

REFLECTIONS ON 20 YEARS OF MORRISON

Like a lot of new businesses, Morrison began in a spare room of my home. It was February 1, 2002, and it was just me (not counting two rather unhelpful cats). To be honest, I had a fairly limited vision of what I wanted to do beyond using my experience to the benefit of clients.

When I left my position as Chief Financial Officer at Sunsweet Growers, though, I got an unexpected parting gift: a contract to provide 750 hours of service over the first year. I at least had the foresight not to let it make me lazy, and immediately set about building a larger client base.

I made a list of about 200 people, then sent out a dozen or so letters a week and made follow up calls to those I had mailed previously. Arguably not the most sophisticated marketing plan, but I had to stop halfway through the list as I had all I could handle. Soon after, I began subcontracting with other accountants and advisors to keep up.

Running the business with subcontractors became a challenge. As most had other clients, I had limited control over their time and priorities. I suspected that I needed to hire, but was slow to pull the trigger.

I finally had to admit that I had hit the limit with subcontractors. I made my first hire, Geoff Chinnock, who served with us for a wonderful 14 years. This led to many more, including now Managing Principal Toni Scott and Consultant Tim Peters, CPA, who both started in 2011.

My original intent was to provide business, financial, and accounting consulting and fractional services. But, a few months after I started, I attended a conference at which I heard about a grants program I thought would benefit many of the businesses I knew. I had never written a grant, but thought I had the basic writing, analytical, and business skillsets. I approached a couple of companies and both gave me a shot. And I learned that people are very happy when you get them half a million dollars or so, and grants soon become a core part of our services. We now have a team of four working in that area.

Likewise, after filling interim positions I occasionally had requests to help recruit permanent replacements. I hadn't done that either,

though I had been involved in hiring at past employers. After a period of doing a few recruitments a year, I got the idea to send out email blasts seeking candidates to contacts in our Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system – and found that we had unintentionally advertised the service. The additional requests for our unique, tailored approach to recruiting led to the starting of our People Solutions practice in 2016.

Our first office in 2007 was a single room, perhaps 200 square feet. We moved into the building next door a year later, where we stayed until we outgrew it in 2012. When we moved to our current location we were one of three tenants. By 2016 we were able to occupy the entire building, allowing for growth without a move.

This year we will be moving across the street to 1385 Ridgewood Drive, with over 5,000 square feet. I call it a “hand truck move,” but it will give us much needed space and more prominent presence and signage.

As exciting as this is, our 21st year is bringing much more. We are delighted to have Ana Klein, MBA, on the team, who is joining us as a Principal in May. Ana is the long-time Vice President and CFO at Sunsweet Growers, having served for nearly 23 years. I hired Ana during my tenure there, and she has been both a professional and personal friend since. Ana will oversee our Business & Accounting Advisory Services (B&A) group, working closely with B&A Manager Dean Pritchett.

We are also thankful to have been joined by Jeff Boian in March, who manages our People Solutions practice. Jeff has a master's degree in organizational leadership and brings a strong background in career development, organizational development, and leadership training. Jeff also had his own consulting practice for several years and brings solid hands-on experience.

I am thankful for all our current and past employees, with 15 now on the Morrison team in Chico and the Sacramento area. And we are thankful for our clients, too many to mention, but we are ever grateful to Agromillora California, Associated General Contractors of California, Blue Diamond Growers, California Olive Ranch, Challenge Dairy, Crystal Creamery, Gorrill Ranch, Mariani Nut, Michigan Blueberry Growers, P31 Enterprises, Pacific Coast Producers, Pleasant Valley Farms, Sun Valley Rice, Taylor Brothers Farms, and Ventura Pacific Company, among others.

And Sunsweet. In a very real sense I feel I never left. They were my last employer, my first client, and have been instrumental in Morrison becoming what it is today. Our thanks to Dane Lance, Brendon Flynn, Harold Schenker, Art Driscoll, Brad Schuler, and many others.

It's not easy to break down 20 years into a few words, so I will simply end it with “thankful.” I know that the future will be even brighter.



2002

2008

2012

2016

2022