



## REFLECTIONS ON 10 YEARS OF MORRISON & COMPANY

I started Morrison & Company in February 2002 with three main goals:

- Offer services that are valuable and unique, not cookie-cutter or “off the shelf.”
- Learn from what I liked – and didn’t – about working with consultants during my 20 years in private industry.
- Live out one of my favorite verses: “Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men.”

The amount of work and the expertise it required quickly outgrew what I was able to do on my own and I began subcontracting to meet the need; one of the first to help was Stacy Kennedy, CPA, who is now one of our most experienced professionals. Our first fulltime employee, Geoff Chinnock, CPA, became a principal in the firm in January 2011.

Our team today is rounded out by Toni Scott, a former newspaper reporter and a gifted researcher and writer; Tim Peters, CPA; grants consultant Morgan Chinnock, and; administrative assistant Caitlin Villalobos. We now work with scores of clients around the United States (and even a few internationally) in four service areas:

**Planning/Feasibility:** Strategic planning, budgeting and financial models, business plans, feasibility studies, product line extensions, business acquisitions and sales, mergers and alliances, and most other business planning needs. In addition to our own team we have long affiliations with like-minded specialists in fields including engineering, marketing, and

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## Morrison helps secure record funding for California solar project



*Morrison & Company Consultant Stacy Kennedy (center), Jane Roberti (left), and Dave Roberti, celebrating the installation of the Roberti's 500 kilowatt solar project.*

Dave Roberti and his family run a cattle operation in Loyalton, California, and were looking for a way to decrease the cost of powering their nine 100-horsepower irrigation pumps.

For Roberti Ranch, solar energy seemed a viable option and Dave came to Morrison & Company seeking help with a Rural Energy for America Program (REAP) loan guarantee and grant, in hopes of receiving financial assistance for the 500 kilowatt project.

REAP is a USDA program that offers grants and loan guarantees to agricultural producers and rural small businesses to help offset the cost of alternative energy and energy efficiency projects. The program is extremely competitive and requires an independent feasibility study to accompany grant and loan guarantee applications. Along with grant writing services, Morrison & Company's staff includes several highly-experienced CPAs, allowing us to complete complex feasibility assessments in-house.



*The Roberti Ranch 500 kilowatt solar project in Sierra County, California.*

Our experience with REAP grant applications (and 100% award success rate with the program) ultimately benefitted Roberti Ranch and in late summer 2011, we learned that the Roberti's application was successful. Roberti Ranch secured the largest REAP grant award in California at \$204,000 and the largest REAP loan guarantee in the nation at \$1.4 million.

In October, Morrison & Company staff traveled to Loyalton to celebrate the ribbon cutting for the solar project, the first in the Plumas Sierra Rural Electric Cooperative District. Sharing in the festivities allowed us to see the tangible result of hours of research, analysis, number crunching, and writing. We were honored to have a part in helping secure the financial and environmental sustainability of Roberti Ranch.

The Rural Energy for America Program is just one of many energy and agribusiness programs Morrison & Company specializes in. To learn more about our grants practice, visit [www.morrisonco.net/Grants.htm](http://www.morrisonco.net/Grants.htm) or our grants website at [www.morrisongrants.com](http://www.morrisongrants.com).

information technology, allowing us to offer comprehensive and coordinated business planning services.

**Interim Executives:** Experienced fill-ins for assistance with specific projects or ongoing high-level advice and assistance by industry-tested professionals who have served in CEO, CFO, controller, and other positions.

**Special Projects:** Some needs are hard to pigeonhole but if it has to do with finance, accounting and accounting systems and cleanup, or business-related processes, analyses, research, and planning, we can help.

**Grants:** Competitive grant proposals and grant administration for food, agribusiness, and alternative energy programs.

This past year was a great one for Morrison & Company and we are looking forward to an even better 2012. We have outgrown our office space and expect to move in 2012, and don't be surprised to learn of further additions to the Morrison team.

Along with this quarterly newsletter and other outreach, expect a new Morrison website this year. (There: I said it in print so now we have to do it!) But don't let that stop you from going to [www.Morrisonco.net](http://www.Morrisonco.net) now, where you'll find examples of our projects, background on our people, and a blog updated regularly with timely business information and the latest goings on here at Morrison.

Finally, I want to thank our clients and all those who've helped make the last ten years a success. We look forward to serving you for many years to come.

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## A Study in Growth: California Olive Ranch



One of the most rewarding aspects of the work we do at Morrison & Company is the opportunity to partner so closely with companies that are highly innovative and changing the landscape of American business.

California Olive Ranch, based in Oroville, California, is one these remarkable companies. The past few years, California Olive Ranch has become the largest producer of extra virgin olive oil in the United States. California Olive Ranch has 13,000 acres of olives under production in Butte and Glenn counties, representing approximately half of the state's olive oil acreage. Their mill in Artois, California, is the largest in the Western Hemisphere and unparalleled in its state-of-the-art equipment. You can now find California Olive Ranch Extra Virgin Olive Oil in grocery stores across the nation.

In late 2011, California Olive Ranch was featured by the New York Times, the Martha Stewart Show, and CBS's Sunday Morning, bringing national attention to the California company. Other 2011 press coverage including articles and mentions in Real Simple Magazine, Good Housekeeping, The Boston Globe, and Sunset Magazine.

Since 2006, Morrison & Company has assisted California Olive Ranch with their rapid growth, including interim financial management, strategic planning, long- and short-range budgeting, accounting systems, and executive recruiting.

We look forward to being a part of this progressive and innovative company's bright future and encourage you to check out [www.californiaoliveranch.com](http://www.californiaoliveranch.com) or visit them on Facebook for the latest recipes and company news!



# Attracting and Retaining Top Talent in Small Market Companies

Businesses that are located outside major metropolitan areas and fit the Small Business Administration's definition of a small business (generally, fewer than 500 employees) often face challenges in attracting and retaining top talent. This can be particularly acute in fields like marketing, finance and accounting, and engineering. Candidates for these and other fields often prefer to live in urban areas and may feel there is more room for advancement at larger "name" companies. Even in the current economy, the best people in many fields are still hard to find and keep.

We have faced these issues many times while serving in interim executive and financial management roles and when helping clients find full-time replacements. Just as you strive to differentiate your product and your brand to your customers, you must also differentiate yourself as an employer. Two important ways to accomplish this is with your work environment and through the perks and benefits you provide.

Americans today are working 47 hours per week on average with just two weeks of vacation per year, leading to all-time high stress levels. This makes your work environment more important than ever when it comes to attracting and retaining good employees. The qualities of a work environment that can be most attractive include opportunities for advancement, a family-like atmosphere, flexibility in work schedules, and a broad range of responsibilities. Clear decision-making authority is particularly important to executive candidates, who often feel bogged down in larger environments.

Another important way to differentiate your company is with benefits and perks. A little creativity can go a long way, but the most important thing is to know what your employees (and prospective employees) value. For some it may be providing lunch once or twice a week, while for others it may be a housing allowance, bring your

pet to work days, free massages, or vacations at company-owned properties. We have a client that has an open coffee bar and a ping pong table, another that allows hunting and fishing on privately owned lands, and a third that brings in masseuses during particularly stressful periods.

If you are serious about making an offer to a candidate from out of the area, it is worthwhile to invite him or her to spend a week getting familiar with the area and the company's culture. Invite spouses and children. As much as practicable, insist on the spouse's visit; we have seen a lot of "good fits" fall apart in short order because a candidate's family was not comfortable with the area.

Drive the candidate and his or her family around town to look at houses, schools, local points of interest, recreation areas, churches, and anything else that may be important to them. Take them to dinner at both fine and family restaurants. If the location is potentially an issue, it is better to find out before an offer is accepted than to refill the position a few months later.

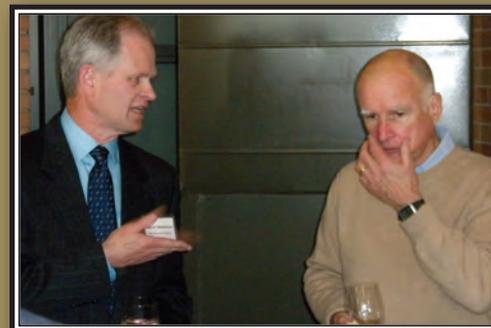
If finding worthy candidates in your area proves almost insurmountable, training and developing the people who are available may be the best and most cost effective option. Reaching out to a local college or vocational school to offer training can be an effective way of finding and investing in talent that is already committed to your community. If you can't find the right candidates, sometimes you have to build them.

Attracting and retaining talented workers can be a struggle for any small or rural business but with a proper understanding of what employees value, you can provide attractive opportunities for current and prospective employees while attracting and retaining the talent you need.

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## Morrison & Company Tidbits:

- Toni Scott, Morrison & Company consultant, was recently selected for the 2012 Class of the California Farm Bureau Federation Leadership Farm Bureau Program. The yearlong program will include 250 hours of instruction and focus on governmental affairs, personal development and agriculture issues. Toni will join nine other Farm Bureau leaders from across the state. Toni chairs the Butte County Young Farmers and Ranchers and is a founding director of the Butte Agriculture Foundation.
- Geoff Chinnock, Morrison & Company Principal, completed a year-long leadership program through the Civic Pioneers Institute in Fall 2011. Each year up to 25 individuals are selected to participate in this Butte County leadership program. The program is open to people in government, private business, education, and non-profit groups. The monthly sessions and workshops were designed to provide professional development and civic engagement.
- Principals Brent Morrison and Geoff Chinnock took part in the Agricultural Council of California's 2011 Legislative Day, meeting with legislators regarding important issues impacting California agribusiness and grower-owned cooperatives. In addition to meeting with legislators and their staffs, Brent had the chance to chat with Governor Jerry Brown.



Brent Morrison with Governor Brown

**Be sure to visit our blog at [www.morrisonco.net](http://www.morrisonco.net) to stay up to date with the latest happenings at Morrison & Company.**

## Who We Are

*Morrison & Company was founded in 2002 to provide specialized consulting services including business planning, interim and part-time executive assistance, special business-related projects and specialized grant writing. We serve companies in food, agribusiness, processing, distribution, alternative energy, manufacturing, and other industries.*