

Managing Time And Cash Flow

Laurna Godwin and Jessica Perkins/Vector Communications Corp.

by Julia Paulus

When Laurna Godwin and Jessica Perkins met through Perkins' brother Kelvyn Moore, "it was a fluke but a blessing," says Perkins.

Both women wanted a career change, and after working on a U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Listening Tours project together through St. Louis Community College at Forest Park, they decided to combine their career experiences and go into business together.

That's when Vector Communications Corp., a public engagement and communications consulting firm, was born in 1998.

Godwin, who studies English and American Studies at Princeton University and received her masters in journalism from Columbia University, had spent over 20 years working in radio and television broadcasting, but she decided she had achieved what she wanted to in that field.

"When I went into broadcast journalism, it was about educating people," says Godwin. "But now it is more about big business and making money."

Godwin started her own business, Godwin Communications, a media relations and video production firm, but after working on the EPA project with Perkins, she decided she wanted to focus on making a difference in the community.

Perkins worked for 15 years in corporate America and conducted leadership training for two years before opening her business, Out-Of-The-Box Thinking, a strategic planning and organizational development firm. Before working on the EPA project with Godwin, she went back to school to get her doctorate in public policy analysis and organizational development from Saint Louis University. Previously, Perkins received her BS in marketing and psychology from Lindenwood College and her MBA in finance from University of Wisconsin.

When Godwin and Perkins joined forces, they made individual neighborhood and community improvement their mission. Vector, whose motto is "advancing learning, dialogue and positive change," involves residents in public policy dialogue and decision making in a number of areas, including transportation, education, health and human services, religion, and parks and recreation. The company's core competencies combine the professional experiences of Godwin and Perkins: public engagement, strategic planning and organizational development, event planning, communications planning and media relations, and video production.

Though they've been successful in their careers, making over \$1 million in revenue at Vector, both have encountered hurdles throughout the years.

"Staying in business is a challenge in itself," says Godwin. "More than 50% of businesses fold within the first five years, so the fact that we are going to be 10 years old in June is an accomplishment in itself."

Perkins identifies cash flow and payroll as hurdles for small businesses. "When a client takes 45-plus days to pay an invoice, that is detrimental to a small business because that payment is usually earmarked for payroll," she says. "It is critical that a small business manages its receivables as well as its payables."

But she says the biggest challenge for a small-business owner is to wear many hats until the company is large enough to hire outside help.

"The most challenging hurdle, especially with a background in corporate America, has been to balance practice management and business development while completing client project work," says Perkins. "In larger firms, there are specific departments to handle human relations, information technology and billing. With a small firm, many times those responsibilities are handled by the owners until revenues are great enough to hire in-house talent or outsource to a vendor."



Terrible's Mark Twain Casino

Is looking to pursue business relationships with minority- and women-owned businesses through economic opportunities and development support.

Terrible's is looking for your help with janitorial supplies, food and beverage, paper and print, office supplies, promotional and marketing giveaways and gift shop merchandise.

We are seeking your excellence in your performance in order to provide the best service to the citizens of the St. Louis region.



For information please call:

573-655-4770

and ask for Samantha Fitzgerald

104 Pierce Street • LaGrange, MO • www.terribleherbst.com