



Dear Friends and Clients,

About this time last year, I spent much of a day sitting in front of the fireplace with Sherry Little, a friend and occasional client who was thinking about some of the professional challenges facing her in 2009.

Sherry focused that day on the plans and principles that would guide her transition from the senior ranks of the federal government to a new entrepreneurial role. At the time, she was Acting Administrator of the Federal Transit Administration. But she was about to become a founding partner of a new company created to support transportation and infrastructure projects.

It wasn't always easy, but Sherry has succeeded in helping to launch **Spartan Solutions, LLC**. In less than a year, the company has attracted a healthy group of public and private sector clients seeking assistance with mass transit and other projects. Along the way, Sherry has won awards and been called upon to give speeches touching upon the career success she achieved while still under the age of 40.

Last week we spent another afternoon in front of the fire, talking about themes and activities for the year ahead. Sherry knows that the second year of a start-up can be just as demanding as the first, and so she was getting ready.

In the course of planning, Sherry reflected on some of the practices that led to achievements in 2009. Because she was so successful in managing her transition, I asked to share some of her guiding principals with you in this issue.

Warm wishes, Bev

Thinking About A New Career Direction? Consider These Tips From Sherry Little

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After years as a well-staffed senior federal official, Sherry Little was nervous when she contemplated becoming one of the first partners in a new company. Not only did she have to quickly learn to behave like an entrepreneur, but also

she had to perform effectively without the expertise and structure she had come to take for granted.

The first year is now behind her, however, and Sherry has played a key role in founding a promising company. Here are some of the points that Sherry kept in mind as she navigated her transition year:

- **Try an M&M&M.** When she was feeling stress, Sherry reminded herself to stay focused on “the 3 M’s”:
 - **Mentors.** Sherry sometimes found it difficult to address administrative and organizational issues now that she no longer had professional staff support, but what made it easier was her wide circle of friends and mentors. She regularly borrowed expertise from others. For example, when she had to make early choices about office technology, she sought help from her tech-savvy best friend, Andrea Wilkinson.
 - **Mistakes.** As she took off in new directions, Sherry gave herself permission to make mistakes. Instead of freezing at the thought of a false step, Sherry told herself that missteps are a natural part of moving forward. She says that she made plenty of mistakes in 2009, but interestingly they sometimes provided her most important learning opportunities.
 - **Moxie.** Even though she was sometimes frightened, Sherry tried to consistently act like a woman with “moxie,” which she defines as including enthusiasm, energy and vision. When she was uncertain, she tried to imagine how she would behave if she actually felt a surge of moxie, and then she acted accordingly.
- **Help others.** Sherry has been around Washington long enough to be turned off by the climbers who engage in tunnel-visioned self-promotion. In her government jobs she frequently tried to give others a boost, and she promised herself that she would keep up that practice, even when feeling the pressure to launch a new business. As she looked back on the year, Sherry realized that several great opportunities actually developed from steps that she took simply to assist other people in their careers.
- **Exercise.** Recognizing that she would miss the structure provided by her government job, and knowing that she needed to be fit in order to work at a grueling pace, Sherry decided to build exercise into her daily calendar. She selected a series of yoga classes, hired a trainer, and committed to work out every weekday.
- **Make lists.** Sherry built her success one list at a time. She started every day by reviewing and refining her “to do” list, and she used lists to keep track of projects, to coordinate with colleagues and clients, and to keep moving even when she didn’t feel like it.

Sherry Little of Spartan Solutions, LLC



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