

INSIDE BUSINESS

Entrepreneurial Excellence Awards 2009

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For 13 years, The Moore Group has provided innovative change management and implementation solutions through software training, development and program management for defense, federal and commercial clients.

When did you start the business and what gave you the idea for it?

In 1996, a former client, Chesapeake General Hospital, contacted me to help the staff run the software-training portion of their desktop implementation. Sentara Health System then followed suit with a project requiring a quick turnaround. It was these first "we need your help fast" projects that defined and established The Moore Group.

What was the hardest part of launching your company?

One of the hardest parts was branding and positioning The Moore Group against much larger organizations. Launching a new company also required that I wear a million different hats, including some I was not particularly skilled at or fond of. The Moore Group's growth allowed for the on-boarding of staff more adept at addressing those areas. A few years back, we started a real operational initiative to put standard operating procedures in place and truly develop a sound corporate policy for employees while still remaining agile and flexible – that has been a very hard yet rewarding phase of our company's growth.

What lesson did you learn that you wish you'd known back before you started?

That the tenacity and fearlessness necessary to start a business are not necessarily the same skills required to take it to the next level. In the last few years, passing the baton has become more of a reality so I could start enjoying life a bit more. I have brought on board a team of seasoned management professionals who use their institutional knowledge, along with their strong work ethic, to poise us for the next level.

To have started a business where a commitment to excellence and organizational growth have been the mantra, and to see it flourish despite many challenges has been amazing, and has required a lot of hard work and sacrifice from many people. Sometimes I step back and say "wow" – the company is doing OK, it is running well and without me working all the time.

What risks did you take?

One of the many examples was after winning the Capital One contract, where we were obligated to be on standby with our team and ready to launch in seven days. We hired our staff and then had a six-month delay because of programming refinements. It was a strategic decision but a nail-biter, requiring a good measure of grit (and payroll burn), but this account meant we were doing business with a Fortune 500 company outside of Hampton Roads, which we needed in order to grow to the next level. It's all about value and performance.

What was the biggest obstacle you overcame?

Probably the biggest obstacle was choosing to move into defense contracting after seven years of a strong commercial presence. It allowed us to have a diversified business model, yes, but it also led to innumerable challenges.

Another big obstacle was having assurances that my management team and my company could manage both nationwide and international projects. For example, during our work with the Defense Logistics Agency, we had travelers arrive in Korea, and our interpreter was a no-show, leaving our people literally stranded. In a time before MapQuest and online maps were around, we had to help our team navigate to their military base as best we could from halfway around the world.

But perhaps some of the biggest obstacles come from something as simple as inclement weather. Our clients have millions of dollars invested in technology conversions, and they are typically transitioning their entire organizations in a very compressed timeline. Our people are critical to their timelines being realized.

The level of travel and logistics is at times almost unreal. Currently, The Moore Group has 29 employees who have been traveling nonstop since we won the CBS Radio and TV project in the spring of 2008. They fly to the client site Sunday night and return home Friday evening. It was a huge win and a high-profile project.

Coincidentally, it was one of our former employees for the DLA contract, one who was stuck on the train platform in Korea looking for the military base, who had emphatically suggested years later that The Moore Group be considered for the CBS project.

What or who has helped you the most in establishing your business?

Years ago, I met Stacy Smith, an accountant who gave me an amazing amount of sound advice. Stacy helped me find a great lawyer and banker and shared much wisdom about solid accounting practices and running a successful business. She helped me find my back office manager – Myra – who has been with The Moore Group for 10 years, and Eric, who helped endure and lead the transition into government contracting seven years ago.

What do you consider your greatest innovation?

Our company's greatest innovation is our signature approach toward change management as it pertains to software training in ERP implementations. Innovation, at least for us, is not necessarily a "eureka" moment. Instead, it is the accumulation of years of trial and error approaches and numerous revised business processes that we have carefully managed through diverse engagements.

How has the company grown, both in terms of employees and revenues?

We have grown to be a multimillion-dollar organization with a team of 55 full-time employees who are located across the country.

Our first-year revenue was six figures, and seven figures by our third year, and we've steadily grown in revenue since then, with 2009 looking to be one of The Moore Group's strongest years.

Has the company earned a profit? If so, how long did it take to get there?

Yes, the Moore Group broke even in year one.

Discuss future plans for the company.

The Moore Group's plans are focused on expanding our capabilities in managed services and human capital, plus growing our footprint in federal and commercial accounts

Given the present economic situation, what is your biggest challenge now and how do you plan to handle it?

Our biggest challenge is the potential of a large commercial client having financial challenges, and anticipating that impact to The Moore Group, even though we are in a financial position to handle a prolonged downturn. Currently, we are closely managing our receivables and modifying terms if necessary. The Moore Group began to diversify into federal, DOD and commercial projects years ago, with the thought that if one segment weakened, the others would provide a continued revenue stream. This has proven true, and is providing a more balanced, measured business cycle at present.