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*We Help You Focus Clearly,
Organize Effectively,
And Act With Courage*



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Reflections on one year in business....

The first year in business has been a "learning experience." I've learned more in one year than in the last five, some of it joyfully and some of it painfully, but all of it priceless.

The recession and the war made marketing a challenge. I learned the value of being involved in organizations like the Chamber of Commerce, that provide opportunities to meet and work with exciting local businesses that are growing fast.

The emotional toll of being an entrepreneur is high, especially on family and friends. I learned the value of creating a business support group and finding mentors that provide safe, honest advice and feedback -- they helped me focus on my vision while still being planted in reality.

I learned and relearned the value of staying focused, of being true to your vision and values. Business is fraught with opportunities to distract yourself. Once you move off center, it takes twice as much energy to get back.

Most of all, I've tasted the joy of serving others well, with my own two hands. It's quite a feeling of accomplishment and one I plan to keep. □ *CMP*

Cathy Perme started her business in June of 1990 and has since expanded and moved it. Oh, and in the process she got married too! Her new "associate" is Scot Gore.

Notes from the Trenches

By Cathy Perme

Quite possibly the war and the recession have something to do with it, but in any case I've noticed a huge amount of turbulence in the organizations with which I've worked. It's times like these that people *most* feel the need to get back to their core: their purpose, their vision, their values. In a rapidly changing world these are our only anchors.

What Deming calls "constancy of purpose" is in fact being very clear and honest about your current reality and yet continually focusing on what you want to achieve. There is another phrase for this: "creative tension," first coined by Robert Fritz and expanded on by Peter Senge.

This is different from strategic planning as it's traditionally done. It's also harder to do, because it takes courage every step of the way. It demands making strategic choices *today* versus making long-term plans that will probably be obsolete in 6 months. The catch is that you must *continue* to make strategic choices, because one set of them won't do. Reality changes -- sometimes slowly and insidiously and sometimes fast and furiously.

Strategic implementation, not strategic planning is the key. Being true to your vision and values, removing the filters that blind you, having the courage to make strategic choices, and then being able to "let go" are critical factors to success.

The first time you try this approach is the hardest -- but with practice you learn how to find leverage faster and faster until creating the results you want becomes a habit, not a by-product. □

Cathy practices, consults, and facilitates this method of strategic planning and has spoken on topics such as "Vision and Courage" and "Using Creative Tension to Advance Your Vision" to audiences ranging from 100-200.