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## How Do You Structure Success?

What's Your Problem?

**From:** [Issue 45](#) | April 2001 | Page 58 **By:** Keith H. Hammonds **Photographs by:** Kathleen Doohar

### Who

Tony Zhang, 43, founder and CEO of AskMeFinance, a Boston-based startup that provides online market intelligence about small businesses to financial institutions.

### What's your problem?

"I want to make sure my hires succeed. In a startup, you want people who can survive without structure - or who can invent structure as they go. Things like that don't come through on a résumé."

### Tell me about it.

"New companies operate under extreme pressure, so your team really has to work well together. And a big part of making sure that a new executive succeeds is making sure that there's a good fit."

### What's your solution?

Zhang retained Gordon Curtis, a recruiter who focuses on retention and sustainability. Curtis's business actually depends on the long-term viability of his prospects: He doesn't collect the last third of his fee until new hires show that they will last. Says Zhang: "Before the first interview with job candidates for

vice president of operations, Curtis prepped me with questions to help me judge what was on their résumés. And after we made the hire, he kept working: He gave everyone on the management team the Myers-Briggs test and went over the results with each of us. Then we went to lunch once a month as a team -- with Gordon facilitating conversations about how we communicated with one another. I was dubious about all of this -- but it worked. We came to understand why certain things happened in certain ways, and we became more effective." The upshot: That new VP is a vital part of Zhang's team -- and Curtis has collected his full fee.

Contact Tony Zhang ([tony@askmefinance.com](mailto:tony@askmefinance.com)) or Gordon Curtis ([gscurtis@mediaone.net](mailto:gscurtis@mediaone.net)) by email.



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