



What I Learned:

Growing From a One Man Band to the Whole Darn Orchestra

“The nice thing about being your own boss is that you can work any number of hours a day you want – as long as they add up to 24.” (Unknown)

GROWING A BUSINESS IS NOT EASY – TRUST ME, we learned it the hard way. Our growth was not entirely by design. However, we’ve been fortunate to work with many great people—customers, colleagues, staff, government, First Nations and community groups who have all been instrumental in our achievements thus far.

Our firm, the Strategic Group, grew from a single proprietor (without a clue) in 2001 to a two-person partnership in 2002 (now able to actually perform a tight-chain traverse on its own!). We now have a current staff of over 100 with professionals from across the resource management spectrum.

Like many business ventures, Strategic’s entry into the marketplace was born of necessity. A casualty of corporate restructuring in 2001, I was only three years out of BCIT and, though I was well-trained by my previous employer, was worried I may not have enough skills or experience to offer prospective clients what they needed. As it turns out, what clients needed was someone who was good-natured, reliable, communicative, hard-working and solution-focused.

Lesson learned? Don’t underestimate yourself.

As our members know, delivering our professional products takes a lot of hard work in all types of terrain and weather. There are significant time and cost sensitivities that must be managed for—and it is nearly impossible to do it all yourself. You need to be a team player, either within your organization or through an array of colleagues and clients, and you must be able to identify and leverage the strengths that others possess.

The decision to hire personnel should never be taken lightly, but it is often the single most important aspect of growing a company.

We have learned that ‘fit’ is the most important component of any employment relationship and we work to ensure that the mutual expectations of both the company and the employee are identified and discussed before hiring.

I was fortunate to be able to partner with two valued friends and respected colleagues to establish our company and pursue business opportunities which appealed to our diverse, yet complementary, skills and interests. Over the last eight years, we have recruited and developed an incredibly experienced and talented staff that practises daily at a level far beyond my abilities.

Lesson learned? If you are going to hire...surround yourself with people who are better than you. You will be amazed at how it can elevate the performance of you and your organization.

Business, like nature, is constantly evolving. We are not only subject to changes in the supply and demand of our services, but the very nature and value of the services themselves. We are all aware of changes in the marketplace. Now consider legislative changes, the professional practice environment, implementation of professional reliance (and its accompanying accountability), new technologies, etc. When you take it all into account, it can be very challenging to develop a business operating plan which persists over time.

We have learned that our key to success is adaptability throughout our organization. As Charles Darwin once said, “It is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent that survives. It is the one that is the most adaptable to change.”

We promote change by continuously investing in our personnel, training, equipment and business development to deliver our services to



a variety of customers in different sectors and locations. This investment allows us to employ the best people, year-round, and deliver excellent value (year over year) for our customers.

Lesson learned? Embrace change. It is inevitable and you can spend a lot of time and energy fighting it—or you can learn to use it to your advantage.

In any business, inventory control is critical. It is important to take stock in the true wealth of resources we have. Not only our environment, but the people we work with each day. As a profession, and the businesses which work within



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the profession, we are fortunate to have educated, skilled people who toil in difficult conditions, often far from home. Why do we do it? It's probably fair to say it's not for the money. Or the glory. So it must be because we love it. There's something about forestry that gets under your skin and stays with you for your entire career.

Perhaps the most rewarding thing about being an owner and manager of a company is getting to choose what you do, who you do it with and who you do it for. There are many important elements to running a business and my partners and I participate primarily in

those areas that we enjoy the most. The way I see it, if I'm going to work 70 hours a week over a 40 year career, then I'd better love what I do. For me, that means working with people (staff, clients, colleagues and stakeholders) to find solutions to the challenges we face each day. **Lesson learned? *Have fun. Let your passion guide you because when you truly love what you do, you will be wildly successful.***

While this article was written in the context of Strategic's business growth, professionals can use these lessons in managing the growth of own

careers. The same principles apply and can serve to guide you throughout your own development.

As a disclaimer, these lessons are a reflection of our experiences and your results may vary. Do not try this at home and always, always, always wear appropriate protective equipment. 🌲

Jonathan Lok, RFT, is one of three managing partners at the Strategic Group. The firm provides professional services, administration and project management in forestry, engineering, biology, timber cruising, GIS, recreation, and wildfire management and suppression from its offices in Campbell River, Port McNeill and Nanaimo.