



WECHSLER
ENGINEERING | CONSULTING

“Aggressive Growth” is Guiding Vision FOR WECHSLER CONSULTING AND ENGINEERING

SINCE STARTING HIS BUSINESS IN 2003, TOM WECHSLER HAS GONE FROM a solo proprietor to president—and now CEO—of one of Atlanta’s leading consulting and engineering services firms. Never one to remain “standing in place,” Wechsler has his eye trained on aggressive company growth.

The difference between then and now, he says, is that he has a finely honed personal vision for his company’s growth and development—growing Wechsler Engineering and Consulting to a 200-person company (with multiple locations) within the next five years.

“IN THE PAST YEAR, I’VE TAKEN ON A VERY TALENTED PARTNER,

Kimble Garrett, who’s assumed the role of president, leading our organizational efforts and driving growth in our key process areas,” he says. “In my new role as chief executive officer, I will focus on building our core expertise, fostering new customer relationships and exploring new services and product development.”

Wechsler Engineering and Consulting specializes in combustion and energy-related areas, mostly recovering energy from waste materials. While the firm’s capabilities apply to a wide range of environments and clients, the focus is on four industries—panelboard, wood products, pulp and paper and biomass power and fuels.

“We work out how to burn materials, get energy from the process and use that energy in other forms,” he explains. “The wood-making process, for example, requires heat to process boards. We take the unusable parts of a tree (like bark) and burn it to deliver heat to the production side of wood-making.”

ENGINEER FIRST, BUSINESS OWNER SECOND

Wechsler holds a Master’s degree in Mechanical Engineering from the Georgia Institute of Technology. Prior to starting his own company, he served as a project engineer and project manager for a supplier of specialized advanced combustion systems and a supplier of incineration, waste-to-energy and air pollution control systems. It’s safe to say he knows the fields of combustion and waste-renewal inside and out.

But he’s the first to admit he’s not a seasoned businessperson by nature. “I’m a technical person, not someone with extensive business training,” he says. That explains why he felt the pressures of new challenges as a business owner, especially in the areas of staffing.

“I was completely new to responsibilities like marketing, hiring and firing, even mundane stuff like motivating employees and paying the right kinds of bonuses,” he recalls. “I wanted to promote people into positions they really couldn’t handle—which ended up creating even more difficult challenges for me and my business.”



GUIDANCE AND INSIGHT TO MOVE TO THE NEXT LEVEL

In 2010, he found the help he needed when he joined TAB. Between the guidance offered by his TAB Facilitator and the insights provided by his TAB Member peers, Wechsler has successfully moved beyond his personal comfort zone and laid the groundwork to take his company to the next level.

“My TAB Board has helped me think through all the ramifications of expanding my business, including the complicated process of becoming a CEO and hiring a president for the company,” he says. “They’ve been consistently supportive of my decisions but, at the same time, cautioning me not to go backwards and never ‘cut your way into growth.’”

Some of the toughest decisions he’s had to make revolve around personnel.

“There were individuals in the company I knew weren’t the right fit for their positions, but I was reluctant to take action. My [Facilitator and] TAB Board made me understand that in such circumstances, you have to recognize the problem, fix it and move on. Without that realization, it would have taken me a lot more time to come to the right conclusion.”

YOU CAN’T KNOW EVERYTHING

Looking ahead to a bright future, Wechsler is confident he can achieve the goal of increasing business by 20-30%, especially with the help he gets from being a TAB Member.

“All business owners can benefit from being held accountable for their decisions,” he says. “TAB holds me accountable, while also reminding me that no matter how much you think you know, you can’t know everything. It’s extremely helpful to get insights and feedback from others who have nothing to do with your business, but who have considerable experience and wisdom of their own.”