

September 26, 2008 | The Columbus Dispatch | Circulation: 244,280



Tom Campbell knew what to do when a 2006 motorcycle accident left the founder of his company disabled. The president of Quick Solutions had previously hammered out a succession plan with founder Gary Quick, helping the transition go more smoothly.

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# How to succeed at work

All companies should have plan ready in case tragedy strikes leader

By Margaret Harding  
THE COLUMBUS DISPATCH

**W**hen company founder Gary Quick named Tom Campbell president of Quick Solutions Inc. in 2002, the move signaled Quick's desire to move slowly away from the day-to-day operations of the information-technology consulting firm.

But that slow transition ended abruptly when Quick was seriously injured in a motorcycle accident in Florida in 2006, leaving the company without its founder.

"He was in a coma for quite some time," Campbell said. "It's just one of those scenarios where you wait to see how somebody recovers."

"He's made some progress, but he has a long way to go."

Campbell said that although his first concern was for Quick and his family, he had to



Gary Quick, founder of Quick Solutions Inc.

stabilize the business and reassure employees and clients.

"It was imperative to help people to understand that the business was safe — that we had a succession plan," Campbell said.

The need to prepare might be difficult — few business owners want to contemplate their exit — but it's necessary, experts say.

Business owners can get caught up in the short term and neglect to think about the effect on the business should something happen to them, said Mary McCarthy, Columbus chairwoman of SCORE, a volunteer small-business counseling service.

"If you have partners, you've got to think about what happens if you decide to retire or something happens to you," McCarthy said. "What happens to your percentage of the company? It can really cause a tremendous

problem if you haven't thought it through and planned it out."

When Campbell joined the business, he said he and Quick put together a succession plan and an estate plan for the founder.

"It's one of those things a lot of people hate to do because you have to sit down and look at your mortality, but it's absolutely imperative," Campbell said.

The company also took out a disability-insurance policy and a life-insurance policy on Quick.

Those policies turned out to be important because the insurance allowed Quick's family to maintain its standard of living without putting a burden on the company, Campbell said.

Quick requires 24-hour care as a result of his accident injuries, Campbell said.

"You see the effects of head injuries. It can be very, very devastating," he said. "The ef-

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fects linger for a long time."

After Quick's accident, a formal board of directors was created to look after the shareholders' interests, and the company now has quarterly meetings to keep employees informed, Campbell said.

Jim Rutledge, a partner with law firm Bricker & Eckler, said he recommended the independent board as a way to help the company by tapping the expertise of top local business people. Rutledge developed the succession plan with Quick.

"We needed their help," Rutledge said of the board members. "They were great to help work with the management to help the management do the best job they could following this great tragedy."

Quick wanted to make sure that employees' jobs would be safe and relationships with clients would be stable in the event something happened to him, Rutledge said.

"Part of this man's plan, even when we talked years ago, his goal was to preserve this business for its employees and his clients," Rutledge said.

The plan seems to be working. The company made a little more than \$28 million in sales in 2007, its best year and a 26 percent increase from the previous year.

Quick Solutions employs about 230, and it recently moved to a new headquarters in Westerville. The consulting firm does project-management work and helps companies implement new technologies.

"We've been very fortunate

to be able to build this business to what it is today," Campbell said.

That building occurred both before and after the founder's accident.

Rick Mariotti said he didn't have reservations about joining Quick Solutions after Gary Quick's accident because of how the company handled itself in that difficult time.

Mariotti had worked with Gary Quick through corporate banking, and the two eventually became friends. Campbell hired Mariotti in 2007, after Quick's accident, and Mariotti now works as Quick Solutions' vice president of business development.

"When you see an organization go through this kind of adversity, it really tells you something about the core foundation of the business," Mariotti said. "I was more comfortable rather than less comfortable."

Campbell said he doesn't know how the company would have moved forward if it hadn't had the succession plan in place. "Without it, most likely we would've lost the business," he said. "You have too many outside forces that come into play that can wreak havoc."

Campbell said people within the company could have worried about its future, while competitors might have tried to take clients, recruit employees and create unrest.

"You've got to be very resilient. You have to create confidence in employees that things are good."

No matter the size, a business should seek out legal advice and develop a succession plan, Campbell said.

"Anything could happen to anybody. You never know when it's your time."

mharding@dispatch.com

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