

CONSULTANTS IN MINNESOTA

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Officers

- **Interim President:**
 Wade Herschberger
 voice: 612.805.5878
chw@RevelstoneConsulting.com
- **Vice President:**
 John B. Rose
 voice: 651.214.5053
jbr@icca.org
- **Treasurer:**
 Norm Nelson
 voice: 612.399.0107
norm.nelson@icca.org
- **Secretary:**
 Larry Bremer
 voice: 763.553.1994
ljbrem@cpconline.com
- **Editor:**
 Bob Newman
 voice: 612.669.2030
RNewman@NewSynergyInc.com

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

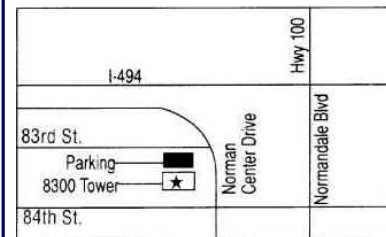
BY
WADE HERSCHBERGER

Greeting fellow consultants!
 A couple of months ago I was pondering my effectiveness as a consultant. While the customers seem to be happy, I felt there were things that I could and should do better. Most of the areas of improvement are 'non-technical'; i.e. while I'd rather learn technical stuff, as a consultant, the non-technical factors are critical to success. I went on a search for books on effective consulting and here's what I turned up. Some old and some new.

A quick note: One of my research resources is Amazon.com. While I buy a reasonable number of books from Amazon, what I find extremely valuable is their online book reviews as well as their related books (i.e purchasers of this book also bought ...). I take some of the reviews with a grain of salt, but by reading the reviews of a particular book and the reviews of related books, I think I get a pretty good idea of which books are very good in their respective fields.

Next Meeting: Thurs June 19

TOPIC: MS Desktop Drilldown, Office 2003, OneNote & InfoPath



LOCATION: [Micro-soft's Offices off Normandale Blvd](#) in Bloomington.

FREE: Pizza and Soft drinks

Networking 5:30 Dinner 6:30

An Accurate attendance count is needed so please **RSVP**. [Joan Barnes 651.257.2570](mailto:Joan.Barnes@micromet.com)

An oldie but goodie is 'The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People' by Stephen R. Covey. I suspect many of you have already read this, but it's always worth a review (which is related to the 7th habit). This was required reading at my former employer; in fact, at district meetings, we'd have do presentations on the 7 habits. As painful as these were, they were a good learning experience

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OFFSHORE—BEWARE BY TERESA NEWMAN

Offshore hiring for programming services is growing at a tremendous rate across all companies. Companies need to be cautious--the savings may not be as great as they expect.

There are many offshore services from help desk support to application maintenance and new development. These services are located in countries where the cost of labor

is much lower than in the US. While this is true, other costs, for infrastructure, travel and training can reduce your overall savings. There is a difference be-

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OFFSHORE-BEWARE (CONT)

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tween the wage rate and the charge rate-- keep in mind that the offshore supplier needs a profit.

Other costs to consider include any hardware and software needed to duplicate the system environment of the client. This can be pricey overseas, with taxes, duties and other extra charges. A dedicated leased line for the offshore team back to the client can add to the cost. If the vendor has

their own infrastructure, expect to pay your share of the cost.

Travel costs figure into the mix, too, because customers ought to go to the offshore locations to help establish strong working relationships and in many cases the offshore company will expect to have a person from their company onsite. Cost estimates also need to include time zone issues, culture, language and a variety of factors.

While some companies

manage to work around the clock with offshore services in India, some consider that too much trouble and prefer to work with providers in Canada, which shares the same time zones with the US instead of 12 hours ahead of East Coast time.

In the 15 years or so that offshore outsourcing has been common, IT shops have turned to overseas providers for projects including custom application development and application

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Thanks to Joan Barnes for sharing this with us

Bob d'Editor

A GRANDCHILD'S GUIDE TO USING GRANDPA'S COMPUTER

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Bits Bytes Chips Clocks
Bits in bytes on chips in box.
Bytes with bits and chips with clocks.
Chips in box on ether-docks.
Chips with bits come. Chips with bytes come.
Chips with bits and bytes and clocks come.
Look, sir. Look, sir. read the book, sir.
Let's do tricks with bits and bytes, sir.
Let's do tricks with chips and clocks, sir.
First, I'll make a quick trick bit stack.
Then I'll make a quick trick byte stack.
You can make a quick trick chip stack.
You can make a quick trick clock stack.
And here's a new trick on the scene.

Bits in bytes for your machine.
Bytes in words to fill your screen.
Now we come to ticks and tocks, sir.
Try to say this by the clock, sir.
Clocks on chips tick.
Clocks on chips tock.
Eight byte bits tick.
Eight bit bytes tock.
Clocks on chips with eight bit bytes tick.
Chips with clocks and eight byte bits tock.
Here's an easy game to play.
Here's an easy thing to say....
If a packet hits a pocket on a socket on a port, and the bus is interrupted as a very last resort, and the address of the memory makes your floppy disk

abort
then the socket packet pocket has an error to report!
If your cursor finds a menu item followed by a dash, and the double-clicking icon puts your window in the trash, and your data is corrupted cause the index doesn't hash, then your situation's hopeless, and your system's gunna crash.
You can't say this? What a shame, sir!
We'll find you another game, sir.
If the label on the cable on the table at your house says the network is connected to the button on your mouse, but your packets want to tunnel on another protocol,

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MOST VALUABLE PLAYERS BY JOSHUA KURLANTZICK
 URL: [HTTP://WWW.ENTREPRENEUR.COM/ARTICLE/0,4621,308635.00.HTML](http://www.entrepreneur.com/article/0,4621,308635.00.html)
 SUMMARIZED FOR ICCA NEWSLETTER

Entrepreneurs trying to compete with the larger chains on price-are almost surely going to lose. Small businesses cannot win price wars since they do not have the bulk purchasing and margins, they have to use a different tack. Increasingly, this tack means not competing on price, but convincing customers that small businesses offer more value.

Services that make consumers think they're receiving more value can take on several forms.

- Regularly meet with customers and gauge

their needs

- Thoroughly educate yourself about your customers business.
- Help you customers profit from new technology.

Marketing experts believe entrepreneurs should move away from accepted methods of advertising to promote their value-added services. For one, they say, entrepreneurs should not shy away from comparing their services to those of large chains.

In other cases, entrepre-

neurs convince consumers they are providing value by actually charging more for their products. "Small businesses need to find niches to survive, and often one of the best ways is to move into higher-end versions of what you have been doing. In the higher-end market, it is easier to compete with large companies, since people have a 'you get what you pay for' mentality, becoming more expensive & specialized creates an idea of value to your consumers."

[Read full story..](#)

Weigh Your Options
 Think it's time to lower your prices?
 Read "Should You Offer Extra Services or Lower Prices?" first.

OFFSHORE-BEWARE(CONT)

(Continued from page 2)

maintenance. Still, today's offshore services are much more complex than those of the past, offering help with everything from IT help desk work to business processes, including call centers, desktop support, accounts payable, supply chain man-

agement and many other types of service.

In addition to the financial issues, offshore outsourcing customers offer other caveats. Chief among them is this one: Choose your projects carefully. Longer-term

projects that need larger teams do well in offshore outsourcing situations, observers say, whereas those that need really fast turn-around time -- or constant input from business users -- aren't such good candidates.

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LEARNING LINUX BY BOB NEWMAN

I have been a Unix power user for 4 years. In an effort to find a use for an old 120 Mghz system I decided that Linux was the best option. It would help me learn Unix better, and it would probably run on the old PC.

I went to www.Linux.org and found a ton of Linux versions...which are called distributions. I chose the

one named "Red Hat" because it was the most popular and had the most titles at Amazon.com just in case I needed help.

Downloading the three CD's takes awhile, even with broadband. But its free so I started the download and went to bed. There are three .ISO files you must download. So this process

took about a day and a half using my lazy method.

Don't try unzipping the .ISO files. Even if this works, you won't like the results. Randy Hayman explained that I needed to you burn each .ISO file to a CD-ROM. Look for the ISO option on your burner.

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Learning a new technology?
 Share it with everyone—together we will grow...

A GRANDCHILD'S GUIDE TO USING GRANDPA'S COMPUTER

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that's repeatedly rejected by
the printer down the hall,
and your screen is all dis-
torted by the side-effects of
gauss,
so your icons in the window
are as wavy as a souse,
then you may as well reboot
and go out with a bang,
cause as sure as I'm a poet,
the sucker's gunna hang!

When the copy of your
floppy's getting sloppy on
the disk,
and the microcode instruc-
tions cause unnecessary

risc,
then you have to flash your
memory and you'll want to
RAM your ROM.
quickly turn off your com-
puter and be sure to tell
your mom!

History of the poem

This poem has probably
received more attention and
circulation than anything I
have ever written. It was
created in an hour, late one
night in the fall of 1994 after
my four year old grandson
and his older brother had
significantly rearranged the
resources on my Macintosh.

It was originally a gift to
Internet friends and was
passed from person to per-
son, and posted on news-
groups and web sites in sev-
eral countries. It has since
been published in NetGuide
Magazine, March 95, p86,
and in the Seattle Times,
Sunday Edition August
13th, 1995, and has gener-
ated more than 300 fan mes-
sages. A Web search will
usually turn up 50 or more
copies posted hither, thither,
and yon. Unfortunately, the
Internet being what it is,

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BEWARE OFFSHORE (CONT.)

(Continued from page 3)

The last and most important
point is be prepared. You
have to have a good process
in place, with clear, concise
requirements. Even simple
tasks may be obvious to you
but describing the process
and all the steps involved
can take a substantial

amount of time to describe
in detail. You must leave
out all slang and be very
precise in your require-
ments. In addition, a verifi-
cation must be made on the
requirements so that it is
exactly what was requested,
to avoid as much turnaround
time as possible.

Last and not least, you must
keep measurements of the
process. Ensure that the
cost savings expected are
definitely being reached. If
this is not done, then the
day you wish to stop using
offshore, you will have no
definite proof that the con-
cept did not succeed.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE (CONT.)

(Continued from page 1)

to both deliver and listen.
They almost always turned
into much longer discus-
sions. For those that haven't
read the book a quick re-
view of the 7 habits:

1) Be proactive: It's more
than just taking initiative.
It's taking responsibility.
It's not being reactive. Pro-
active people are still influ-

enced by external stimuli,
but are able to extend their
circle of influence.

**2) Begin with the End in
Mind:** Clearly identify
what's important to you and
manage your activities to
achieve those ends. Remem-
ber that 'everything is cre-
ated twice'; once when it's
conceived in the mind and
again when it's physically

created.

3) Put First Things First:
This habit is the fulfillment of
habits 1 and 2. This is the
day-to-day activities that cre-
ate what you proactively en-
visioned. It's all about appli-
cation of independent will.
4) Think Win/Win: This is
seeking mutual benefit in all
interactions.

(Continued on page back)

Please e-mail the editor:

*"What books have
made an impact on
you?"*

LEARNING LINUX (CONT.)

I now had "Red Hat Linux 9" ready to install. The installation was very easy. I had just enough disk space to load the "home computer" version of the setup. This enabled me to take GNOME for a test drive. GNOME GUI interface for Linux.

It took a while to install, mainly because the ol' PC can only go so fast. I used my regular PC to learn more from GNOME.org and OPENOFFICE.org. There is a huge open source effort.

You can find software for just about any application that Microsoft has. No wonder Bill's scared.

The GUI interface looks nice. It's very similar to Windows. Unfortunately it is intolerably slow. My 120Mhz just isn't up to the task. If my second PC was faster I would probably keep using GNOME. Because it was so slow, I reinstalled Linux using the server setup. Which was my original goal.

As a server, the response time is very good. All the files and directories are intimidating.

I want to connect my Linux PC to my main PC and the WWW. There is a lot of information on the web, but I think I need a bit more hand holding at this point. So, it's off to the bookstore.

I hope to share with you how I connected my Linux computer to my other PC and the www in my next column.

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some scoundrel whose editing skills exceeded his or her ethical standards edited the poem, reduced it by half,

removed my name, and recirculated it under the title "If Dr. Seuss were a Technical Writer", attributed to the ever prolific "Anonymous." Dr. Zseuss, the real Dr.

Seuss impersonator, responded with Hang the Information Highwayman! in the summer of 95.

Next Month:

"Hang the Information Highwayman!"

POST GAME WRAPUP OF STRICTLY BUSINESS

Thank you, thank you, thank you to everyone who worked to support ICCA at Strictly Business. This was the first year that I headed up the MN Chapter participation. The representative from Strictly Business was also a rookie, so there were a few communication gaps, but overall everything went well.

Thank you to all the folks who helped staff the booth. Jack provided a computer and a nifty presentation describing the benefits of ICCA membership. Karl

Hella and Bob Newman held down the fort during the SOHO presentation. We made some good contacts for potential new members.

Thank you to the folks who put together a the presentation on SOHO computer Issues. It was a class act, but the audience was a bit small. Thank you to Larry Bremer, Randy Hayman, Bill Buending, Hizzonor Jack Rose, Ray Kaplan, and Bill McTeer for expert information. In particular,

thank you Larry for screwing around with the slides. The good part is that we now have a presentation that is available to 'take on the road'. The road show is one of the agenda items for the 'What Are We Gonna Be When We Grow Up' Chapter meeting that is scheduled for September or October. Hope you can all make it to that one. We have lots to talk about.

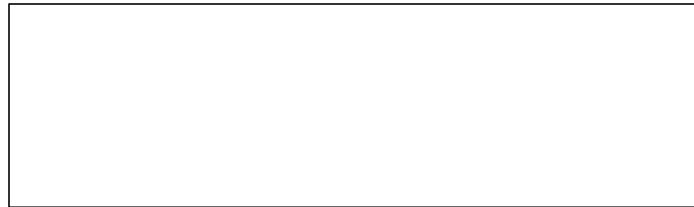
- Joan Barnes



5930 N. Oakview Lane
Plymouth, MN 55442



First Class Mail



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE (CONT)

5) Seek First to Understand, Then to Be Understood: This is the key to interpersonal interaction. It's truly empathizing with another to truly understand.

6) Synergize: The whole is greater than the sum of the parts. It's putting the other habits together and achieving more.

7) Sharpen the Saw: This is the habit of taking time to stop being too busy to renew yourself, physically, emotionally, spiritually, and mentally.

Again, I highly recommend this particular book. I think the principles are absolutely essential to effective consulting.

Another book that is highly recommended is 'Flawless Consulting' by Peter Block.

I haven't finished this one yet, but I've really found this book to be very effective. It discusses consulting from contracting (which is more than just the legal contract) to problem analysis, discovery, feedback and implementation. It is a very practical, pragmatic overview of the role of a consultant and how to manage a consulting engagement.

As consultants, we are almost always involved in introducing change. My experience is that the cultural change issues are almost always harder to solve than the technical ones. I've read many books and articles on the topic of change, but most seem to focus on the issue, but don't provide practical guidance on how to effectively implement

changes. A book that is highly recommended, but I haven't made time to read yet is 'Leading Strategic Change', by Black and Greger. In skimming through the book, I've gleaned a few ideas that are helping. It focuses on first changing the individual; almost the opposite of many other authors.

I'd be interested in hearing what resources others have found and used in being effective consultants.

That was what was on my mind this month...

Wade



*When You Hire One of Us, You
Get Our Collective Knowledge and
Experience*