

# Solutions Speak

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**Ten Years. New Look. Same Solutions that Work.**

**By Jay Garner  
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It's hard to believe, but 10 years ago this month, I went on a leap of faith and started what was then called the Competitive Strategies Group. At that time, I had served as a local or regional economic development practitioner for 23 years. I was ready for a change.

During my practitioner days, I spent well in excess of \$1 million for consulting services, which, of course, included engineering and technical services. But, when it came to the strategy work I engaged consultants to do, I found myself uninspired by the end result. There was little creativity and innovation, and I found that I was writing many of the recommendations in the plan myself. I knew I could do a better job, though the risk of starting your own business was daunting, since you "eat what you kill."

Nonetheless, I took the plunge. I created a business plan, engaged a group of potential clients in a focus group to help me devise our menu of services, and came up with a name for the company. I listened to the focus group intently, except for their suggestion for the company name. I wanted it to be more than just my name, but the focus group participants came back and said, "You are the brand. It needs to be your name." But, I didn't listen. I quickly found out that, even though the company was named the Competitive Strategies Group, both clients and the media were referring to the company in a variety of ways—all using the Garner name.

So, in 2009, I changed the name of the company to Garner Economics in order to reflect public sentiment as well as our focus on analytical, quantitative analysis as an important piece of the strategic planning process, and our ability to provide cost analysis for corporate location clients.

But, back to 2003.

My first client was the Greater Phoenix Economic Council, led by Rick Weddle at the time. I did some organizational and investor relations work for them. Thank you, Rick! Michael Olivier followed closely behind as my second client, whom I assisted (along with the Harrison County Economic Development Commission) in organizational design. Jim Renzas got me involved in incentive negotiations and site

advisory work for a number of corporate clients. Thank you, Jim, for helping me get into the site location advisory business. The Facility Group, and now Primus Builders, outsourced their location advisory work to us. This allowed our entire team at Garner Economics to gain an expertise in location factors for the food and beverage industry, as well as distribution centers. More than 100 client engagements later (and with many repeat clients), here we are!

I am fortunate to have a superb team of professionals helping me:

<http://www.garnereconomics.com/Team/Default.aspx>. I am also fortunate to have the strategic partnerships that help us drive business to our respective firms:

<http://www.garnereconomics.com/Partners.aspx>. I am lucky to have great friends who have either hired us or recommended us to other firms; many of these new clients also became great friends rather than just business acquaintances. And, lastly, I am blessed to have a supporting and loving family.

The success of Garner Economics could not have occurred without many, many people and organizations. And, for that, I am especially grateful. Our goal is to provide each of our clients, whether they are an economic development organization or a corporate client seeking assistance in location advisement, an outstanding product that is innovative and creative, yet pragmatic; one that exemplifies our slogan: Solutions that Work.

It's been a great 10 years. I look forward to 10 more.

Oh, and by the way, check out our new look by visiting our new web site: [www.garnereconomics.com](http://www.garnereconomics.com). Let's be honest. Like most company web sites, it's mostly an electronic brochure that advertises our company. Yet, our site does provide a bit more. Our Research & Analysis page offers articles that reflect research or authorship done specifically by Garner Economics, as well as articles from other sources that we feel would be valuable to you, our clients and visitor to this site.

<http://www.garnereconomics.com/Research-Analysis/Archive.aspx>.

Here's to a great 2013!