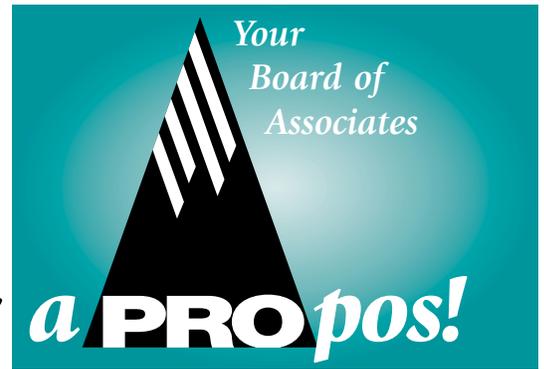


PRESIDENT'S RESOURCE ORGANIZATION

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PRO's Prose

by Ray Silverstein, Founder and President

Who says you can't mix business and friendship?

PRO exists to be a good friend to small business owners. PRO offers entrepreneurs a place to forge relationships not unlike friendship—to exchange ideas, share problems and explore solutions.



As the founder of PRO and a fellow small-business owner, I also work to befriend small business as a whole. And there is plenty of work to be done!

This spring, PRO helped launch The Institute for Small Business Success, a not-for-profit organization designed to provide information and training to area small businesses and to create scholarships in entrepreneurship and business at local colleges. Our first seminar series kicked off in May and continues through November.

I'm also teaching a class at College of Lake County's Small Business Development Center on creating business plans and hiring winners. In addition, this fall I will be playing The Advisory Board Game with the GLMV Chamber of Commerce, the Deerfield/Bannockburn and Northbrook Chambers, and Lake County's Women in Management group.

But supporting you and your fellow PRO members remains my priority. As we enter the final quarter of the year 2001, I urge you to take advantage of everything PRO and I have to offer.

Or as James Taylor once sang, "Ain't it good to know you got a friend?"

Ray

How To Keep Your Small Business Healthy

When you think about it, the term "small business" is a big misnomer. After all, small businesses represent 99% of all U.S. employers. Small businesses provide jobs for more than 50% of the private sector workforce and actually create about 75% of all new job openings. In other words, small business is essential to the U.S. economy—and therefore, the world's.

But, individually, small businesses remain very vulnerable. More than a third of all small businesses close within their first two years and a full 50% go out of business before celebrating their fourth anniversary.

Even established small businesses can never rest on their laurels, buffeted by changing market conditions and shifting economic forces. How do you ensure that your business stays healthy? By giving it a periodic "physical," that's how!

This means stepping back from day-to-day operations and looking at your business as if from afar. It means revisiting your business plan, your marketing plan and your financials to see if you're meeting your long-term goals. It means not always working *IN* your business, but creating time to work *ON* your business.

So, close that file and let voicemail pick up your calls for awhile. Stop thinking about your problem of the moment. Put on your visionary hat and start thinking big thoughts. You can begin by asking yourself questions like these:

- How do this year's revenues compare to last years? How do you account for the change...or lack of change? What impact does this have on gross margin?
- Do you have a marketing plan with goals? Are you following it? If not, why not? If so, is it yielding measurable results?
- How is employee morale? If your people are happy, why? If morale is poor, identify the culprit(s)—long hours? Lopsided workloads? Convolved procedures? How can you fix it? People leave managers...not companies.
- What new products or services did you introduce this year? Did you do a good job of supporting their launch? Is there anything you could have done better? Do you need to reinvent your business?
- Are your sales people as motivated as they were back in January?
- What is your single greatest challenge right now? Are you doing everything you can to address it? Have you left any resources—including PRO—untapped?
- How's your own health? Are you plagued by stress-related headaches or insomnia? Is it time to make some changes?
- Identify your company's greatest strengths and weaknesses. How can you capitalize on your strong points and shore up your weak spots?

continued...

Takes notes, jot down solutions, determine where more research or thought is needed. And don't neglect to turn to resources like these for support, assistance and fresh ideas:

1. PRO Meetings – Air your concerns and questions at PRO. Often, fellow members have been there, done that...and found viable solutions.
2. Attend a conference or seminar – It's a great way to focus on an ongoing problem and pick up new ideas.
3. Read a good book – Business books not only offer good information and suggestions, but trigger all kinds of creative thought. Need a recommendation? Try *First, Break All The Rules* by Marcus Buckingham, *Selling the Invisible* by Harry Beckwith or *Relationship Selling* by Jim Cathcart.

By giving your business ongoing check-ups, you can make sure your firm stays in the black of health!

PRO chatter...

No one can say PRO members aren't productive! Congratulations to **Kati Spaniak** on the birth of her daughter Lisa Barbara, and to **Sally Schumann** on the birth of her daughter Grace Kathleen. Speaking of proud parents, a tip of the mortarboard to **Jody Haas** and **Ross Wolfson**, whose son graduated last June from Kansas University, and also to **Ed Bunzol**, whose son recently graduated from the University of Iowa. Not only is PRO growing, but we're getting stronger, too...**Casey Swistun** successfully completed the Iron Man Triathlon this summer, winning our universal admiration. And yes, we're moving up! We're justifiably proud of member **Mitchell Roth**, who made the Chicago Law Bulletin's list of "40 under 40" attorneys to watch. Final food for thought: **Ray Silverstein** was recently appointed to the board of Darifair Foods, Inc.

Do You Know A Potential PRO Franchisee?

There are many advantages to owning a PRO franchise, including flexibility...autonomy...and the continual opportunity to talk business with stimulating and successful entrepreneurs. And, of course, PRO facilitators are always exposed to exciting new ideas!

Perhaps you know someone who might make an excellent PRO franchisee. The ideal candidate fits the following profile:

- Has successful management experience
- Enjoys mentoring and working with people
- Demonstrates excellent communication skills
- Is creative, with good problem-solving skills
- Has a strong desire to be his or her own boss
- Is enthusiastic, and loves talking/thinking about business
- Is committed to ethical business practices

If you know someone who fits this description and is interested in being his or her own boss, please tell them about PRO, or ask Ray to give them a call.

PROfile

ILYA TALMAN, ROY TALMAN & ASSOCIATES



Ilya Talman is the president and founder of Roy Talman & Associates, a recruiting firm that specializes in information technology and moves as swiftly as the industry it serves. "Technology is evolving so quickly," says Talman, "that 50% of our technical

knowledge becomes obsolete within 18 months." Originally a programmer, Talman works hard to keep pace with technology and provides extensive training to his staff to ensure that they are up to speed.

"Our depth of knowledge is our competitive edge," admits Talman. "Because we understand technology and its uses, we can have in-depth interviews with both client companies and applicants. It ensures our clients needs are met and our applicants' skills appreciated.

Talman's client list reads like Who's Who in the IT marketplace. In addition, his firm receives over 1,000 resumes per week from eager candidates. As a rule, his company considers 15-20 applicants for every candidate that is actually presented to a client company. These positions range from systems analyst to web manager to chief technology officer.

Talman feels his PRO membership has been very beneficial to his company. He remarks, "Meeting every month with people whose opinions I have grown to value and hearing how they deal with their day-to-day battles helps me deal with my business issues. The advice I get from PRO members is usually right on target. And Ray Silverstein's input is extremely valuable because his various experiences allow him to make a difference."

Take Advantage of Our Website, www.propres.com

If you haven't visited our website in awhile, it's time to check in! www.propres.com offers a number of services, including access to the PRO events calendar, the results of member surveys, our newsletter archive and Members Only arena. It's like having access to a PRO meeting—24 hours a day!

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Ray Silverstein.....President and Founder

