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PROFILE

Charles Hoyt is still willing to work on a handshake basis

By Janice Stevens

Special to The Business Journal

A love of nature and an aptitude for business is a winning combination for Charles Hoyt, owner and manager of the Charles Hoyt Company, Agricultural Management Consulting.

The business specializes in business assistance to and the operation of agricultural-based firms.

Hoyt's office decor reinforces the theme of nature from C. W. Russell and Remington's prints of horses to a clock with paintings of birds such as the House Finch, Northern Mockingbird and Morning Dove.

"I grew up liking Russell as an artist," Hoyt said.

Hoyt's experience as a horse wrangler as a teenager in Montana could fulfill the dreams of many small cowboys, but for Hoyt, it gave him a lifelong love of working with animals and land. While pursuing his MBA degree, Hoyt was an instructor in the agricultural business management department at Cal Poly. He has also lectured at California State University, Fresno.

Hoyt's first professional position after college was in Fresno with Western Farm Management Company under Jim Miles in 1976.

"He was a positive influence in my early business career. He had a great flair for life," Hoyt said.

Hoyt was involved in mortgage loan, land appraisal, real estate feasibility studies, real estate brokerage and project consultation. Hoyt quickly moved up to Western Region Loan Manager in charge of agricultural mortgage loan production and service. This involved a correspondent relationship with three major insurance companies and covered the seven western states and nine offices.

In spite of the upswing of his career, Hoyt knew something was missing.

"I was moving further away from management and in 1980 I decided to work for a farmer to learn the grass roots," Hoyt said. "I went from a desk-oriented job to the field. I love field agriculture." In 1980, Hoyt joined Price Giffen Associates, "a large diversified farming company operating over 1,200 acres and seven crops." Hoyt managed all the business aspects of accounting, cash flow, finance and strategy functions.

After four years, Hoyt said that he came to a point in his life in which he wanted to own his own business. In 1984, he took on the challenge during the "downside of agriculture," as he describes it. Fifteen years of consulting later, Hoyt still derives a great deal of pleasure out of a career that is dependent on the cycles of nature. Hoyt's territory includes the Central Valley, the Imperial Valley, the central coast, Sacramento and Nevada. Some of his assignments include providing management assistance to large scale row crop farming, large scale produce farming and marketing, tree farming, packing house management, product manufacturing and processing.

"My business is very personal. It's not terribly franchise-able. I've chosen to provide more with my own time," Hoyt said.

That personal, individualized consultation is Hoyt's strength. He brings his education and experience in both business and agriculture to the table in working with clients.

Hoyt offers four common assignments typical of Charles Hoyt Company:

1. Works with a lending company to convince or reassure them of the businesses success

2. Works with staff or administration to provide accurate information

3. Offers mediation and arbitration between family owners or partners

4. Creates a detailed economic-business-computer model to analyze the complexities of the business

"I can interpret thoughts and plans. I can save them months of time," Hoyt said.

Hoyt specializes in a financial position analysis. Once he determines what the business needs, he goes to work.

"I'm a mechanical nuts and bolts-type, but I can see the big picture. That helps me a lot to chart out and sift through the maze and chart the paths.

"I will come in and work with the accounting staff, helping them hire employees to assist them. I come in, set them up then leave. Most are like the bell curve, with on-going relationships, many for over 10 years," Hoyt said.

Hoyt appreciates the type of people he works with.

"They're great. They are very good at what they do - they just don't have the time to lay out the plans. Most things are done over handshakes," Hoyt said.

Honesty and integrity are of the utmost importance to Hoyt.

"I adhere to a very high level of ethics. I try to guide myself with the level of ethics of an attorney. I deal with sensitive and personal levels. I'm project oriented," Hoyt said.

That level of integrity plays a part in Hoyt's accepting a consulting project.

"I ask, do I believe in the project? I don't take a project I don't believe in and then I really fight for them. I take care of the selling permits, whatever my clients are trying to do. My personal contribution is [that] I work long hours. I don't leave at 5 p.m.," Hoyt said.

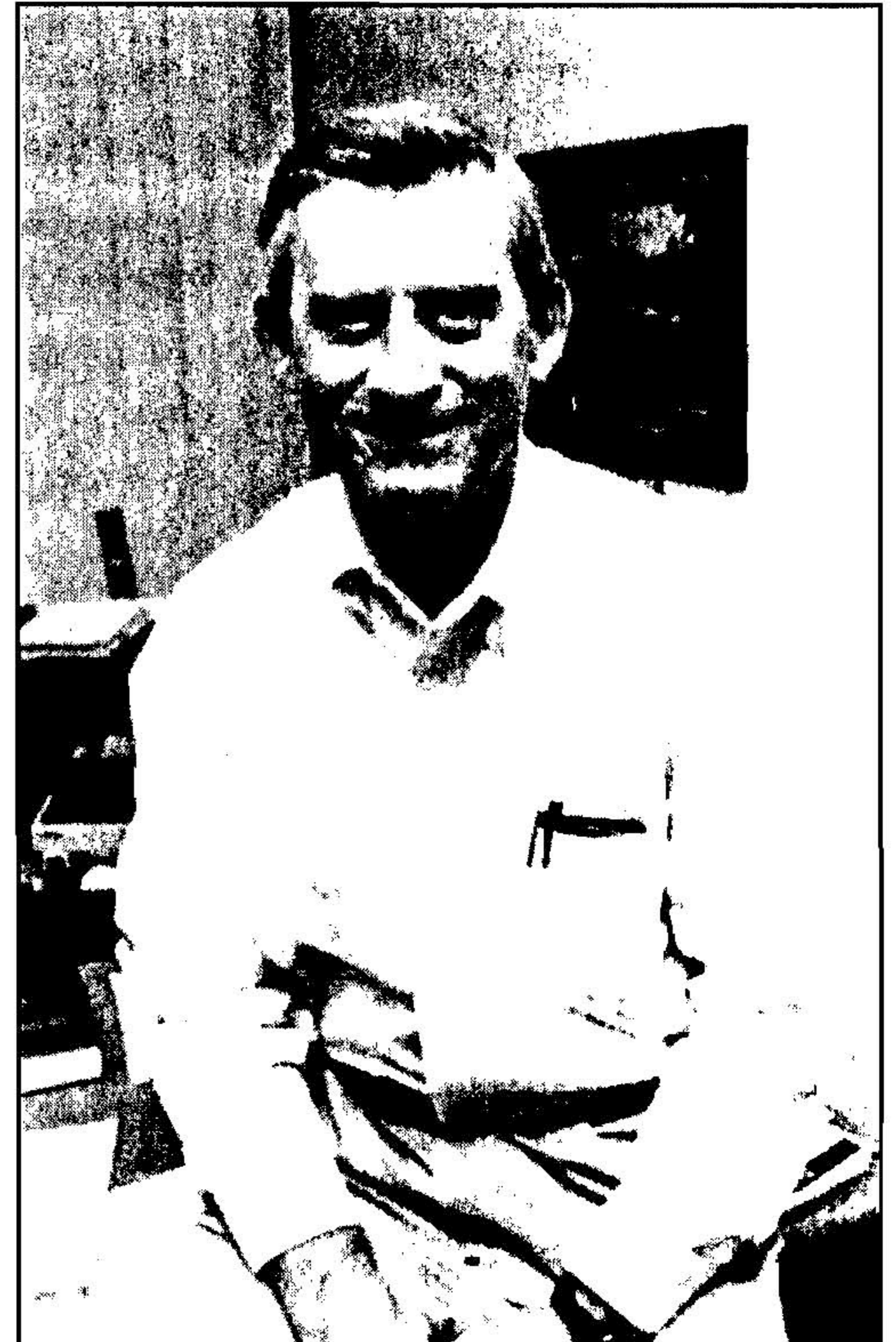
Working long hours would be the only way Hoyt could accomplish all that he does. He has been appointed to the Panel of Arbitrators of the American Arbitration Association. He is a member of the Steering Committee for the Family Farm Alliance; he is a member of the Western Growers Association, the Fresno County Farm Bureau, and the American Society of Farm Managers and Rural Appraisers. He is a member of the San Joaquin Valley Ag Lender's Society and a past member of its board of directors.

"He's fantastic because he has banking background and farming background," said John Newton of Newton Brothers, of Stratford, Calif. Hoyt provided strategic planning and general business assistance for the large family row crop farm operation.

The Charles Hoyt Company has an excellent relationship with most of the major agricultural lenders in the San Joaquin Valley.

"He's a dogged individual. He would work so hard. He's a detailed-oriented individual . . . He's a real hands-on guy. We're limited to what we do so we need to be the best. We're always trying to see how we can improve on whatever we're doing.

"Chuck came in to reorganize our financial records. He has the ability to work with our bankers. He's sharp," said Newton, one of many in a long list of satisfied clients, past and present.



Photo/Eusevio Arias