

Words to live by –

Treat people right and they will remember you. What goes around, comes around.

Connie Hyslop, President/Owner
Hyslop & Associates

I may not be Steve Jobs, Bill Gates or anyone famous, but I have built a successful business that has provided me a comfortable living and a loyal following of students who I believe will remember me for giving 110% and always making their best interest my priority. Over the years, many people have asked about my background. I did not have a plan; I have followed my instincts to get where I am today. Here is my story.

NH Department of Education Days

In 1981, I went to work when my second child was a year old. I got a job for the NH Department of Education as a secretary to John Gray and Nancy Grimes who were state consultants in the Sex Equity Office. Yes, this prompted the jokes you expect. On more than one occasion, I received mail addressed to Connie Hyslop, Sex Quality Office. The purpose of this office was to educate teachers and administrators in New Hampshire schools on the Title IX Educational Amendment.

"No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance..."

In summary, our office sponsored seminars to educate people that boys and girls should have equal opportunity in all aspects of education, including academics and sports. Nancy Grimes felt that it was important to educate women to strive for more in their future. She offered seminars on "Math Anxiety for Women", "Women in Non-Traditional Careers" and many more. Nancy believed that young women should be encouraged to be a doctor rather than a nurse, a lawyer vs. an assistant, etc. Over the couple of years that I worked for Nancy, she always told me that I was *underemployed* and had what it takes to be an entrepreneur and be the boss. I truly feel that I owe my self confidence and business success to Nancy Grimes. Sadly Nancy passed away a few years ago – we remained friends until the day she died.

My first exposure to computers was while I was working for the Department of Education. Our office purchased a dedicated word processor, known as an IBM Displaywriter, for the bargain price of \$14,000. This was when I met Robin Warren who was a marketing representative for IBM and handled accounts with the state. The state had a freeze on purchasing equipment, but with Robin's help we did some **creative** budgeting and leased the equipment from IBM.

My computer training began when the UPS driver said "sign here". I opened the boxes to find 9 full size gray notebooks (not computer notebooks) with instructions on how to put the equipment

together and learn to use it. I spent several months teaching myself how to use the computer. Months later when the state freeze on spending was lifted other offices in the department purchased equipment. When they opened the boxes, their response was "Connie knows how to run this". That was the beginning of my computer training days. I found that I had the ability to read technical directions but translate instructions into terminology that the average person could understand. I found it very rewarding when I would show people how to do things that they had struggled on. The next thing I knew the Department of Revenue Administration heard that I was really good on the computer and requested that I help them. Again, this was a real ego booster.

The Transition to a New Career – Computer Training

In September of 1984, my boss, Nancy met someone at a business networking group that owned a computer training school in Derry. She highly recommended me as a trainer and shortly thereafter the woman contacted me and convinced me to leave my state job and go to work for her school full time. It seemed like a good career move so I took a chance. I did on-site training in businesses in southern New Hampshire and Massachusetts. While in this position I attended a seminar at IBM in Bedford and ran into Robin Warren. We chatted for a few minutes and later had a business lunch to discuss possible networking. I loved my job and the joy I got from teaching others. However, my boss was the only woman in my entire career that I could not work with. After being employed for 6 months, I decided I could not continue to work for her. I went home and told my husband that I needed to find a new job. The next morning I walked in the office to my phone ringing and it was Robin, from IBM who wanted to let me know that she had a used computer for sale if I knew anyone that might be interested. That night I told my husband, Doug, *"I think this is fate staring me in the face"*. Doug has always been encouraging and supportive and said you can do it without her.

Establishing My Business

In February of 1985 I applied at Laconia Savings Bank for a \$5,000 commercial loan to start a business. Back then it was a simple couple page application. I did not do any research or have a business plan, just an idea and lots of enthusiasm. After signing the loan papers, I approached the teller window to deposit the check and realized that the check was for \$50,000. It may have only been an extra 0 – and trust me I was tempted to take the money and run. My basic values kicked in and I knew I had to do the right thing. So I went back to the loan officer and said "excuse me, but I think this check is a little too much". Keep in mind this was before everything was done on a computer so I had to wait for someone to cut a new check on the typewriter. While I was waiting, the loan officer was making small talk and said – so what are you going to do again? I gave him my sales pitch. His response was "you mean to tell me you can teach us how to use all of these computers we have around here". I had no idea what they had, or if I knew how to run them, but at that point I had to be confident and said "of course". Laconia Savings Bank (Now Bank of New Hampshire) became my first customer and they are still a customer today.

Six months after I started my own business, Robin Warren left IBM to start her own computer training & consulting business. She contacted me and suggested that we work together rather than become competitors. And so, I became a subcontractor for her company Access Computer

Consultants. Robin is very professional and has a strong business and marketing background. I learned a great deal about business from her. She was excellent at selling our services to corporate customers, whereas my strength was teaching. After subcontracting to each other for a couple of years, Robin suggested that we become partners. After about 2 years, the economy took a down turn. Robin was able to financially ride it out – but I on the other hand had a young family and needed to supplement our income. It was at this time that I approached 6 different colleges and started teaching continuing education computer workshops. Robin and I had originally agreed to split our profit 50/50 and so in fairness to her I decided to pull out of the partnership and go back to subcontracting.

Identity Crisis

Now I needed to come up with a new business name. I had done training for thousands of people at this point but under a variety of business names or representing a college. So I decided my new company would be **HYSLOP & ASSOCIATES** because people that had participated in my classes would know it was me and follow me. So I continued to do on-site computer training for business throughout New Hampshire and Massachusetts. After 14 years in the training business, the computer industry exploded and I was teaching days, evenings and sometimes Saturdays. It wasn't long before I started to get burned out with the travel and long days.

Our Own School

In August of 1998, my husband, Doug decided to leave his job in Concord and together we opened a computer training school in Laconia. Our goal was to offer one day workshops to local businesses and individuals in the Lakes Region. After opening, we were approached by the local Employment Security staff and asked to provide services to people who needed to build their skills to obtain better employment. Along the way, we also gained a following of senior citizens who wanted to gain basic computer skills.

Today, I continue to offer classes to the general public at our school located in the Lakes Region and provide on-site computer training to businesses that have enough participants to fill their own classes. As a sideline of the training business, I offer computer consulting services and informational seminars to large groups. Our customers include businesses, individuals, family and friends.

In summary...

I have always believed that if you treat people right, they will remember you. You never know when they will come into your life again. Nancy Grimes may have been my boss, but she became my friend and when she retired from the state I helped her to learn how to use her computer. I first met Robin Warren as a salesperson for IBM, we became business partners, but when we dissolved our partnership, we remained friends. She later taught for me at my new school. Laconia Savings became my first customer, their staff consistently sends me referrals and they remain a customer today.

I may not be in the same financial world as Bill Gates or Steve Jobs, but my business acquaintances, customers and students have become my friends. Success is not always measured in money.