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## ***Quest for Victory: Moving Beyond Crossroads***

***An Interview with Cathleen Asch former CEO of Truevision***



**CATLIN & COOKMAN GROUP**

*Mastering the Art of Corporate Growth*

*Entering its seventh year, Truevision (<http://www.truevision.com>), a \$30 million video graphics company at the time, was at a crossroads. The firm had built the video graphics market and had owned it for several years until competitors finally started coming in and chipping away at the company's revenue base by offering niche products. Realizing that Truevision had to make changes and plan for the future, then CEO Cathleen Asch decided to analyze the company's strengths and weaknesses to determine directions for future growth.*

*What evolved was a multi-pronged process in which Truevision developed a mission and vision along with departmental objectives and four new cross-functional teams during three off-sites that eventually involved each of the 120 staff members. Along the way, time was also spent on building critical skills, including problem-solving, goal setting, communication and teamwork.*

*After the events described in this interview, Truevision was sold. Cathleen Asch has since left the company, but the business has continued to grow and expand its offerings. In this interview, Ms. Asch looks back at the process of engendering change.*

### **As competitors began to eat away at your market, how had Truevision responded?**

**Asch:** We gradually moved away from our known expertise and spread out in too many directions. As a result, we weren't following up with new products or product enhancements in areas where we already had good positions. We realized we were dissipating our resources and decided to choose one thing to do exceptionally well so that we owned that market, rather than continuing to do a lot of things sub optimally.

### **How did you handle the planning process?**

**Asch:** We started working with a strategic planner, but soon realized this approach was too diffuse for us; we would be making bets and wouldn't know for two or four years whether they were the right bets. We needed a more focused approach that also addressed the

organizational dynamics involved in managing change. That's when we started working with the Catlin & Cookman Group to create a mission, vision and action plan.

Katherine Catlin designed a series of off-sites; we called the process "Quest for Victory." The first off-site was for the five senior managers, and the second one involved all 25 senior and middle managers. The final phase was a series of three one-day forums, one each for the Engineering, Sales & Marketing, and Finance & Operations departments.

By the end, everyone in the company was committed to our new strategies. Each department had created its own mission and vision and a one-year plan they could act on at once. The real benefit of the Catlin & Cookman Group's approach was that you could make something happen immediately. It all goes toward accomplishing a longer-term payback, but change begins right away.

### **You mentioned you wanted to address organizational dynamics; how did the off-sites do that?**

**Asch:** Let me give you an example that stands out in my mind. Our vice president of Engineering saw a need for better teamwork between our hardware and software engineers. Working with the Catlin & Cookman Group, he decided to have the four engineering managers prepare their own team-building exercise, stipulating that the exercise had to be analogues to the product development process so the team-building experience would be relevant to the engineers' actual work.

The exercise they created was wonderful! They gave competing teams 20 minutes to design, build and test a moveable object out of Legos. The team whose object had the biggest combined score on durability, speed, and other specifications won prizes. Also, one member of the team had to make a sales presentation that included a rationale for the design of their object.



In addition to teaching teamwork, we learned a lot about the individual participants and their approaches to product development and marketing. For instance, one engineer gave a very articulate presentation and you could see him in a role in front of a customer, which is not the way you normally think of engineers. He was great!

**Did the people at Truevision use the various skills and team-building tools they learned at the off-sites after the meetings ended?**

*Asch:* Absolutely! We strengthened our cross-functional team skills, especially in problem solving. We had been using cross-functional teams before, but not as much or as effectively as we did after the sessions. Also, everybody was more aware of the need to pay attention to internal communications. We felt we had been doing a good job in that area, but everybody became more conscious of it.

**What were the benefits of having an outside facilitator for your off-sites?**

*Asch:* Without the Catlin & Cookman Group, I don't think we would have covered as much ground in as much depth or developed as many actionable items. A lot of people say, "Gee, facilitating is a no-brainer." That's totally off-base. It's not an easy job, and it's particularly difficult for people on the inside. It's harder for them to push in some areas because it's risky for them. In my experience, the results that come out of a professionally facilitated session are much better. A professional knows how to bridge different functional disciplines without biases.

**How do you respond to people who say planning isn't "real" work?**

*Asch:* I put the whole company through it, and our people knew it was real work! You can keep your eye on the ball for today for so long and then it becomes tomorrow and you've still got your eye on the ball for today and you lose.



## Catlin & Cookman Group: Corporate Profile

### *Building a Community of CEOs Who Are Growing Great Companies*

In today's fast-paced world, CEOs have the toughest job of all. While it's both exciting and rewarding, it can also be extraordinarily challenging. Where do CEOs turn for guidance? Since 1989, CEOs of emerging-growth companies have come to the Catlin & Cookman Group for our unique expertise and resources – proven methods and frameworks to plan for and manage growth and change. Our sole focus on the CEO experience sets us apart, and the highly targeted resources we offer – CEO forums, consulting processes and practical tools – are developed exclusively for CEOs who are committed to growing great companies.

#### **High-Growth CEO Forums™**

More than ever, CEOs need a group of peer advisors to help grapple with issues they can't discuss with their teams or Boards. Our unique Forums are tightly-knit groups of CEOs from similar stage companies who meet quarterly to discuss their business challenges, advise each other about critical decisions, and develop best practices for managing growth. Our focus on customizing agendas to address members' real-time, bottom-line issues keeps the group accountable and the payback measurable. And, through our licensed partners, we are growing the number of High-Growth CEO Forums worldwide, creating a powerful, wide-reaching community of over 70 venture-backed CEOs.

#### **High-Growth Consulting**

To succeed, CEOs must create a shared vision and strategy with the executive team – and then execute ... flawlessly. We work closely with CEOs to define their strategic vision and annual plans, build and align executive teams, and create the organizational design, operating system and culture for impeccable execution. Our systematic, proven frameworks for growth deliver measurable results.

***Building the Profit Spiral®** Our foundation framework. Uncovers impediments to growth and helps CEOs and their executive teams create and implement strategic plans that include market focus, mission, values, vision, strategies, structure and culture — and an operating system to make sure the plan works. The result is the path to extraordinary growth.*

***Building the Executive Team as Leaders of Growth®** Defines the key responsibilities of the executives beyond their functional roles and develops a highly-focused and exceptionally strong team capable of leading the company to successful growth, breakthrough innovation and maximized profits.*

***Building the Awesome Organization.** Drives the strategic plan down into the organization – ensures that the critical metrics, operating processes, culture and activity alignment exist to execute the plan.*

#### **Thought Leadership**

Our deep understanding of the high-growth CEO experience is reflected in our books, articles and seminars – and on our website, [www.ceoexchange.com](http://www.ceoexchange.com).

***Books:** **Leading at the Speed of Growth: Journey from Entrepreneur to CEO** (Wiley, 2001) and **Building the Awesome Organization** (Wiley, 2002) by Founder Katherine Catlin and Jana Matthews.*

***Seminars and Speaking Engagements:** “Growing Your Company: The CEO's Challenge,” a two-year, 7-part series for the Massachusetts Software Council, “The New Breed of Leader” at the Future Forward Conference, “Planning Bootcamp,” and many other engagements.*

**Clients Include:** Anaqua, Antenna Software, aPriori, Authentica, Authoria, Avotus, Bluespec, Circles, Concord Communications, Constant Contact, e-Dialog, Empirix, eRoom Technology, Experience, I-Logix, Inmagic, iRobot, LiveVault, PeopleCube, Monster.com, mValent, OneSource Information Services, PanGo Networks, Pantero, Soundbite, Steelpoint Technologies, The MathWorks, VFA, Sevin Rosen Funds, Polaris Venture Partners, and North Bridge Venture Partners



# The Bottom-Line Impact Experienced by our Clients

## High-Growth CEO Forums™

“The job of the CEO is inherently and unapologetically isolating. The High-Growth CEO Forum offers a refreshingly honest and sincere source of support and advice from peers who live on similar quarterdecks. Its format and strong facilitation differentiate it from other groups I have seen. The Forum is one of the most effective feedback and personal development mechanisms available to a CEO. It has made me a more effective leader and a happier, more balanced human being.”

*Colin Angle, CEO of iRobot which had a successful IPO in November 2005 establishing a market cap over \$700 million. He was also E&Y Entrepreneur of the Year winner in 2003.*

"I am a strong advocate for the CEO Forum. I grew and sold my last company for 5X more than it was worth when I started as CEO. There is no way I could have done that without the Forum. The quality of the people and input I got from them along the way was invaluable. We are all dealing with the same issues, just different context and timeframes. As you know, a CEO's biggest challenge is prioritizing – especially his/her time. The fact that most of this team never misses a meeting speaks volumes about the value proposition! As an aside, my current company is less than a year old and our last round post money was already 5X the first!"

*Paul DiGiammarino, President & CEO of Anaqua. After a successful exit, Paul is again a Forum member.*

“The Catlin & Cookman Group community was my most valued sounding board when I was CEO of eRoom – no other constituency could offer the direct, trusted and knowledgeable feedback a CEO needs when in the line of fire. Not the board, not my management team and certainly not my spouse. The CEO Forum provided me the opportunity to step back from the trees, reassess my long-term vision and strategy and gain clarity on often difficult and complex issues – and over time I built some fabulous friendships.”

*Jeffrey Beir, former CEO eRoom Technology, and currently General Partner, North Bridge Venture Partners. Jeffrey was an E&Y Entrepreneur of the Year winner in 2003*

“The Catlin & Cookman Group’s High-Growth CEO Forum was a major contributor to giving me the ideas and inspiration as an entrepreneurial CEO that led to winning the Entrepreneur of the Year Award.”

*Dan Schimmel, former CEO of OneSource Information Services and an E&Y Entrepreneur of the Year winner in 2001.*

“Given my scars and collective experiences, I would have thought that by now there would be nothing I could learn from a group such as this, but I am amazed at the insights I get from experienced and even newly appointed CEO's... I don't recall ever making a similar endorsement.”

*Gene Robinson, CEO of I-Logix, Inc*

## High-Growth Consulting

“I’ve always been an entrepreneur, and one of the things I learned early on was that I couldn’t get any synergy in my business until I had a group of people working as entrepreneurs together. We have that now at Monster.com as a result of our work with the Catlin & Cookman Group, and we also have a plan in place that will guide our future growth while helping us preserve our unique culture even as we add more and more employees here and around the world.”

*Jeff Taylor, Founder and Chief Monster, Monster.com*

"The Catlin & Cookman Group has been an invaluable partner for Authoria - amazing people and processes for providing insight and peer-review, and for driving powerful ideas into action."

*Tod Loofbourrow, CEO of Authoria Inc.*

“When facing a difficult issue on my management team, or for the company as a whole, a quick call to my Catlin & Cookman Group consultant always provides an enlightened and unbiased point of view that helps bring clarity to the decision that must be made. I consider the Catlin & Cookman Group to be a vital member of my team.”

*John Rizzi, CEO of e-Dialog*

