

## Q&A

**Peter Tonti** | Associate business adviser with Santa Rosa-based business consulting company *The Business Resource*, discusses what it takes to help companies achieve a higher level of performance and growth.

# Taking Business To The Next Level

**PRESS DEMOCRAT:** What kinds of local businesses hire the Business Resource, and what services do you offer them?

**TONTI:** Our clients include founder-run businesses of all types: service businesses, professionals, contractors, light manufacturing, retail and distribution.

Our most requested services are profit and cash flow improvement; financial oversight and management, which includes bookkeeping, accounting support and capital development; and marketing, which includes branding, positioning, promotion, negotiation and service delivery enhancement.

**PRESS DEMOCRAT:** What are some of the most common problems the businesses you work with have run into?

**TONTI:** We specialize in helping businesses that are owned and operated by their founders achieve a higher level of business performance and growth. Such businesses often run into three major problems:

Not enough sales or profit - a growth plateau;

Inconsistent cash flow - feast or famine;

Finding and keeping good employees.

**PRESS DEMOCRAT:** How do you go about advising business owners who know far more about their industries than you do?

**TONTI:** We require our clients know far more about their industries than we do. We depend on it. Most often this is the primary obstacle facing business owners - they are experts in the area of their product or industry. This can lead them to overemphasize the importance of the technician's role while overlooking the importance of business knowledge and experience.

Our managerial, supervision and leadership and financial organization skills always complement the owners' technical expertise - we partner with them to round out their expertise.

**PRESS DEMOCRAT:** Are business owners sometimes their own worst enemies?

**TONTI:** Each of us is our own worst enemy. A business owner's greatest strengths can become a business liability without a plan to keep those strengths in check.

If a business owner is the smartest person in the room, he or she is in big trouble. It's our job to help owners see how their strength can become their adversary and how to overcome that.

**PRESS DEMOCRAT:** If the Business Resource consultants were doctors, what kind would they be? Internists? Surgeons? Psychiatrists?

**TONTI:** The old joke is: "You know the definition of a consultant? It's a guy who borrows your watch to tell you what time it is." That implies

that "consultants" don't really need to know much about your business or your industry to do "their job." And that may be true. TBR is not cast in the mold of traditional expert adviser or "consultant." The most important difference between TBR and other consultants is that we do not "operate on" the business. We are rent-a-partners, not "consultants." We are wise peers who have been there and done that, and know exactly what to avoid to save time and money and improve profits.



**Consultant Peter Tonti has advised businesses such as Sonoma Design Apparel & Promotion, Inc.**

## Q&A: Business owners can be their own worst enemies

We are a hybrid of entrepreneurial expertise and technical business experience. We do not operate on or advise others by expert opinion. We effectively and skillfully help people focus on their strengths and make better business choices.

PRESS DEMOCRAT: How do you go about diagnosing what ails a business?

TONTI: We work with founders who want more from their existing businesses. That doesn't mean business owners don't have complaints, but those complaints place them more on a growth plateau than the edge of a cliff or "ailing" most of the time.

We offer a complementary business assessment that enables both the founder and TBR to understand the strengths, limitations, opportunities and threats facing that business. After the assessment is complete, a game plan is drawn up for the business and provided to the founder. They may choose to work with us to implement the game plan or go it alone. Once we begin to work together, daily, weekly, monthly and quarterly results are pinpointed and measured, yielding more reliable results.

PRESS DEMOCRAT: How much do you charge?

TONTI: Fees generally run from \$1,000 to \$5,000 per month, depending on the demand and complexity of the business and goals.

We are not paid by the hour; we are paid for results.

We form agreements with clients based on results they choose and we each agree to. We help clients determine rates of return on investment using our

services; if we cannot generate multiple times our fee, we do not work with the client.

PRESS DEMOCRAT: Share with us one of your favorite success stories.

TONTI: Sonoma Design, Apparel & Promotions Inc. creates promotional materials for a range of clients, largely by imprinting organizations' logos on shirts, caps and other garments, as well as hardgoods like coasters, key chains and mouse pads.

The company was formed in 2003 by Tim Keehn and Eddie Brascia, who have complementary and compatible skills and expertise. With Tim's strengths in design and production and Eddie's "do what it takes" attitude and sales and marketing skills, things grew very quickly.

up significantly, and the company is set to begin construction in January on a new 8,000-square-foot building on Airway Drive. By building and owning their own facility, the company will stop paying rent and begin diversifying its asset structure, increasing the value of the business over the long term. ■

The Business Resource is a twenty year old small business management support firm specializing in delivering better business results faster.

Founder business operators can schedule a complementary, no-obligation business assessment by calling 707.571.0017 x 701 or visiting our website at [www.thebusinessresource.com](http://www.thebusinessresource.com)

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*“Today, Sonoma Design has far exceeded their goals”.*

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A year later, the company was experiencing growing pains and had reached a capacity plateau. They didn't know if they should continue to grow the business or pull back.

In July 2004, they reached out to The Business Resource for help. We worked with Tim and Eddie to figure out how to fund future growth; how to retain the family business environment without a corporate feel; and how to design and implement a long-term business plan.

Today, the company has far exceeded those goals. Revenues and profits are