

❖ Consultants in Minnesota ❖

December 2002

President's Message

By Randy Hayman

Greetings!

The November featured speaker was Bob Ryan, Associate Director, Skillshare & Associates. Bob, an independent consultant himself, has made a career out of fixing organizations and putting them back on the success track. The presentation he gave was based on the dichotomy we all face in our chosen careers: the fear of success and the fear of failure. Have you ever made some decision to not do something because you couldn't possibly meet the demand had it taken off?

Let's say that you have a contract with a company that requires you to do your work onsite. Let's also say that this company has a security policy and that all corporate computing resources are behind one or more firewalls.

The company policy on email is that the company encourages its staff and contractors to get a free web-based email account and to not use the corporate email system for anything but corporate correspondence.

The company computer usage policy also allows staff and contractors to use the Internet during business hours as long as it is kept reasonable and business oriented, but personal use is allowed during breaks, lunches, and non-working hours, with restrictions on sites visited and content viewed.

The company states that it may monitor Internet usage, and has set up a proxy server for security and content control. This proxy server requires a username and password. The company has also prohibited outgoing file transfers via the http protocol.

When onsite at this client, what would you do for your personal email if you did not currently have a web-based email account?

- (a) You would open one.
- (b) You would use your laptop and its modem to dial your own ISP, since you don't need yet another stinkin' email account for spam.
- (c) You would set up your server at home to do port forwarding from http (port 80) and get high speed access to your ISP, mail, and the Internet through the corporate LAN.
- (d) You wouldn't check your personal email while at this client.

What about Internet usage?

Bob's presentation in November may have helped you with answering these types of questions. Part of his presentation was focused on knowing yourself and what your own boundaries are so that you can focus on your business goals by staying within those boundaries. According to Bob's experience in the many years he has been consulting, this relationship is vital to your business growth.

Last month I wrote of a virtual organization using a server on the Internet as a central repository. We delivered our product to the client a couple days later than the originally scheduled date, but on schedule with the last second changes asked for. We are now actively making modifications to the product based on the clients ongoing requests. Creative Solutions for a creative solution has worked very well for this project.

That's the view from here.



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INDEPENDENT
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Newsletter
of the



Minnesota Chapter



Fear of failure ... or fear of success?

By Jack Rose
ICCA of Minnesota

Those of us who have been independent for a while know it: Being a consultant isn't just about finding and doing the work. There's an entrepreneurial mindset that seems to be an unwritten requirement of our chosen profession.

Bob Ryan, our November meeting speaker, identifies two flaws of the solo practitioner who's likely to fail: (1) Fear of failure; and, oddly enough, (2) fear of success.

The fear-of-failure part is easy to identify: Avoidance. Inaction. "Playing" at running an independent business, instead of devoting most of your time and energy to it. Frequent use of what Bob calls "the J-word" -- job.

Fear of success is marked by more subtle patterns of failure. Your goals aren't clear. You don't have a business plan. Your behavior is self-defeating, e.g., maybe you tend to accept any old assignment, regardless of where it will take you.

How can the independent consultant overcome these fatal flaws? After 18 years in the business, Bob Ryan puts it in perspective. The principal of Skillshare Associates Inc. (8245 Thomas Ave N, Brooklyn Park, MN 55444-1523; 612-965-2253; bobryan@skillshare.net), Bob experienced the "three-year consultant slump" partway into his career. After playing out the contacts and referrals he had brought with him into his social services consultancy, one day he found the future-business pipeline beginning to empty. He correctly assumed that it was time to do some marketing, but he also decided to look inward and identify what was standing between himself and success in consulting. At ICCA's chapter meeting November 19, Bob laid it out for our membership:

- *Know yourself.* What kind of personality do you have

(dominant, influential, follower)? Do you have the personality, values and ethics suitable for an independent career?

- *Articulate your future.* Who do you want to be, and what do you want to be doing? When do you see this happening? How would you like to be thought of?
- *Line up your actions with your vision.* Stay on course, or in Bob's words, "steer away from the riverbanks." Learn to say no. Pace yourself. Check your ethics.
- *Periodically recalculate your course.* Develop means of measuring your success. Get an accountability partner. Don't be afraid to ask for help.

Our thanks to Bob Ryan of Skillshare Associates (<http://www.skillshare.net>) for helping us form goals and mindsets to foster independence for the long term.

Read Any Good Love Songs Lately?

By Peter A. Miller

"In a minute there is time for decisions and revisions which a minute will reverse".

This excerpt from T. S. Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" is one more reminder that decision making is not always a simple thing. It is amazing (and sometimes even entertaining!) to observe how we and others make decisions. You can: flip a coin, take a course, make a "for and against" list, consult a therapist, meditate, and/or look for "a sign from above".....Whatever!, but the bottom line is that each of us has to make each decision inside our own head and heart. And don't forget that deciding not to decide (or not to decide yet) is also making a decision!

The English language has a vast array of vocabulary for the behavior of being indecisive. People who can't make up their minds about something are said to waver, dither, vacillate, waffle, hesitate, seesaw, yo-yo, or even shilly-shally. It seems that the number of synonyms for decisive

behavior is far fewer!

We are encouraged to admire decisiveness, and to have a measure of understanding for irresoluteness — but only up to a point. Since we humans are gregarious by nature, our behavior often impacts on others, both near and far. So taking an inordinate amount of time to reach a decision can put intrusive demands on those around us. I might also point out that the degree of indecision is not always proportional to the weight of the issue being considered. It is not unheard of that some people can decide on whom to marry more quickly than on what to wear to the wedding! We should not rush to conclusions, but protracted hesitation may come with a price.

So, what am I suggesting? Well, consider this: "Staying on the fence" does not allow you to get in touch with the feelings which naturally follow from having made a decision. Make your best decision based on the input (too much information is not always such a help either) you have at your disposal, and if all choices seem equally appealing, go with your first instinct. Now that you have made that decision, stop for a minute and check how you feel about it. If you're immediately not feeling good about it, honor that feeling and reconsider. Otherwise stick with your choice — and choose to feel good about it, since rarely in life does the moment of absolute certainty ever arise!

Bad decisions can often be rectified, and even a learning experience — no decision teaches you nothing and is like idling your engine on the fabulous motorway of life!

Guest columnist Peter A. Miller is president of the English Speaking Community Club (<http://www.escc.se>) in Stockholm, Sweden.

2002 ICCA Holiday Fun Wednesday, December 18th

by Joan Barnes

The annual ICCA Holiday Fun will be held at Christos Greek Restaurant in St Paul. Cost is a mere \$25 per person. There will be a special limited menu of about 5 dinner choices: a lamb, a chicken, a vegetarian, and two Greek traditional dinner choices. You can make your selection the evening of the 18th based on your whim of the moment. However, **RESERVATIONS ARE REQUESTED – by Dec 13th**. And, when you make your reservation, please include your dessert choice: Baklavas (sweet confection of walnuts, honey in phyllo pastry), Galatopourekos (velvety nutmeg custard baked in phyllo pastry), Rizogalo (creamy rice pudding with cinnamon and golden raisins), Milopita (glazed apple slices baked in phyllo with ricotta and cream cheese). I will pick a default if you don't, so gimme a call: 651-257-2570. Cash bar and appetizers begin at 6:00PM, dinner served at 7:00PM.

Christos is located in the old Union Station, 214 Fourth Street East, St Paul. There is a parking garage in the basement, so if the weather isn't clement and you're not in the mood to deal with it, the garage is an option. This is a fun event. Well, all of our events are fun, but this one isn't for talking business. Maybe we should implement a 25 cent fine for anyone who tries. Bring your Significant Other.

Eats, drinks, and fun

By Jack Rose
ICCA of Minnesota

There's a saying that "all work and no play makes jack" ... OK ... bad pun! But here's our chance to prove that consultants have more fun than ... um ... accountants?

This year's **ICCA Holiday Fun get-together** is at Christos in the Union Depot (214 4th St E) in St. Paul (<http://twincities.citysearch.com/profile/5516879>). The date is **Wednesday, December 18, 2002** and we'll gather around 6 p.m. for a 7:00 dinner and festivities.

Webmaster's note: It sure would be nice if you'd **RSVP** with your intention to attend or not to attend! Visit the members-only section of <http://www.icca-mn.org>, log in with your member number (from the label of *The Independent*) and last name, and click "RSVP a Meeting."

Your votes on the selfsame web page *do* help us decide what to order for dinner. The web page remembers your **meal preferences** from your previous visit, and you can change them any time. Now you can see a current total of votes for every dish.

Since we traditionally don't have a regular chapter meeting in July, a few of us took it upon ourselves to re-institute the annual summer chapter picnic. So here's a pre-announcement of **The First Annual ICCA Bastille Day Bash**. Date: **Sunday, July 13, 2003**. Location: Still working on it. Details when available, here or on our web page.

Meeting Reservations: Call Joan Barnes at 651-257-2570!
See you all at Christos Greek Restaurant in St. Paul

Have a "Ho Ho Ho"
HOLIDAY



Next Meeting

Wednesday, December 18, 2002

Holiday Fun

Christos Greek Restaurant in St Paul.
214 Fourth Street East, St Paul

Cash bar and appetizers at 6:00PM
Dinner at 7:00PM

For reservations call
Joan Barnes @ 651-257-2570

FUTURE MEETINGS

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Get involved--write a story for the newsletter. I need stuff to fill these white(blue) pages!!



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