



In this issue
[in the long run](#)
[a different approach](#)
[reading list](#)
[announcements](#)
[about trek](#)

[Join Our Mailing List!](#)

trekking

a newsletter on practical strategic thinking and action
issue #67

in the long run

When we named our consulting business, a number of years ago, we decided to call it "Trek Consulting", because building a business can be an arduous journey. This is something our many clients can attest to. It's a journey, not unlike a 26-mile marathon.

As noted at the bottom of last month's Trekking, I completed the [Baltimore Marathon](#) on October 10. Finishing the marathon achieved a personal goal, after a few months of long training runs (three over twenty miles) and overcoming a little nervousness. My time of 4:37 means I ran an average of about 10:30 per mile, which isn't really that fast, but with the hills and the humidity, I'm satisfied. I'm proud to have completed the run and have the pictures to prove it.



The easy thing to do here would be to compare the building of a business to the running of a marathon. So let's do it.

For both, they start with an idea or a spark. Maybe the idea for your business came out of nowhere or maybe you prepared for it for what seems like ages. For me, the idea of running a marathon arose after a challenge in a watering hole after a short 5-K race in Somerville, MA last December. But that's another story for another time. I'm sure you can just as easily remember when the idea, or spark, for your business first came to you.

For both, you need a plan. Everybody recommends that business owners should have a business plan as a way to address financing needs, management depth, market analysis, required resources and the production and distribution process. For a marathon, your plan will call for you to start months ahead of the race so you can build up mileage to get in a few long runs of 20 plus miles and not get hurt. Let me tell you, my [running plan](#) looked daunting at the outset as I'm sure your business plan seemed when you first outlined it.

For both, you need to execute the plan. The running of the business is a demanding, all-consuming process. The running of the marathon is

all-consuming for the time you are on the roads in training as well as during the race. And for both, even though you have a well thought out plan, you'll need to be flexible and willing to adjust your plan as you move forward with it. Even the best laid plans need to be tweaked.

For both, the performance and outcome will be a direct result of how well you trained and executed the plan. Your success will mirror your ability to deal with the bumps in the road, in the economy, and in your life (and hopefully the issues of dehydration and cramping will only relate to running a marathon). At the completion of both, hopefully, you can look back with pride on your accomplishments.

a different approach

While you read the above, you were probably thinking "that's fine, but a marathon is over after 26 miles and 385 yards, but a business doesn't have a finish line." A common reaction, but it's wrong.

That's what exit strategy planning is all about; it's creating a finish line for your business. If you are raising venture capital for a start-up, you know the investors are going to want to know how and when they are going to cash out, whether by merger or IPO. Every owner should have an exit strategy, if simply for their own sanity. "I'll do this for five years, then evaluate"... "I'll prepare my business to be sold to a competitor in seven years"... "I'll pass it on to my children after they get out of college"... "I'll sell to my management team"... by developing a plan you will aim your business in that very direction.

Of course, these days many owners are just looking to survive. Their banks are more demanding, their customers are paying more slowly, their suppliers are hounding them for payments. It is hard to focus on the future, the finish line, when you can't see past this week. But without an exit plan in place, the decisions you make today may actually be pulling you further away from your goals.

So, if you do not have an exit plan, make it your personal goal to create one or get an advisor to help. Your plan will help you align your resources to get the business where you want it to be, ensure you have the right management team, and that you are targeting the correct market segments. Your company's technology, brand, customer base, systems, processes, business model, and other intangible capital will all be affected by the exit plan. Your personal exit plan will cover your personal finances as well as transitions in your lifestyle ("What are the tax implications of your exit options?" "What will I do when I am no longer running my business?") - even more reason to think through and plan for your exit.

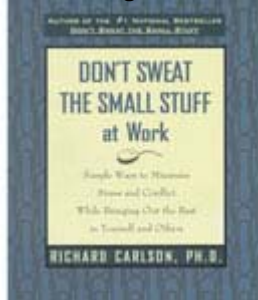
Remember, to get to the finish line successfully, you'll need a plan.

reading list

Don't Sweat the Small Stuff at Work - Simple Ways to Minimize Stress and Conflict while Bringing Out the Best in Yourself and Others

By Richard Carlson.

Even though [this book](#) was published ten years ago, it's worth re-reading. This economic downturn has added considerable pressure to office life. Increased demands on workers has led to longer hours, and in many cases, without increased pay. Threats of downsizing and unemployment hover over workers. All of these naturally increase stress. So relieving tensions through some of the simple steps in Carlson's book can reduce anxiety and possibly improve productivity and satisfaction. I recommend you read it if you have not read it before. If you read it prior to the start of the recession, I recommend you read it again.



announcements

The Exit Planning Exchange (XPX) Connecticut will host its first event in Hartford on November 17. The speaker will be Kevin Kennedy, the founder and CEO of Beacon Exit Planning LLC. Beacon specializes in exit and succession planning for private business owners. Kevin will relate the experience he and his partners had in selling their 63-year-old business.

XPX-Boston will hold two events in coming weeks: on the evening of November 18, XPX's Platinum sponsor [Caturano and Company](#) will host a networking event at their offices in Boston. Two Caturano partners will also update attendees on tax and financial issues that may affect business owners and their exits.

On the morning of December 10, XPX Boston will hold a breakfast at Knight Hall at Babson College in Wellesley, MA. The speakers for this event will be Bryan Piskorowski - Director of Business Strategy for Wells Fargo Advisors, speaking about the personal investing outlook for 2010 and Ken Serwinski, managing partner for Prairie Capital Advisors, speaking on the mergers and acquisitions outlook for 2010.

[Register for any of these events](#)



Trek Consulting is proud to announce that our Trekking newsletter was named a 2008 Constant Contact All Star!

about trek consulting

Trek works with owner-managed businesses to develop and execute action plans for growth. Trek also works with the owners to prepare for their successful exit by coordinating the resources necessary to increase and preserve the firm's value, creating the succession plan and assembling the right transaction team, financing and post-transaction plan.

Our clients report improved market focus, greater revenues, better margins and increased profits. To learn more about Trek Consulting and how we can help you improve your company's results, visit us on the web at www.trekconsulting.com or call us at 781.729.1008.

