

# Getting core work finished

BY TRENTON HIGHTOWER

Think for a moment about why you entered your chosen field.

Are you actually doing the job you thought you'd be doing, or have dozens of peripheral duties been turfed your way? As budgets become leaner, many managers admit to an increasing amount of job dissatisfaction as the gap between their actual job responsibilities and their original career goals grows ever wider.

In a climate this busy and frugal, it's easy for managers to get overwhelmed. One solution is to learn how to outsource necessary tasks like training and business communications, leaving you more time to attend to your core business.

This is a strategy I have adapted for FCC's Customized Training Department. With a relatively small staff, we rely on strategic partnerships to meet our goals quickly and efficiently.

For example, FCC partners with a local information technology vendor to help us meet the IT training needs of our corporate clients. Through this partnership, companies are able to offer their employees college credits for completing advanced IT certification courses.

Another invaluable partnership we've created is with a Frederick media company. Our relationship has allowed us to leverage valuable opportunities to present FCC's programs to the regional and national customized training community. A report on FCC's Best Practices in Customized Training was outsourced to the media company, and the report drew national attention to our program — excellent public relations for a relatively small investment.

Just as our program is strengthened by strategic partnerships, we also strengthen other organizations by teaming up with them.

Here's a generic example:

You're an human resources manager tasked with developing an employee training program. Immediately, you see the challenge: How can you maintain the training programs that your employees need, deliver



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## Curriculum vitae

As Frederick Community College's associate vice president for customized training, Trenton Hightower oversees the training needs of more than 5,000 employees at 75 area companies. Mr. Hightower is a board member for the National Council for Continuing Education and Training. With a bachelor's in communications and public relations, and a master's in administration of higher education, Mr. Hightower still maintains his best education was basic training at Fort Benning, Ga., home of the Army's Infantry Branch.

them in a way that's fresh and interactive, protect your company's bottom line and preserve your sanity, too?

Here's how dozens of your colleagues have done it: Find a creative, affordable partner who can manage your company's training initiatives cost-effectively.

Your goal is to find a single partner who can develop, create and deliver programs across as many of your training needs as possible — from technical to interpersonal, from customer service to leadership development. Choosing one partner who can provide broad-spectrum training in supervisory skills, personal development, computer training and job-specific skills will give you the best return on your investment of time and resources.

Outsourcing can be a great boon to your business or employer, but before you reach out, ask yourself three questions:

1. Does your vision and mission match your potential partner's? If this fundamental fit isn't there at the outset, your chances for a successful partnership are slim to none.

2. How much is it going to cost? Tally the start-up costs and ongoing expenses, and

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make certain the final number justifies your short-term and long-term investment.

3. How much time, energy and resources will this arrangement entail? The price of the project is only one aspect of its total cost; how much time you will need to invest is just as critical. What kind of equipment — office space, desks, computers, and connectivity — will be required?

If you outsource thoughtfully and with care, I believe you will find — as I have — that strategic partnerships are great investments. When a prospective partner passes your "3 Question Test," chances are you're going to save money and gain valuable time to focus on your core business.

And before long, you'll find that the job you envisioned, and the job you're actually doing, are closer than ever.