



*We Help You Focus Clearly,
Organize Effectively,
And Act With Courage*

August 2010

Critical Success Factors

July 1st marked the 20th Anniversary of C. M. Perme & Associates. As I review accomplishments over the years, I'd like to share what I've learned:

Outcomes

Clients care about getting something done. So, if you can't deliver outcomes, you won't be around for long. That said, the tricky part about being a consultant is that the client is the only one who can *create* outcomes! It is critical to work in partnership with clients to achieve results, and to select motivated clients as carefully as they select you. When most of your work comes through referrals, taking on a shaky client is a big risk.

Money

Business ownership is a lifestyle, not a job. It is a lifestyle that affords a great deal of control and flexibility over what you do, whom you work with, and when you work. At the same time, it is also a lifestyle with inconsistent cash flow that requires discipline in budgeting, savings and investment.

Marketing

Even though 95% of my business comes from repeat customers or referrals, I've been in business long enough that many of my early customers have retired. As a result, I've learned that marketing needs to be a continual process of outreach.

As any entrepreneur would tell you, being your own boss is hard work, but can be the best work in the world. It's been a fabulous journey so far— and I can hardly wait to see what the future holds! ☐ CMP

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Twenty Years of Building Consensus and Getting Results

By Cathy Perme

I was only 24 years old when I first realized that I wanted to be a consultant. As a newly minted Systems Engineer with IBM, I was in awe of a guy named Bill Tinney, who had what I thought was the coolest job in the world. Bill was really "old" – in his late fifties, I think – and he flew around the world to consult with executives on how to effectively use their new computer systems. I asked Bill what I needed to do to get a job like his. He said I needed more experience – in marketing, planning, strategy, management, leadership and policy development. Thinking of all the years of growth and learning this would require, I wailed, "But Bill, I'll be *old* by then!" He replied with a smile and said, "Precisely."

Following Bill's advice, I began to gather all the requisite arrows for my consulting quiver. Along the way, I began to realize that I had a special talent for getting something done by forging consensus with multiple and often conflicting stakeholders. My last full-time job was in 1990, as a developer of strategy and policy for information technology in Minnesota government. As I reviewed Bill's requirements, I realized I was ready. I hitched up my skirt and launched my own firm. My business grew, but within a year I was dog-tired. As a "lone ranger," I was limited by my own capacity, so I began to create consulting teams that delivered bigger results and better outcomes, allowing me to expand my reach.

The projects I've tackled, and the partnerships I've formed, have been wildly different and endlessly interesting. For the U.S. Department of Justice and state and local government, I've conducted redesign workshops and facilitated needed policy changes. I've assessed the cultural impact of mergers and acquisitions in global financial services and manufacturing, developing roadmaps for successful integration. Working with non-profits in areas such as school nutrition, community policing and responsible home ownership, I've developed strategic, business, and restructuring plans. When organizations as diverse as a large urban school district, a professional association and a large grocery retailer needed to reorganize business or support services, they consulted with C.M. Perme & Associates.

Working alone or with a cadre of top-notch professionals from the network I developed, C.M. Perme and Associates has created measurable results for a customer base that has included international bankers, accountants, police officers, bus drivers, school lunch ladies, dry cleaners and factory foremen. I've worked with organizations as small as a two-person storefront and as large as a global business operation.

In all cases, I helped people get focused, get organized, and get results. Some call that strategic planning, some call that organization development, and some call that project management. I just call that my brand. ☺ CMP

*For more information, to view results of the last customer satisfaction survey, or to read past newsletters: www.cmperme.com
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