

CFO SPOTLIGHT: STEWART CURLEY, CFO OF LOOKINGGLASS CYBER SOLUTIONS

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1. What's the most interesting issue you've had to resolve in your career?

I was an early employee at Orbital Sciences, which was the first commercially funded aerospace company. We were in the process of going public and the morning the shares were to start trading the Wall Street Journal wrote an article in the upper left corner of page 1 trashing the company and claiming our Pegasus winged rocket (the first of its kind) would never fly. The underwriters got spooked and pulled the offering and we were out of money. We accelerated our development and successfully launched the rocket within a few months. This was the first time a new rocket was successfully launched on its first attempt in the history of the US space program. We raised the offering pricing and completed the IPO shortly thereafter and went from almost out of business to a multi-billion dollar company.

2. Describe your version of the modern day CFO.

The CFO role has really evolved into more of an operating role. The traditional accounting and finance functions are still core, however the respect for the position has grown to include areas like legal/contracts, HR, facilities and professional services. In my current role I am also responsible for the contract manufacturing of our security appliance, not traditional CFO stuff.

3. What is your biggest accomplishment of your career?

Marrying and keeping my wife Debbie. A spouse that can support a CFO's long hours, grumpy moods and frequent job changes is truly a saint!

4. What's one regret you can share about your career?

I regret not doing a better job balancing work and family time and sweating the details too much. Family has to come first and the kids always grow up faster than you think. Try to laugh more and worry less. That is easy to say but you need to constantly remind yourself (and mean it) or you will fall into your old ways.

5. How do you mentor people in your organization?

I really enjoy mentoring controllers and Directors of FPA. I take pride in seeing how many have gone on to be successful CFOs, some more successful than me!

6. What are the 3 most important characteristics of a company culture?

1. Respect for alternative opinions. You must listen to be heard

2. Collaboration – you are stronger as a team
3. Forgiveness – we all screw up, so let things go when your team makes mistakes, as long as they are willing to admit them

7. Do you have a personal mantra, words of wisdom or favorite inspirational quote?

Work hard and play harder, it is the only way for a CFO to stay sane.

8. Name an “inflection point” experience that prepared you for your current position as Chief Financial Officer.

When I was a 26 year old Corporate Controller, I thought I knew everything and could assume the new CFO role at our company. I was very disappointed when they hired a much more senior person to take that position. I thought of leaving but decided to stay, which became one of my best decisions. I learned more from him than I could have imagined and I became much stronger CFO when my time was right.