Greater Washington CFO Network
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CFO Spotlight: Joe Greeves, Former CFO GeoEye

August, 2017

1. **What was your first CFO opportunity and how did you get it?**
After leaving public accounting (Touche Ross – Now Deloitte) with great training, I went to work for my client ERC International and, at the early age of 31 years, was offered an opportunity to do a carve-out IPO. It was a wild ride. I was the youngest guy on the executive management team and probably was not really ready to be a public company CFO. The good news is, after many long hours and late nights, the IPO was successful and it worked out great for the company and myself. Key points - I had a great CFO mentor/coach and when they asked if I would do it, I said "yes". This was the beginning of my 25-year CFO career, with two strong IPO's and five successful exits!

2. **What's the most interesting issue you've had to resolve in your career?**
I personally found transitioning between CFO opportunities and dealing with the down time, in between CFO opportunities, very challenging. I transitioned five different times as a CFO. Leaving each company and my great team was always hard. It was easier, but still challenging, when you had a golden parachute and the results were really great. It was even more challenging and not much fun, when things did not go well (which happened in two of my six CFO roles). You never know how things (including world events – I was in transition when 9/11 occurred) will play out, so be flexible and prepared for a variety of possibilities. Key points – Keep your network warm and active - stay in touch with your friends. Keep up your skill sets, credentials (CPA, MBA, etc.), business relationships and contacts. You never know when you might need them!

   For those who are later in their CFO careers, the key question I hear often is "what should I do" when you, or someone else, chooses to retire you from your CFO career. You may not be ready yet to have too much idle time. I chose to become an entrepreneur and build a business with good friends (Cordia Partners & Resources) where I could help the next generation create careers and give back to the CFO community that has helped me in many ways! Key point – Make sure you have a plan!

3. **What advice do you have for other technology-minded CFO's?**
   Everyone has their own operating style, but for me these were always the important issues as a CFO:
   a. Make sure you commit to the entity and establish a strong trusting relationship (good definitions of success) with the CEO, Board members (especially the Audit Chairman) sales and operations teams and keep your eye on the forecast – especially bookings and cash.
   b. Identify and establish the key business drivers and metrics and make sure everyone understands them and agrees. Try to focus on the future and be a strategic leader – operate at the macro level, but make sure you understand the micro level issues too.
   c. Lean towards Yes (versus No) when dealing with other team members. Key point - You will not gain team trust if you don't listen or frequently start off with a no answer.
   d. When you have good opportunities to raise or drive cash – do it! Cash is strategic and helps ensures confidence in everyone!
   e. Finally, try to be genuine, fair, humble, ethical and a facilitative leader of success. Make yourself available to the team and try to resolve issues quickly and as fairly as possible. You will have a short honeymoon to gain the trust of the CEO and team. Key Point - The shelf life of an unfair CFO tends to be short.

4. **When you are not working, how to you spend your downtime (hobbies, activities, etc.)?**
   I have always enjoyed my CFO and entrepreneurial roles, so in many respects, I never felt like I was really working!

   I have always tended to work long hours doing the week, and then try to completely break away on the weekends to do active things (CAPS games, UM Terp basketball and football games, and enjoying our Annapolis home) with my wife and kids (3) and grandkids (5) and friends. This approach always provided the balance I needed and helped keep my marriage to Patty (37 years and still my best friend) and family relationships healthy.