

Innovative Business Model Enables Boutique Consulting Firm Deliver Quality Services To Recession-conscious Companies

Lafayette, Calif., February 7, 2009 -Today's business headlines abound with news of the credit crisis and the global economic downturn. Despite these challenges and the uncertainty that lies ahead, companies across many industries continue to seek out ways to operate more efficiently and move their businesses forward.

According to A.T. Kearney, in an October, 2008 paper summarizing their Global Policy Council:

"Executives still have a business to run. There's no time to wait for the economy to work its way out of this crisis. Devising the best approach requires a measure of tenacity – planning for short-term wins to reduce cost and improve efficiency while scanning for opportunities to improve and grow the top line."

But companies need to achieve this in an environment of pervasive budget constraints. Companies of all sizes, in nearly all industries, are hoarding cash and operating conservatively.

East-bay based Sides & Associates (S&A) offers a business model of a virtual, boutique consultancy that enables spend-wary companies to seek out impactful solutions and assistance from high quality consultants even in this time of requisite line-item budget review. The result: clients achieve their goals during this challenging time at recession-appropriate costs.

Recent examples of S&A client companies making such business improvements:

- A rapidly growing biotech company formalized their drug development project teams, processes, oversight committees and decision making to reduce risk, increase consistency and efficiency, and establish a model that would scale with growth.
- A financial services company invested in improving the allocation of their marketing spend and use of customer data to reduce costs and increase the ROI of sales and marketing efforts.
- A large biotech company established the new processes, systems, organizational changes, governance, and regulatory compliance mechanisms required to begin collecting DNA on all clinical trials as a step toward delivering the right medicine to the right patient – without significantly increasing clinical trial costs or reducing enrollment rates.
- A technology company invested in improving recruiting and developing the technical and management personnel most critical to business performance. This included recruiting positioning, processes, and metrics and analysis of employee retention and success drivers so improvement efforts could be targeted effectively.
- A successful biotech company accelerated early stage clinical trials by increasing up-front planning, streamlining processes, strategically outsourcing, and enhancing systems.

How S&A's business model offers practical help for them

To cost-effectively deliver on these and other project goals, S&A has focused on developing the assets that create value for clients while avoiding costly overhead. "Our clients are looking for informed advice and assistance with their current business challenges but are reluctant to embark on major, costly initiatives in this environment" said Lynley Sides, founder and principal at S&A. "Through our flexible model we are able to provide the needed expertise, analysis, and solutions while remaining within the time and cost limits that makes sense given their unique situation."

The assets that matter to S&A's clients:

- People: Since clients primarily care about *who* is doing the work, S&A has focused on establishing a team of smart, accomplished individuals with varied experiences, small egos and common interests. More than 90% of consulting work is performed by the firm's principals, whose backgrounds include MBAs and engineering degrees from top schools, experience with

companies including IBM, Genentech and Nestle, officer level operational positions, and a former “Advertising Age Magazine Top 100 Marketer.”

- Consulting process expertise: S&A consultants were trained through working for large consultancies and have dozens of combined years of consulting experience. Their “Consulting Process” training is delivered to extend the capabilities of client and S&A personnel. However, their approach is flexible and customized to meet each client’s unique circumstances – which is highly valued by clients, particularly under financial limitations.
- Depth of intellectual property: S&A consultants have conducted extensive research and organizational audits and developed solutions across product development, decision making, business process, project management, roles and responsibilities, marketing, sales, leadership development, training, and recruiting for companies of all sizes in the biotech, technology, internet, and financial services industries. The resulting work products and industry expertise position the firm to ask the right questions, frame problems, and work with clients to quickly design and implement the right solutions for them.

The minimal overhead model:

- Virtual: The significant investment in office space, technology infrastructure, graphics departments and other overhead by many consulting firms must be covered by client fees. S&A consultants work virtually and efficiently, collaborating to deliver high value with only a minimal investment in these areas.
- Pay for value delivered: While a significant portion of a typical consulting firm’s personnel cost is consultants who are “on the beach” (not doing client work) but must be covered by fees, every S&A consultant is only paid for direct client work, so client fees aren’t padded to cover other time.

As a result, clients achieve their goals through work done by high quality people, based upon proven but flexible methodologies and experience; they don’t pay excessive rates to cover high overhead costs. That’s a recipe that makes sense for executives at companies of all sizes in this uncertain business climate.

About Sides & Associates, Inc.

Sides & Associates, Inc. (S&A) was founded in 2001 with the goal of helping companies manage growth and succeed in rapidly changing environments. To this end, our consultants partner with clients in diagnosing business issues, designing workable solutions, and facilitating implementation and change programs carefully suited to each company’s culture and priorities. This approach allows client leaders to effectively manage growth while focusing their internal resources on core business operations.