

## Focus on doing good, not just doing well



Doesn't it seem that organizations whose goal it is to serve the community are often on the six o'clock news trying to raise money to keep their doors open? The worlds of community good and business profit are often portrayed as very

separate countries with different cultures and languages. Yet there are more and more companies focused on supporting their employees, supporting the community and earning a solid profit. Sage Landscape Architecture and Environmental is one firm that succeeds in the balancing act of maintaining values and enjoying a successful business venture.

Joy Lyndes founder and President of Sage said, "Creating a business is just a different form of design. In order to have a sustainable business, one must create opportunities for doing something good for employees and the community." Many CEOs might view this as a great slogan to hang on the wall and yet not walk the talk. Lyndes really practices this philosophy and it pays. The company is on track to grow 45% to 55% this year. Sage, like other like-minded organizations around the world, is proving that when employees are satisfied and aligned behind a vision, profit becomes a barking dog at the door. A company's profits soar when people get support to do their jobs and opportunities to contribute.

Lyndes spent the first twenty years of her career as a designer and project manager. Her biggest challenge when she started her firm was to transition from being a seller/doer to leading and growing the business. For the professionally trained entrepreneur there is no larger barrier to jump than into leadership and away from an emphasis on "technical expertise and production." Three things helped her successfully make the transition:

1. seeking out and completing relevant training;
2. implementing what she learned and;
3. mentoring employees.

Lyndes is not afraid to question assumptions and try creative strategies. Lyndes and Noelle

Sanders, Phoenix office manager, recently achieved a breakthrough using a non-conventional strategic session where people focused, shared information, and coalesced around their skills. The participants spent almost no time on charts with timelines, responsibilities and all the usual accouterments of strategic planning. Rather, they spent their time understanding one another's goals, challenges and daily activities. "These connection conversations allowed the company to take advantage of assets and to combine strengths. Although we established goals, we did not produce detailed plans as you usually do in strategic planning sessions. Yet, our connections were so strong and our understanding of our mutual interests so clear that we surpassed our major goals within two months," said Lyndes. When people become connected and clear about goals, they focus. Compare this to the usual dry session concluding with a detailed report that sits on the shelf producing nothing but dust. Willingness to learn and try new approaches is a strong best practice for Sage.

Recently the Sage Tucson office won two projects that typify ideal projects for this community-oriented firm. The first is a City County Court Complex where Sage will work as a sub consultant to DMJM Design and GHLN. This project will be in the heart of the downtown area of Tucson and will serve the entire community. The second is a Pima County Cultural Resource Project: the historic Canoa Ranch in Green Valley. Sage is responsible for the Master Plan to preserve, interpret and open the environment for public use. Sage will act as a sub consultant to the firm of Poster Frost and will work in close alliance with the Green Valley Advisory Committee. These projects require creative design, interpretation and high community involvement. Both of these projects satisfy Sage's vision of creating opportunities to contribute to their employees and their community.

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