



# CONSULTANTS IN MINNESOTA

## Officers

- **President:**  
Wade Herschberger  
voice: 612.805.5878  
[cwh@  
RevelstoneConsult-  
ing.com](mailto:cwh@RevelstoneConsulting.com)
- **Vice President:**  
John B. Rose  
voice: 651.214.5053  
[jbr@icca.org](mailto:jbr@icca.org)
- **Treasurer:**  
Larry Bremer  
voice: 763.553.1994  
[ljbrem@  
cpconline.com](mailto:ljbrem@cpconline.com)
- **Secretary:**  
Eric Romo  
voice: (651) 688-6896  
[EricRomo@  
EricRomo.com](mailto:EricRomo@EricRomo.com)
- **Editor:**  
Karl Hella  
voice: 507-645-6754  
[khella@wwdb.org](mailto:khella@wwdb.org)

## Call For Articles

Can you write a few paragraphs on an interesting topic related to what you do for a living? ICCA of Minnesota is looking for articles for this newsletter, for our web page, and for submission to larger-circulation journals.

Please help!

Send articles or story ideas to [editors@icca-mn.org](mailto:editors@icca-mn.org), or call us at 612-245-ICCA.

## President's Letter

by Wade Herschberger

I was having one of my interesting discussions with my accountant and he brought out his training material on taxes. Turns out that the trainer, Sandy Botkin, is pretty well known and has a very popular book, Lower Your Taxes - Big Time. I bought a copy and it's one of the better investments I've made for my business. He

covers, in good detail, three basic strategies for legally lowering taxes.

1. Ensuring you take the business deductions you're allowed.
2. Various forms of corporate entities and the pros and cons.
3. Fringe benefits available to small and home-based businesses.

There's a section on personal tax strategies as well. I was aware of many of the items he discusses, but certainly not all, and I certainly understand them much better now. He also has a web site, [www.taxreductioninstitute.com](http://www.taxreductioninstitute.com). Spend two hours with the book and you'll more than save the cost of the book and the value of your time!

Well, it's hard to believe that summer is almost gone! That's the bad news. The good news is that in my experience (with previous firms and as a independent consultant) fall usually means an up-tick in business in Minnesota. It seems to be difficult to get pro-

### Next Meeting

Wednesday

September 15, 2004

[PRIME Hotel Bloomington](#)  
[Minneapolis Airport](#)

Speaker: Eric Gibson

Mutual of Omaha

Topic: Maximizing your health insurance dollars

Mentoring 5:30PM Dinner 6:30PM

Members \$25 Non-Members \$28

**RSVP 651.257.2570**

jects started when everyone is up north at the cabin. It'll be interesting to compare notes at the next meeting. It was exciting to have so many new/potential ICCA members at our last meeting. At least one was directly related to the radio publicity we had on KFAI.

Thanks to Jack Rose and all the other participants in the radio event! It sounds like some of our allegedly shy members have a real flair for public speaking (and no, I'm not talking about Jack - I said shy :-)). Let's keep up the momentum. As we are continually reminded, the key to publicity is to keep at it. I'm sure we'll be looking for more similar events.

No further developments on the membership survey, but we're pushing to have a draft set of questions together within a few weeks. You should be hearing from us sometime in September or October.

Also, no further developments (it's SUMMER!) on the scholarship program.

I'm hopeful that we can make some progress on that soon also.

Hope to see you all at the next meeting in September!

# CORE COMPETENCIES FOR IT CONSULTANTS

## AUGUST MEETING SUMMARY

At the August meeting, Ray Giske presented a set of "core competencies for information technology consultants" that he developed as part of his work on the ICCA National Board of Directors. Following is a summary of the presentation and discussion that followed.

The idea for the project grew out a discussion held at a meeting of the national board. The topic of the conversation was the body of knowledge that information technology consultants needed to know in order to operate effectively. One person present suggested the National Speakers Association had a set of core competencies that might be useful to review. Ray Giske volunteered (and the NBoD agreed) to proceed with developing a set of core competencies for information technology consultants.

After conducting an internet search where core competencies for several organizations were found, Ray proceeded with developing a set for IT consultants. The resulting list was posted as a draft on the national ICCA website and comments were invited from the membership.

After reviewing the project background, Ray briefly presented examples of core competencies for other types of organizations found on

the Internet. These included National Speakers Association, school principals, and legal assistants. Ray also pointed out that the concept of "Core Competencies" had been developed by a pair of researchers, C. K. Prahalad and G. Hamel. The central idea, presented in their book **Competing for the Future**, is that a company or organization has key areas of expertise that lead to the development of core products which, in turn then, provide access to a wide variety of markets and makes it difficult for their competitors to imitate.

Within the context of an IT consulting organization, a competency was defined as the skills and behaviors that a consultant brings to a position in order to perform a task or function. Core competencies are those competencies that are most critical and establish a base-line for evaluation. The following were presented as "core competencies" for IT consultants:

**Technical Expertise:** This area is fundamental and reflects the core competency that serves as the basis for the consulting service being provided. This competency is likely to change over time; in fact, it must change to remain competitive.

**Project Management:** Including project

## A FEW GOOD IDEAS

From Ray Giske

If you are totally successful at marketing your information technology services, then there is no point in reading any further. Simply proceed to the next article.

Now that I have your attention, I'd like to introduce you to a web site and e-zine that I have been using for several years now. It is packed with ideas and while I have not used many of them, I continue to be impressed with the material available; it is directed to the service business professional, it is inexpensive, and best of all, it is practical.

In 1999, I attended the national ICCA conference in San Jose, California. One

of the speakers I heard there was Robert Middleton whose presentation had the title "Becoming a 'Client Magnet'". I was impressed by the speaker's knowledge and enthusiasm but more importantly, I thought the ideas and suggestions were really practical and applied to the kind of business I was in. Shortly thereafter, I sent him my email address and I have been getting the weekly e-zine (it's free) ever since.

So, as a fellow ICCA member and information technology consultant that might just be interested in getting a few marketing tips, I suggest you check out the web site [at www.actionplan.com](http://www.actionplan.com).

*I suggest you check out the web site [at actionplan.com](http://www.actionplan.com)*

## CORE COMPETANCIES, CONT.

management as a core competency assumes the independent consultant works predominantly on a project by project basis. The project management skill set includes a broad range of skills, some of which may overlap with other competencies.

**Client Development:** This competency has to do with identifying potential clients and making a sale to these clients (i.e., the sales and marketing piece of the business). It is more than that, however, in that it also includes the skill required to develop a long-term relationship with the client to provide service on a continuing basis.

**Oral and Written Communication:** This competency represents skill with the use of the English language. Understanding how to write and communicate succinctly while getting the point across. Listening, critically and analytically, is a very significant and valuable communication skill. One needs to know what goes into a proposal, understand the components of a contract, and how to prepare a project report.

**Contract Management:** The consultant needs a basic understanding of the components of a contract. While contracts between the consultant and the client may be paramount, contractual relationships exist between the consultant and vendor, as well as with other business relationships. Some contracts are written while some may be verbal or only implied.

**Professional Development:** A consultant that does not hold this competency in high esteem and does not act on it will not be competitive for long. Professional development includes development of technical expertise as well as development of all the core competencies.

**Analytical and Critical Thinking:** Thinking analytically involves identifying components of the problem to be resolved and the relationships and dependencies of those components. Thinking critically requires an understanding of the assumptions that are in play and examining those assumptions to determine whether or not they are valid. Problem solving is a significant component of the consulting profession and problem solving requires analytical and critical

thinking

**Ethical Guidelines and Professional Standards:** One might argue whether or not this component is a competency; however, it is included on the belief that, all things being equal, the consultant that demonstrates strengths in this area will have a competitive advantage.

**Business and Financial:** Regardless of the consultant's clientele, the consultant is operating as a business in a business environment. Understanding how to manage and operate a business is fundamental to being competitive in the consulting profession. Financial aspects of business involve budgeting, accounting, financial reporting, and reporting and paying taxes.

**Organizational Awareness:** Requires an understanding of the organizational structure of a client or customer. It also means the consultant has an awareness of the formal organizational structure and the impact of informal organizational structures as well. Organizational awareness involves recognition of all working relationships and understanding the quality of the relationship.

During the presentation, Ray asked for and got significant discussion among the members present. Ray concluded his remarks by reviewing the value of having and using the core competencies that were presented. The values include:

- They provide a hierarchical organization of the consulting knowledgebase (taxonomy)

- They provide a framework for self-evaluation

- They help identify professional development needs

- They provide a framework for assessing competition and for providing differentiation from competition

Ray Giske, principal Giske Consulting Group, Inc. is a 10 year member of ICCA. He has served both as Vice-President and President of the Minnesota Chapter and is currently serving a two-year term as a Director on the National Board of Directors. Giske Consulting Group, Inc. may be reached at [rgiske@gcginc.us](mailto:rgiske@gcginc.us)

*The idea for this project grew out a discussion held at a meeting of the ICCA National Board of Directors*

### September Ponderable:

*“ There is no such thing as Business Ethics ”*

*- John Maxwell*

Minnesota Chapter  
www.icca-mn.org • 612-245-1100



5930 N. Oakview Lane  
Plymouth, MN 55442

## Newsletter Position Open

*Your Minnesota chapter has a vacancy for Newsletter Editor. Please step up to the plate and volunteer to perform a valuable and much appreciated service to our consultant community. Countless rewards await some wordsmith.*

*-- JR, (an interim) Editors*

## THE OUTSIDER

BY KARL HELLA

This space will be unfamiliar to those of you receiving only the electronic version of the newsletter. Bob Newman was not generating a page for mailing labels so when he sent me the file, I added this page, printed paper copies and mailed those copies to people holding firm to the 20th century. Rather than leave the page blank, I decided to ramble about whatever struck a chord that month.

This month it is the weather. I don't like temperatures much above 80 so this has been a pleasant summer for me. And the grass has looked good even though there wasn't enough rain to require frequent mowing. What more could you want? Of course the resort industry has a different opinion!

A future topic might be the effects of outsourcing. Are you following the series in the StarTribune? If you have any ideas about that, let me know.

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