

## **Corporate Character**

*By Roy Oberg*

**As founder, owner and manager of a boutique-recruiting firm, I produced a document called the Strategic Objective. It is a detailed articulation of where we are taking the business. This vision includes what the company will look like, act like, feel like, smell like, and how it will perform when it is fully developed. It provides our direction, our goals and how we will perform towards our target of the future. Our Strategic Objective serves as the basis for all our decision making, planning, and business development activities. It is a document that clearly identifies to each employee where the organization will be in the future and how each position contributes to achieving that future goal. As the Company Leader, entrusted with fulfilling the Strategic Objective, I give it life by holding myself and the company accountable to each of the elements contained within it. Without my personal accountability, as the Company Leader, the Strategic Objective becomes a benign wish list.**

**It has been said that the definition of Character is doing the right thing even when you don't have to. A company's character, just as a person's, can have good or bad character. The Strategic Objective of Oberg and Associates addresses and defines the character of our company and the many accountabilities that are associated with it. For us, we are accountable to the Corrugated industry to demonstrate open and honest communication, mutual respect, and deliver hard results. If we fail to accomplish any one of these commitments in any of our professional relationships, we will have failed in our primary accountabilities. If this happens, our market place will look upon us as a company with poor character. When we do deliver on these accountabilities, we demonstrate strong character and can be considered a company of integrity. Therefore, the individual actions of a company's employees define the company's culture and character.**

**Today's corrugated converters face many complex and challenging issues. Product demand is soft around the country and price erosion is a harsh reality in many markets. Energy costs are dramatically increasing, client corporations are exporting more manufacturing overseas, and Wall Street continues to show poor confidence in Paper/Packaging companies. The corrugated market place is over-supplied with converters willing to do almost anything to retain volume and remain competitive. Therein lies the issue of Corporate Character. Does the business environment play a role in the way your company does business? Is it easier to maintain your Corporate**

**Character during times of prosperity than during periods of economic struggle? What does your company stand for, what values does it demonstrate as it pursues its Strategic Objective.**

**As many corrugated companies deal with layoffs, plant closures, union negotiations, wage freezes, and benefits/retirement issues, the decisions that are made and actions that are taken define a company's character. The manner in which a Company reconciles the challenges often defines their character in the eyes of their employees as well as the eyes of their customers. Many employers want to do the right thing for their employees and customers; yet they may only address the fiduciary responsibility to the stockholders and/or owners. Do you/can you have a vision of how to resolve these types of issues, even though they may not be black or white?**

**Demonstrating strong company character is challenging. Character, personal or company, is not only what you do, it is also defined by how you do it and why you do it. Character means different things to different people and to different companies. If a company is to display a consistent character, it must first define its character. We have made our Strategic Objective the definition of our character in both spirit and action. Do you and your employees have a clear understanding of your company's character, that which they are to emulate?**

