
THE BUSINESS OF NEW JERSEY

THREE QUESTIONS

In difficult times, rely on core values

Peter Levy says his firm believes in "process."

Levy is partner in charge for Corporate Integrity/Strategic Planning at Sobel & Co., a leading certified public accounting and consulting firm based in Livingston. Levy's firm helps businesses develop better processes, analyze the competition and articulate a succession plan and exit strategy, he said.

With the shrinking economy in mind, Levy said he would urge businesses to stay the course, proceed with caution and remember what got them where they are. Tough times demand you rely on your core values, he said.

Levy talked to The Star-Ledger about strategic planning.

Q. How do you map out a strategy for a specific company's needs?

A. Sobel created a strategic planning tool, "Corporate Topography," which allows us to map out a company's specific goals. We believe that the strongest driver of change is the truth.

True leaders or business executives can guarantee continued success if, and only if, they address the current problems facing the business, and rely on objective, unemotional processes to move ahead. Corporate Topography works because it delivers a self-sustaining method for businesses to leverage their existing strengths.

A company accepts or rejects change in accordance with its culture, dependent upon what is known as the "tone at the top." If the leadership of a company embraces change as a component of

long-term success, the results are exceptional. For many business owners, their companies are similar to a child they have nurtured, and it takes a great deal of courage to call your own baby ugly.

Q. How has the economy affected your firm's work flow?

A. Our strategic consulting has thrived in this economy. We

preach to business owners that the time to fix your roof is when the sun is shining; however, human nature leads many business owners to wait until things are tough. In this economy there is an unprecedented demand for improving a company's internal structure, tying compensation to performance and using process-driven strategies to create new growth. Our Corporate Integrity Unit has grown exponentially, as economic concerns force leaders to recognize the importance of using governance and ethics to prevent fraud.

Q. What is the worst job you've ever had?

A. In high school, I worked for a cable television company that was trying to determine if residential buildings in run-down neighborhoods were still occupied. We were dropped off in the middle of nowhere, with a tiny piece of a city map, and told to visit each building to check the tenant list. If you walked off your piece of the map . . . you were completely lost.

— Rhea N. Bernard

Please submit suggestions for "Three Questions" to rbernard@starledger.com.



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