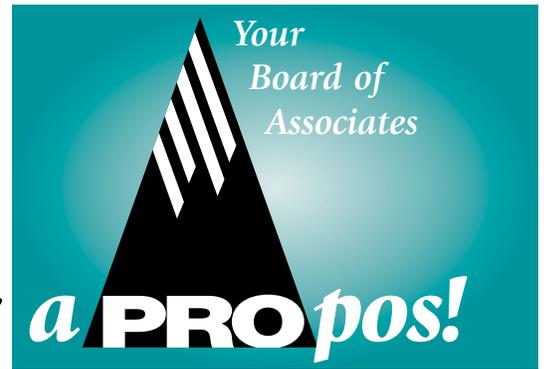
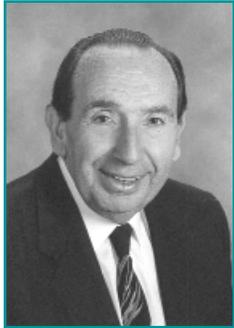


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PRO's Prose

by Ray Silverstein,
Founder and President

Time out!

As the leader of a small business, your time is valuable. Every day,

consciously or not, you choose how you will spend those 14-karat minutes and hours.

At PRO, one of our priorities is to keep you focused on your goals and your role, so you can make the most of your valuable time.

Do you allow yourself to fuss over minute operational details? Can a single phone call derail your entire day? Does the bulk of your to-do list remain chronically untouched?

If so, it's time for a time out. Determine what issues are truly worthy of your attention, and what's better delegated to someone else. Don't do well what you shouldn't do at all.

Every so often, prospective members confide that they're worried they "won't have the time."

Won't have the time to focus on their company's future? To create viable strategies for long term growth? To find solutions to pressing problems?

Such individuals are not truly interested in taking their companies to the next level. A monthly PRO meeting takes less time than a single round of golf, yet offers benefits that will long outlast the fleeting thrill of a perfect birdie.

More than 100 years ago, British statesman Charles Buxton made this timely observation:

"You will never find time for anything. If you want time, you need to make it."

Ray

*"Waiting for the bus is a bad idea
if you turn out to be the bus driver."*

— Michael M. Butler

Measuring Risk— Don't be a "Seymour!"

Being in business means taking risks. As a business owner, your job is to measure risk. That means reviewing possible actions and asking questions such as: what is the probability of success? Is this a risk I can afford to take?

When you first started your business, you willingly embraced some sizable risks. The longer you are in business, the more risk-adverse you become. When you started you had less to lose. Along with success comes a natural inclination to eliminate risk.

Don't give in to it! That task belongs to your attorney and accountant—skilled technicians who are trained to eliminate risk. When you start thinking like they do, your business will decline.

To keep growing, keep your edge. Continue to take risks. Evaluate them intelligently, but don't turn the evaluation process into a reason for stalling.

You cannot obtain all the data needed to make a foolproof decision. You cannot delay taking action because you want to "see more" facts. In other words, don't be a "Seymour!"

Instead, follow the advice of legendary business expert Tom Peters: "Ready, fire, aim!"

Okay, that's an overstatement. The point is, you don't want to "get ready...aim...check your sites...check the wind...re-aim...check the elevation...and fire."

Why? Because by the time you finally squeeze the trigger, your target will be long gone.

One of the advantages of small business is flexibility. One of the disadvantages of small business is flexibility. Take charge of your flexibility—and accept that risk is part of growing a business.



**Hit the
Links,
with
PRO!**

Out of the boardroom... onto the green! PRO-Recreation is coming soon, offering members a new, fun way to network in a recreational setting. Have some ideas? Interested in participating? We want your feedback!

Happe Together in Sacramento

Meet PRO Facilitators Ron and Dave Happe

At PRO, we like to think of ourselves as one big, happy family.

That's particularly true in Sacramento, where brothers Ronald and David Happe—our new franchisees—are building PRO boards at the speed of light.

For nearly thirty years, this dynamic duo has done business in Northern California and Nevada. One reason they make excellent PRO facilitators is because they are themselves entrepreneurs. Over the years, they have started...purchased...grown...and sold a number of successful businesses—including one that helped individuals become entrepreneurs themselves.

In January, Ron and Dave kicked off their new enterprise with Executive Briefings. They held their first PRO meetings in February.

"We already have close to 20 members," says Ron, "and there's a great deal of interest."

What's the secret? In addition to their expertise, they have strong relationships throughout the Sacramento business community.

"We were fortunate to receive the enthusiastic sponsorship of William Martin, President and CEO, of The Bank of Sacramento, located at 1750 Howe Ave, Ste. 100 in Sacramento," said David. "We have been acquainted and done business with Bill for nearly 25 years. Bill started The Bank of Sacramento about 5 years

ago, he is a very successful entrepreneur in his own right. Because Bill knows and understands the challenges and concerns of the small business person, The Bank of Sacramento has become a successful and respected regional bank among the small business community. He is extremely interested in supplying any opportunity he can to his customers and the business community that will help improve their chances of success in these challenging times. Ron and I greatly appreciate Bill's support and endorsement of our PRO Advisory Boards," he added.

And they are already receiving rave reviews from their new members. Lance Soares of ABCO Services—a rental company with 30 employees—says he values the opportunity to share ideas with fellow business owners.

Chris Upton, owner of Custom Products Manufacturing/Roll-Out Shelves in Antelope, CA, appreciates the fact that fellow members face the same problems and issues that she does. Some of them, she notes, have solutions to problems she has yet to face.

Ron and Dave have firsthand knowledge of many of the issues facing entrepreneurs. Since 1996, they have acted as consultants for small and medium size companies. Their specialties include marketing, operations, finance, and valuation. They also provide assistance in growth through acquisition and developing exit strategies.

For more information about Sacramento's PRO network, call Ron or Dave at 916-966-7008.

PROG-R-O-W-S

The PRO network is expanding! We are pleased to announce the launch of new franchises in Sacramento and Phoenix.



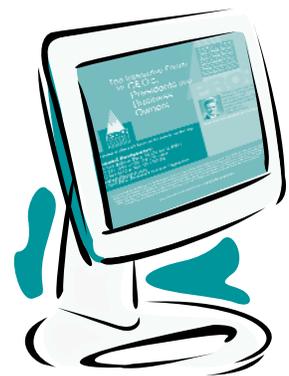
These join existing PRO organizations in Chicagoland, Denver, Long Island, and Orange County, CA...and offer members expanded networking opportunities.

If you know of anyone who may be interested in becoming a franchisee, please contact Ray Silverstein.

Are You Using Your Cyber-PRO Resources?

We are expanding our website, www.propres.com, to be of greater value. Log on now, and you'll find some key questions to ask prospective job candidates.

In addition, feel free to forward the PRO e-newsletter to your associates and friends. It's a great tool for staying in touch! If you have topics you'd like us to address in future issues, email info@propres.com



PROfile

BILL FOSTER, CEO, TOWN AND COUNTRY INDUSTRIES



"I'd cut a lot of corners before I'd give up PRO," says Bill Foster, CEO of Town and Country Industries, a commercial print shop in Munster, Indiana.

Bill—a PRO member for more than a decade—knows how to focus on growth. When Bill joined Town and Country as Advertising Manager in 1976, the

company produced free circulation newspapers, with a separate printing division consisting of one man and one press.

Today Town & Country no longer produces newspapers, but the Printing Division has evolved into a 60 employee, eight press, profitable niche business.

Town & Country produces business supplies and marketing tools to the home-based reps of multi-level marketing and direct selling companies.

It all started with one frantic phone call from a new Mary Kay rep who needed labels, business cards, and a rubber stamp...ASAP.

Bill provided them. More importantly, he recognized the opportunity and positioned his company as the one-stop source for direct sales organizations. Today, his firm processes 500 business card orders a day.

Bill took over managing the business in 1991, then purchased it in 1997.

"Ray Silverstein was instrumental in making that deal happen," says Bill. "He hooked me up with a quality CPA firm and helped structure the initial offering."

Bill says PRO spurred him to build better customer relationships and utilize e-marketing strategies. He values the give-and-take of ideas and the honest feedback.

"The knowledge I get from PRO," says Bill, "is worth hundreds of thousands of dollars."

PROchatter...

PRO athletes are in league of their own! **Ross Wolfson** is now Director of Player Personnel of his softball league. "Downhill racer" **Scott Fohrman** recently powdered his cheeks. **Gary Pollack** is aglow after his youngest son's Bar Mitzvah...and his tennis victory over **Ray Silverstein**. (It was nearly as arduous as Jonathon's education.) **Ralph Vatalaro** has emerged as PRO's most avid skier and sailor, while **Casey Swistun** reigns as all-time tri-athlete. Congratulations to **Jonathon Rohde** for winning a different triathlon—graduation from the Bank of Montreal's grueling in-house MBA program. **Ed Bunzol** beats the Bears; his championship tailgate parties outshine the game. An amateur chef, Ed would salivate over publisher **Bob Weeks'** new magazine for chefs. On another note, we are pleased to report **Jody Haas** is feeling much better. (Stay away from those large weights, Jodi!) We also wish a speedy recover to **Barbara Flom**, following her recent surgery, as well as Ed Bunzol's wife.



Our Sponsors Are Real PROs!

A warm thank you to our sponsors, including:

- * Longtime supporter Harris Bank
- * Barbara Flom of Goldberg, Kohn, Bell, Black Rosenbloom and Mortitz, Ltd.
- * ...and our newest sponsor, Frank Reid of Lincoln Financial Advisors Corp.

We applaud your vision and appreciate your support of the small business community!

Don't Wait to Plan Your Estate

By Frank C. Reid

In conjunction with Lincoln Financial Advisors, a registered investment advisor

Making excuses to delay estate planning is easy. In fact, maybe you've already thought: "I'll worry about it when I'm older." Or "My estate is too small to be affected." Or even, "I don't know what I'm going to do with my assets yet." However, if you are unprepared when incapacity or death strikes, your family's financial future may not be protected.

While there is no designated age for beginning to plan your estate, waiting too long may rob your beneficiaries of much of their inheritance. That's why it's important to take the time *now*—before you need an estate plan.

Start with the Basics

What if you were to die intestate—that is, without a will? As the foundation of your estate plan, a will provides for distribution of your assets, names a guardian for your minor children, and appoints an executor or personal representative to see that your wishes are carried out. If you die without a will, a court will make these decisions for you. Consequently, your estate may not be distributed as you would have wished. Failing to make a will means you relinquish control over what will happen to your assets—and perhaps your family's financial status—upon your death.

Minimize Estate-tax Consequences

It goes without saying that you don't want a large portion of your assets to go to the government in the form of estate taxes. But that's what may happen if you don't plan ahead. You may already know that, under the tax law's marital deduction, you can generally transfer all of your assets—regardless of the amount—to your spouse estate-tax free. So it may sound as if the government has already done some estate planning for you. But don't relax just yet.

When your spouse dies, any remaining property will be included in your spouse's estate. If the total exceeds the credit exclusion—\$1.5 million in 2004 and 2005, rising in 2006 in scheduled steps for several years before it returns to \$1 million in 2011—taxes on your spouse's estate could take a substantial part of the inheritance your children or other heirs would receive.

One way to minimize the estate taxes your beneficiaries will have to pay is to establish a trust that will distribute income to your spouse during his or her lifetime while sheltering assets for future heirs. Trusts can take many different forms, so consult with a professional financial advisor before making any decisions.

Don't Neglect Business Succession Planning

If you own a business, what would happen to it if you were to die unexpectedly? Without proper planning, part or all of your business might have to be sold to pay estate taxes. In addition, your business could suffer unless a competent manager succeeds you and a well-structured plan for ownership transfer is in place. There are many methods you can use to accomplish these goals, including partnerships,

buy-sell agreements, and stock transfers. Once you've developed a plan, lifetime gifts, trusts, and life insurance all may be used to ensure that your family remains financially stable.

Leave a Paper Trail

An estate plan isn't very useful if no one in your family knows what it is, so be sure to maintain clear records. Make a list of your assets, including securities, retirement plan accounts, savings accounts, real estate, life insurance policies, and so on, along with information to identify and locate the accounts. Make a second list of your liabilities, including loans, mortgages, and credit card obligations.

Personal information, such as your Social Security number, birth certificate, divorce decree, and similar documents, should be stored in a secure and accessible place. Include cemetery plot records and detailed funeral instructions. List the names, addresses, and phone numbers of your attorney, accountant, executor, and trustee, if applicable.

By letting your family know where your important records are kept, you'll help to ensure the timely transfer of your assets to your heirs.

The consequences of waiting too long to plan your estate can be financially and emotionally devastating for your family. If you haven't begun to plan your estate, a professional financial planner can help you get started and recommend strategies to help achieve your particular planning objectives.

This information should not be construed as legal or tax advice. You may want to consult a tax advisor regarding this information as it relates to your personal circumstances.



Frank C. Reid has more than 20 years of strategic financial planning and business consulting experience. He holds a B.S. from Yale University and M.B.A. from The University of Chicago. Frank is a registered representative and investment advisor representative of Lincoln Financial Advisors Corp., 8755 W. Higgins Road, Chicago, IL 60631, 773-867-3644, offering insurance through Lincoln affiliates and other fine companies.

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