

I am excited to announce the new Fulcrum ConsultingWorks, Inc web site, redesigned to better represent my focus on Finish Strong™. The title of this monthly e-newsletter has been changed for the same reason. But as you're about to read, branding and tag lines mean nothing if a company can't deliver. Fulcrum ConsultingWorks, Inc. can.

So what is Finish Strong™ thinking?

It is about creating operational systems that build in completed work. It is about dotting operational i's and crossing operational t's. It's based on the premise that operations is more than an implementation tool, or a means to an end. Operations is the strategic function that delivers competitive advantage and brand loyalty to the marketplace and profitability to the shareholders. Or doesn't. Your company cannot afford to be sloppy if you want it to be great.

THE EVOLUTION OF FINISH STRONG™

Over my 17 years of consulting and 14 years prior to that working in operations, I have had the opportunity to examine why some companies are more successful than others. A successful company, leading through its business and marketing strategies, makes the right promises to the right markets. Equally important, they have operations that keep those promises every time, operations that earn brand loyalty and competitive advantage in the market and deliver profitability to the shareholders.

Ever have a great meal, but find yourself becoming impatient as you wait what seems like forever for the bill? Ever buy something, only to discover upon opening the box that a part or an instructional pamphlet is missing? Ever had to follow up with a company because the person you talked with didn't do what he said he would? "No problem; just bring it back" is a phrase that may make sense to the person speaking it, but for the customer it IS a problem. The return process only adds to unnecessary customer costs and time.

Operational failures tarnish creditability with the

market, increase costs, and taint whatever competitive advantage existed. I've learned that it's not what successful companies start that differentiates them; it's what they finish. They Finish Strong™.

Regardless of marketing strategy, customers see brand promise through their experience. What they see includes all the loose ends left scattered behind a transaction, a relationship, an interaction. Loose ends tarnish brand promise and customer loyalty, and in turn, profitability.

Finish Strong™ is a way of thinking based on the premise that Operations is more than an implementation tool, or a means to an end. Operations is a strategic function that establishes competitive advantage and brand loyalty with the marketplace and profitability with the shareholders. The business and marketing strategies define how to approach the market; it is the responsibility of operations to ensure tight connection between promises made about product and service and the organization's ability to deliver them.

If you want to improve the brand promise that your operations deliver, Fulcrum can help you Finish Strong™.

APICS AFTER 50 YEARS

APICS - the well-respected materials and supply chain management professional organization that accepts responsibility to define the field's body of knowledge and certifies mastery of that body through its CPIM and CSCP programs -- was formed in Cleveland, OH in 1957. This year chapters around the country and around the globe are celebrating the 50th anniversary.

The trail from a small room at the Alcazar Hotel in Cleveland to an international organization with well over 50,000 members has certainly been bumpy at times. But despite the birth of competing and complementary associations, massive changes in the profession wrought by computerization, globalization, technology, and the progression of professional thinking, APICS continues to be relevant. Not an easy task.

Happy Birthday APICS.