Look at the path of any professional who has built a successful business from the ground up and you are bound to discover some "food for thought" that is relevant to your own strategic planning. Launching any new business venture, including an environmental one, is difficult, as there will inevitably be obstacles and unforeseen setbacks along the way. However, there are some common traits that distinguish entrepreneurs who succeed in turning new ideas into profitable business operations from those who are unsuccessful. These traits go beyond what anyone can learn in Business Management 101. Experience has demonstrated that the qualities discussed below are common to many successful innovators and that these traits should be useful for any fledgling entrepreneur to remember.

**Passion** — An entrepreneur builds a business based, first and foremost, on an idea. The idea alone, however, is not enough. Ideas have little chance for success without enthusiasm. It will be difficult, if not impossible, to convince other critical players—employees, investors, and potential clients—that you have a winning business proposition without displaying fervent passion. As Ralph Waldo Emerson said, "Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm."

**Realism** — Although passion is critical, it is equally important to be realistic. Objective analysis is the way to separate viable business ideas from foolhardy ones. Entrepreneurs, at least the successful ones, must be honest with themselves about ideas that are worth pursuing and those that, although they may be good ideas, are unlikely to turn a profit.

**Vision** — Any successful business is based on a vision accompanied by a clearly laid out strategy for getting there. Having a well-defined plan can make the difference between veering off course and staying on track. For example, some environmental firms have a strategic vision to pursue only high-end consulting work, and charge a premium for it. This vision reflects their strategic focus on being a specialist rather than trying to undercut the competition’s price. Defining this vision in clear terms enables such companies to concentrate on a particular business path without distraction.

**Resilience** — Unless you are clairvoyant, you have no idea what obstacles might arise that will threaten your plans to bring a new idea to market. Successful entrepreneurs are flexible and willing to change their plans in response to market feedback. They are even willing to abandon their plans if customer demand does not materialize. In the final analysis, entrepreneurs are resilient enough to know when to cut their losses or change course, rather than continuing down the wrong path.

**Perspective** — Getting a new idea off the ground requires attention to market needs. Successful entrepreneurs are innovators and, as such, they do not focus on what was, but rather on what is (and, of course, what will be). The distinction between "then" and "now" is an important one. Environmental firms...
can either lament the days when command-and-control regulation and strong enforcement kept environmental services in high demand, or they can change perspective and think of new and innovative ways to meet demand for their expertise under today's more flexible regulatory environment.

**Persistence** — Behind every success story is inevitably a line of failures. Any entrepreneur’s primary goal is long-term survival and building a company with staying power. Such an effort, however, takes time and persistence. Consider Thomas Edison, who received his first patent in 1869 for an electric vote recorder. With patent in hand, Edison’s vision was to market his invention to Congress and state legislatures as a means for tallying votes electronically rather than the more arduous process of roll call. However, his first sales call was rejected by the Massachusetts state legislature, followed quickly by a rejection from the federal government. The problem with his approach was that speed was not a top priority of government. In fact, politicians considered the roll call a sacred ritual. Undaunted, Edison vowed to invent only products that had “commercial demand.” His persistence obviously paid off, and he went on to patent more than 1000 inventions and build many successful businesses.

**Fearlessness** — Along with persistence, entrepreneurs generally possess an innate fearlessness. Fear of failure prevents many business ideas from ever leaving the ground. In the words of Anne Morrow Lindbergh, “It takes as much courage to have tried and failed as it does to have tried and succeeded.”

Regardless of what business you are in, if you have an idea for a service that truly delivers value, and you can back up that value in terms of quantitative returns, there’s a good chance you can convert your idea into a business success. Despite the famous adage, “Nothing succeeds like success,” getting there can be a long haul. To get any new business idea off the ground, therefore, much can be learned from the innovators who preceded you.

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This international symposium will provide a technical forum for environmental professionals to share experiences with the proposed revisions to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s *Guideline on Air Quality Models*. Since the *Guideline* is required for use in the preparation of State Implementation Plans, federal construction permits, and many state permits, the technical and regulatory issues are of concern to source owners, regulatory agencies, consultants and the general public. Courses on CALPUFF, AERMOD, and PRIME will precede the conference.

EPA has proposed the adoption of AERMOD-Prime and CALPUFF as the refined models for most applications and simultaneously proposed the deletion of ISC. Since ISC has been the workhorse of regulatory modeling for almost 20 years, this represents a considerable change in the way modeling will be done.