. This includes contract negotiations with clients, employment agreements for engineering staff, vendor negotiations and bid review, payroll, human resources, hiring and training support staff, development and maintenance of employee handbook, development and maintenance of safety manual.



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