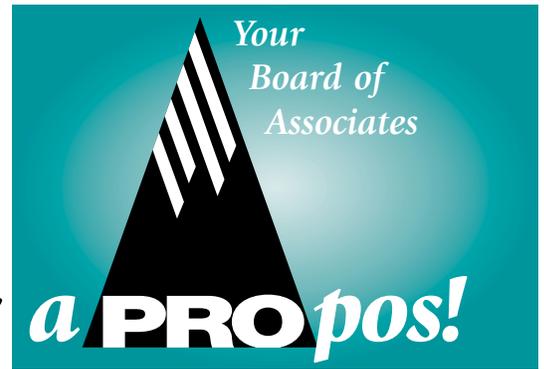


PRESIDENT'S RESOURCE ORGANIZATION

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Spring, 2001

PRO's Prose

by Ray Silverstein, Founder and President

Song satirist Tom Lehrer sings a song called "Be Prepared." Some of the words are "Be prepared. That's the Boy Scouts' marching song, be prepared as in life you go along..."



PRO members are not Boy Scouts, but things are changing and PRO members indeed should be prepared. The economy is a question mark...the stock market and high tech stocks have decreased in value...large companies are announcing layoffs daily. The consumer confidence level has slipped. The economy—as some PRO members have stated—may be in a "white out." That means now is the time to create contingency plans, if you haven't already.

Many business leaders have not experienced the responsibility of guiding their companies through periods of level or decreasing sales. Yet a beneficial sales environment can mask issues and internal problems. Now is the time to define the "root problems" in your business and to create solutions. It is not the time to treat the symptoms with band-aids! Now is the time to make those hard decisions, have action plans in place, and be ready to implement them if warranted.

But there is a silver lining. Now is a time of opportunity. Quality people are available, and you may be able to upgrade your resources. Now is an excellent time to improve your internal capabilities—from asset allocation to sales and service.

PRO members are there to help you. PRO members are a community. You will get your best return from PRO and your PRO group by being open, expressing your concerns, taking the temperature of your business and, if necessary, creating the atmosphere of accountability.

Ray

Introducing the Institute for Small Business Success

The Institute for Small Business Success is a not-for-profit organization designed to help small business owners enhance their competencies through ongoing education.

The newly-formed Institute—which names PRO among its sponsors—will support the development of the small business owner through seminars, publications, educational materials and surveys. In addition, it will create and award college scholarships to minorities in entrepreneurship and business students attending local colleges.

PRO members may be interested in attending part or all of the Institute's 2001 seminar series, which will be presented in six parts as follows:

Thursday, May 10 – Raising Money to Respond to Growth

Dale Burton, Sr. VP, Devon Bank; Ben Buettell, Partner, Houlihan Lokey Howard and Zukin Inc.; Stephen Dyer, Principal, Much Shelist Freed Deneberg Ament & Rubinstein, PC; and Lawrence A. Sherman, Chairman, Puritan Finance Corp.

Wednesday, May 23 – Make the Web Work Better for Your Company

Kati Spaniak, President, Indico Bellum

Thursday, June 28 – Upgrade Your Sales Force and Skills in 30 Days or Less

Jody Williamson, President, Total Selling Solutions

Thursday, September 13 – Succession Planning and Family Business Ownership

Richard Block, Sr. VP, Trust Officer, Devon Bank; Jeffrey Miller, Organizational Consultant, RSM McGladrey; Neil Weinberg, Principal, Much Shelist Freed Deneberg Ament & Rubinstein PC; and Ray Silverstein, President, PRO

Wednesday, October 10 – Prescriptions for Managing Health Insurance Costs

Alan Wishner, President, Flexible Benefit Service Corp.

Wednesday, November 14 – What's Your Business Worth When It's Time to Leave?

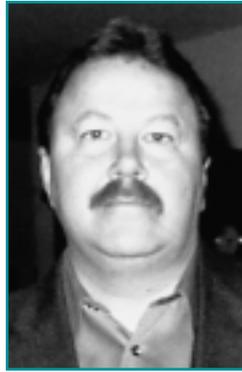
Ben Buettell, Partner, Houlihan Lokey Howard & Zukin Inc.; Stephen Dyer, Principal, Much Shelist Freed Deneberg Ament & Rubinstein, PC; Jerome Lipman, Principal, Jerome H. Lipman & Co.; Robert Moore, Managing Director, RSM McGladrey; Ray Silverstein, President, PRO

Each program will be held from 8:30-10:30 a.m. (Power Networking breakfast begins at 7:30) at Mission Hills Country Club, 1677 Mission Hills Road West, Northbrook.

If you are interested in attending a seminar or would like more information about the Institute for Small Business, call (312) 337-3658.

PROfile

**KEVEN HESS,
MILMOUR PRODUCTS**



Kevin Hess loves impulsive people. As the President of Milmour Products Inc., a Skokie-based premium incentive company, he along with Milmour's CEO (and fellow PRO member) Scott Fohrman, pride themselves on being able to make grocery shoppers the types of offers they just can't refuse.

"A premium giveaway incentive is something offered to the consumer in exchange for taking a specific action in a specific time frame relative to our client's brand," Hess explains.

Some of America's largest food pre-packagers turn to Milmour, including Kraft, Pillsbury and Keebler. Hess and his expert staff fully develop the value-added giveaway from a pure concept to the actual gift and the follow up logistical support that will be needed to implement their idea.

"Scott and I have built a business together that neither of us could have built on our own. The three different giveaways we create are in-pack, on-pack, and near-pack," says Hess.

To understand the logistical issues that must be solved consider this: the Pillsbury Dough Boy Cookie Cutter offer required the Milmour staff to figure out how five million individual cookie cutters would be placed into bags of Pillsbury Flour without disrupting Pillsbury's production line.

Milmour was founded 1956 and Hess accepted a sales position in 1989. At the time, there were only four employees. In little more than a decade, the company has grown to sixteen people and annual sales of approximately \$10 million. Along the way, Hess discovered that life at the top could be lonely, especially when it came to human resource issues.

"I find my membership in PRO to be very helpful. I always want to be fair, equitable and work within the law when I make human resource decisions. Often, the advice I receive from PRO members confirms what I know in my heart. Other times they offer me a completely different point of view, which is of even greater value. Either way it helps me to move the process forward with confidence."

Human resource issues are likely to stay on Hess' front burner. Milmour is a leader in an industry that continues to grow.

"Increasingly, in order to differentiate themselves from the competition, brand builders are looking for alternative ways to promote their products. Premium based promotional offers are a value-added means of meeting that objective."

To help meet his own objectives, it is likely that Hess will continue to put a premium on his PRO membership. He has been a member long enough to know that good advice is a part of the PRO package.

PROchatter...

PRO members continue their busy ways. **Casey Swistun** of Swistun, Inc. traveled to Poland to join in the 24th reunion of his former dance group. In addition, Casey has just celebrated 15 years in business...a great accomplishment for a person who came to the U.S. without speaking English! Casey stays 'on the run' by once again participating in the Chicago Marathon as well as a half iron man triathlon. **Jody Haas** and **Ross Wolfson** of RTA have recently moved into a new home. Jody has been nominated for Working Women's Business Person of the Year! Ross is also active in their business, generating interactive telephone sales leads. Congratulations to **Jeff Miller** of Miller Ace Industrial Centers on the birth of his third child, a baby boy. Not to be out done, his sister **Sally Schumann**, also of Miller Ace Industrial Centers, is expecting her first. You might say their company is first in production! **Kati Spaniak** of Indico Bellum is also expecting her first child...**Rob Alesick** of C.S.I. Technologies has engineered a new daughter...and **Howard Schneider** of Huron Paper Stock is a proud grandfather. (Is there something in the water?) Speaking of families, **Ralph Samuel** of MLP Seating celebrated his daughter's graduation from Harvard University's School of Education; **Alan Sklar** of Gleason, Sklar, Sawyers & Cumpata gave away his daughter in marriage. Meanwhile, **Dick Daniels** of Audits International moved to new offices and **Joe Pomis** traveled all the way to Las Vegas to speak at his industry convention. Talk about high profile: **Matt Zell** of Prometheus Network Systems and his father Sam were interviewed in *Forbes* magazine, and **Ilya Talman** of Roy Talman and Associates was recently quoted in the *Wall Street Journal*. The prolific **Ray Silverstein** has also been busy providing sound bytes to the *Wall Street Journal*, *Inc. Magazine*, *Entrepreneur* and *Crain's Chicago Business*. He is also teaching a class, "How to Create a Business Plan," for College of Lake County's Adult Education program. Ray has also helped give birth to Propulus, L.L.C. Venture Service Providers, a consortium of four leading service providers in the Chicago metropolitan area. It's been a most productive season!

It's aPROpos! is a publication of PRO—President's Resource Organization, 100 East Bellevue, Chicago, Illinois 60611. It is published periodically and distributed free-of-charge to its membership. Non-members can obtain free copies by writing or calling the PRO office (312) 337-3658.



Ray SilversteinPresident and Founder

Take Advantage of Our Partners in Progress

As you know, when you belong to PRO, you are not alone. Not only do you have the support and input of your fellow PRO members, you also have access to expert outside resources, in the form of PRO's Partners in Progress.

Our Partners in Progress sponsor PRO activities and initiatives. In addition, they provide members with access to additional professional resources specifically geared to the small business owner. Our Partners in Progress are:

- Resource Technology Associates, Inc. (technology consultants)
- Goldberg and Kohn (attorneys)
- McGladrey and Pullen (CPA firm)
- Harris Trust and Savings Bank

Our Partners in Progress are eager to make your acquaintance. Be sure to look for their representatives at PRO sponsored events.

PRO Partner in Progress, Harris Bank, Leads Chicagoland Small Business into B2B eCommerce

Want to grow your business by tapping the Internet? For many small business owners, the answer is a resounding "yes." And now, a new strategic alliance between Harris Bank and eScout.comSM makes Internet commerce accessible, affordable, and secure.

Through the alliance, Harris Bank will be providing small businesses access to the fastest growing business-to-business (B2B) trading marketplace in North America. B2B exchanges are revolutionizing the way business is done by using the Internet to improve efficiency in supplier networks. This includes the capability to buy and sell goods, as well as providing access to e-commerce and e-business solutions.

Unlike many other B2B networks, eScout is not new to the e-commerce arena.

"They have been up and running for over a year and continue to grow rapidly", noted Harris Bank's Charles Piermarini, EVP, e-Business. "The company has a strong management team experienced in providing financial services to independent businesses."

eScout members are able to participate in the new economy by buying online, efficiently and at preferred prices on more than 200,000 items. The discounts are possible because eScout aggregates the purchasing activity of its members, enabling each member to take advantage of pricing that normally is only available to much larger companies. Some of the many suppliers in the network

include Boise Cascade Office Products, Gateway Computers and Sprint.

Members don't need to worry about the risks of buying online, which result from disclosing a credit card number. While members can charge their purchase to a credit card if they choose, they can also simply and automatically debit their checking account—no account numbers need be disclosed to the seller—meaning members enjoy a secure payment process for ease and safety.

In addition, members can access an electronic marketplace by selling to other companies in the network. This includes The Global Trading Web, the fastest growing electronic marketplace in the world, as a source for buyers of their goods and services. Harris Bank and eScout's payment security provides both buyers and sellers access to a robust payment system they can trust.

But eScout is more than just a forum for buying and selling. It also provides business owners access to other powerful online services, including:

- eScout SolutionsSM – A growing suite of e-business applications including logistics, human resources, and other business infrastructure demands. Here, members can tackle everyday business obstacles with solutions that allow them to reduce paperwork, streamline processes, and save time.
- eScout InsightSM – A resource for business news, trends, and events for a wide range of professionals. Members enjoy thought-provoking features on issues effecting their industry.
- eScout UniversitySM – For web-based training and member orientation programs.

The Harris Bank eScout alliance results in a big win for small businesses, which will gain easier access, lower costs and greater security for their B2B transactions.

"eScout is dedicated to empowering independent businesses by creating the tools they need to thrive. The soul of the economy lies in its community-based banks and businesses. We have created an e-business and e-commerce network that gives every independent business the commerce, sourcing, marketing, and business processing power of a Fortune 100 company, while preserving the special character and trust in our communities." states Sandy Kemper, founder and CEO of eScout.

Businesses can sign-up today by phone by calling 1-888-726-8848 or online at www.escout.com, mentioning Harris Bank as their sponsoring bank. A representative of Member Services will contact the new member to obtain additional information.

Have You Played The Advisory Board Game?

Business is not a game, for certain. But that doesn't mean you can't have fun brainstorming new ways to make your business more successful. That's the thinking behind The Advisory Board Game.

Developed by Ray Silverstein, this innovative brainstorming tool is a genuine board game. And while the game is enjoyable to play, the objective is quite serious: to help small business owners find viable solutions to their greatest challenges.

How do you play? First, you sign up for one of the scheduled game sessions. (It takes about an hour and a half to play.) Then, get ready to relax and enjoy...prepare to hear some wonderful ideas...and do some of your best brainstorming ever.

You and your peers form a single team as you make your way around the colorful game board, navigating obstacles on your way "to the top." Along the way, you'll confront the same types of dilemmas you face in your everyday business life. Like...how do you find qualified employees? What can you do about rising insurance costs? How do you form an intelligent succession plan?

Together, you'll brainstorm dozens of valuable ideas on the subjects of marketing, sales, finance, compensation, performance and succession planning. With a little luck, you'll bypass the frightening Cave of Confusion, as well as the murky depths of Insolvency Swamp.

The game, says Ray—who acts as facilitator—is an idea and profit generator.

"Brainstorming sessions work best when participants are relaxed. That's the point of the game board format. You arrive at the session as a 'player'—and let's face it, playing is fun. You can't help but enjoy yourself—and that's when you open the door to all kinds of breakthrough thinking."



The Advisory Board Game has received positive feedback from many of the PRO members who have had the chance to play. In addition, it is sparking interest throughout the small business community. Ray has been asked to present the program to local Chambers of Commerce, as well as students enrolled in area small business programs. Upcoming sessions include:

- College of Lake County's Small Business Program – May 3, 2001
- Mount Prospect Chamber of Commerce – May 24, 2001
- Green Oaks, Libertyville, Mundelein, Vernon Hills (GLMV) Chamber of Commerce – August 21, 2001

General sessions may also be offered, and PRO members are encouraged to invite their small business clients. It's a terrific, no-cost way to create added value for your small business clients—and to show them that you care about their success. PRO can even provide you with a sample invitation letter that you can easily customize. For more information, contact Ray.