



CONNECTION

OFFICIAL QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF
CHORTEK & GOTTSCHALK, LLP

23217 West Stoneridge Drive, Waukesha, WI 53188 262/522-8227 FAX: 262/522-8228
550 Bay View Road, Suite E, Mukwonago, WI 53149 262/363-2930 FAX: 262/363-2933
www.c-gcpa.com www.c-gconsulting.com

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THE FIRM GROWS, Introducing... Paul Rodrigues



Chortek & Gottschalk, LLP constantly reviews opportunities for its clients. Such an opportunity to expand our construction practice has presented itself at Chortek & Gottschalk and we are pleased to announce the addition of Paul A. Rodrigues, CPA, MST to our group. Paul will be a Principal concentrating his 20 years of experience in accounting, tax, and consulting toward the construction industry. In addition to this concentration, Paul has significant expertise in real estate, litigation, and forensic accounting. Shortly, Paul will

also be completing his certification as a Fraud Examiner.

From his Price Waterhouse beginnings, Paul's career included Jefferson Wells International as their National Tax Director, where he established offices across the United States to service Fortune 1000 companies. Paul then worked for several regional and specialty Certified Public Accounting firms where he focused on the construction market.

Chortek & Gottschalk is fortunate to have over forty talented professionals with a variety of expertise to serve our clients. From emerging businesses to third generation corporations, Chortek & Gottschalk strives to be proactive in helping companies and individuals move to the next level of success. ◉

From all of us at

Chortek & Gottschalk, LLP
C&G Consulting
CGK Investment Banking

**WISHING YOU A
HAPPY HOLIDAY**



CORPORATE COLUMN, Disaster Preparedness for Business Technology

Year end is a good time to re-read the company disaster recovery plan and test its procedures. Make sure your plan includes:

- ✓ Contact information for the vendors that would be involved in recovery
- ✓ An inventory of your current servers, workstations, and infrastructure
- ✓ An inventory of software in use and locations of data storage
- ✓ A data backup plan explaining procedures and off site storage

The key to a good plan is to have it written down and make it detailed enough that it provides the process for your IT system's recovery. Relying on a single person or vendor to make a plan after a disaster has happened is likely to leave business data and systems at risk.

It is advisable to have a "shopping cart" prepared of what replacement hardware would need to be ordered

in case of a total loss due to calamity or theft. In this case, a bulk order can efficiently be placed, saving hours in recovery time.

Check your business insurance policy to ensure it addresses your key areas of risk. If there were a week's loss of data, how long would it take to re-create that data? Is this recovery cost covered by your insurance policy?

If not routinely done, have a test restoration of data performed to make sure that the data backup system is doing its job. If you have less than two weeks' worth of tape media, and they are more than a year old, it is time to consider replacing them.

If you would like a professional review of your company's technology disaster preparedness or if you have questions on your disaster plan, contact: Mike Senkbeil, 262-522-8248, msenkbeil@c-gconsulting.com



It is now easier than ever to meet with C&G team members. While we enjoy face-to-face meetings, sometimes it is just as effective to meet 'on-line'. The firm has been utilizing a popular web-based meeting tool, GoToMeeting, to conduct business with clients via the Internet.

The tool is very easy to use: a meeting is scheduled, everyone connects via a web browser and dials an 800-number. All the participants see what the host PC is 'broadcasting', typically a presentation, spreadsheet, or other business document. Meeting participants see screen changes real-time and since 'everyone is on the same page' by seeing and hearing the same thing simultaneously, meetings are efficient.

Why might you want to conduct on-line meetings with your customers, vendors, and business partners? Supplementing on-line meetings with face-to-face meetings has several advantages: lower costs, more efficient use of time, and the ability to include people in an online meeting that might have had difficulty making a face-to-face meeting.

Contact Rick Sovitzky, 262-522-8227, at C&G to learn more about this effective business tool.

Trees For Troops



Noffke Tree Farms of Mequon, a C&G client for many years, was the drop-off point for 10 area Christmas tree growers donating 200 Wisconsin-grown trees to the Trees for Troops program. A large FedEx truck piled high with it's green aromatic load headed to its destination in Fort Knox, Kentucky, home of Army Recruiting Command.

Kathy Gross, whose parents started Noffke Tree Farms in 1952, volunteered for the program through the Christmas Tree Growers Association. The program, which began in 2005 with 4300 trees delivered to military families, estimates that 17,000 trees will be sent to service members and their families in the US and overseas this year. The trees last year came from more than 650 donors in 27 states with FedEx providing the shipping and logistics.



Photos by Jeffrey Phelps of the Journal Sentinel

Master Sgt. Pat LaLonde, of the Wisconsin National Guard 128th Air Refueling Wing, remembers how colorless the desert can be having served in southwest Asia. "There's no green over there, so having a fresh Christmas tree means everything. It's like having a little piece of home," LaLonde said. Leonard Noffke, who served in the Wisconsin National Guard in the 1950s, says, "It's the least we can do. They do so much for us."

Noffke Tree Farms attached notes to each tree with care instructions and the heartfelt sentiment, "We hope that this tree brings the spirit of the holidays to you, wherever you are."

TAX TIPS—Federal Tax Credits for Business Owners

The Federal Community Renewal Tax Relief Act was passed to encourage public-private collaboration to generate economic development in 40 distressed communities around the country. As a result of this Renewal Community designation, Milwaukee will receive regulatory relief and tax breaks to help local businesses provide more jobs and promote community revitalization.

Certain Milwaukee business owners can take an annual tax credit of up to \$1,500 for each employee who lives and works for the business in a Renewal Community (RC). Employers must verify their business location and employees address as being inside the RC. **Chortek & Gottschalk, LLP can help with this verification process.** The credit is available

through December 31, 2009 and prior year amended returns can be filed to look back and claim this credit for any open years (generally 2004 – 2006). We recently assisted one of our business clients in claiming this tax credit and they were able to file Federal amended tax returns for 2004 – 2006 claiming almost \$180,000 of tax credits.

Another Federal tax credit that may be available to business owners is the Alternative Fuel Tax Credit. Congress recently enacted legislation providing for a 50 cent per gallon tax credit for companies using propane in forklifts. Although forklifts are normally exempt at the time of purchase from the Federal excise tax on propane, they are still eligible to claim the full 50 cent per gallon

credit for business use.

This credit could be of significant benefit to a warehouse or manufacturing operation using propane-powered forklifts. For example, a warehouse operating four forklifts running approximately five hours per day would consume approximately 2,000 gallons of propane annually. At a 50 cent per gallon tax credit, this would amount to a \$1,000 credit for the taxpayer, which is claimed on the taxpayer's income tax return for the year. This credit is available after October 1, 2006.

Please contact Scott Henkel, 262-522-8239, if you are interested in exploring the opportunity of claiming these tax credits for your business. ●



On November 1st, CGK Investment Banking hosted a seminar entitled "How To Prepare Your Company for Sale – Strategies for Maximizing Your Company's Value Today and Tomorrow." Over the course of the hour-long seminar, business owners learned about a number of key areas of focus that can not only help improve their businesses immediately, but will also help them better position their company for eventual sale down the road.

Topics covered included how to handle real estate in the sale of a business, strategies to maximize after-tax proceeds with corporate structures, dealing with key employees, non-competes and contracts, among others. Response from the participants was extremely positive with everyone commenting that they had at least one new area of focus to improve their business.

CGK is planning another session of the same seminar in early 2008, as well as additional seminars dealing with the actual process of selling a business and what to do once you have sold your business. If you have an interest in attending one of these seminars, please contact your Chortek & Gottschalk representative or CGK Investment Banking directly at 262-522-8227.



CHORTEK & GOTTSCHALK, LLP
CPAS AND BUSINESS ADVISORS

23217 West Stoneridge Drive
Waukesha, WI 53188

www.c-gcpa.com
Phone: 262/522-8227
Fax: 262/522-8228

Holiday Traditions From the Staff...

On Christmas Eve we make traditional Norwegian food such as Klub, potato dumplings with ham, and Torsk, cod potato and milk/butter gravy. On Christmas Day we go to church in the morning and follow up another big dinner with a late afternoon movie for the whole family. ~ *Mike Senkbeil, Partner, Network Services*

Following Christmas Eve church service, the family gathers to go caroling in the neighborhood and exchange offerings of "goodies" . ~ *Paula Seffrood, Support Center Administrator*

Our family came to acquire a magic Santa key. We dare not disclose how we came to possess such a great device. This key is used to magically enter our house on Christmas Eve to deliver presents to the kids. You see, we don't have a fireplace or chimney, and Andrew was quite curious, and dare I say concerned, as to how Santa would be able to deliver presents. This key hung on the outside of the house on the 23rd. And wouldn't you know it, but each year the key is found where it always is, by the saucer of milk and empty plate of cookies. Now, don't go thinking that we only take care of Santa on such a long day. A nice little pile of carrots is left for the reindeer. And would you know it, all that's left of the carrots are few nibbles." ~ *Michael Radtke, Audit Manager*

My last year in high school was spent in Germany as an exchange student where I had my first taste of "Glüwein", a popular drink served during the Christmas season. I still enjoy 'brewing' a hot batch using wine, brandy, and heavy spices. ~ *Rick Sovitzky, Partner, Business Technology*

When I was a little girl my family would spend a whole day making dozens of different kinds of Christmas cookies a few weeks before Christmas. On Christmas Day my parents would let us eat cookies for breakfast! As a kid that was the best thing in the world. All of my brothers and sisters looked forward to eating cookies for breakfast on Christmas Day, each and every year. ~ *Peaches Senkbeil, Office Manager*



Chortek & Gottschalk, C&G Consulting, and CGK Investment Banking staff were treated to the annual Christmas show, *A Fireside Christmas*, at Fort Atkinson's Fireside Theatre following dinner and cocktails on Saturday, December 8th.

A wonderful holiday tradition for many!