

Executive of the Month

Joe Bruno • CEO • CMA

Success Magazine: What does success mean to you?

Joe Bruno: Being able to care for yourself and your family, while having a positive impact on people. That's where I come from and that's what I try to do.

SM: Unlike a lot of politicians, you were not born into an affluent family. Could you elaborate on your upbringing?

JB: My father immigrated to the United States as a young boy and dropped out of school in the sixth grade to help support his family by working on the railroad. He later worked at the Army paper factory in South Glens Falls, shoveling coal. He married and had eight children. We probably grew up in as poor a circumstance as you can imagine—no hot water, over-crowded, only a small wood stove in the kitchen to heat the whole house. My father was an honest, hardworking guy and ended up working three jobs to try to support us. He never went on welfare and always instilled in us that we shouldn't take what we didn't earn.

My mother became ill in her thirties. Because we didn't have medical insurance to pay for her stay at the hospital,
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was forced to come home. Even while she was sick, she would get up to care for the younger children or help prepare meals. She passed away at forty-four.

SM: What kind of work did you do growing up?

JB: My first job was carrying pastries from a local bakery to cafeterias and eateries before sunrise. I was paid with day old baked goods that I would bring home for my family to eat. It wasn't much, but it was a treat for us. Later on, I got a paper route (without even having a bicycle at the start). For extra money, I would set up pins at the bowling alleys. One summer, I had one of the worst jobs imaginable for a kid. I took cab requests over the phone for a local taxi company from three in the morning until two in the afternoon. I was only thirteen years old and I saw much more than I should have—drunks in the taxi yard, people starting fights—all for only fifty cents a day.

SM: What did you learn from all of this?

JB: From my father, I learned the importance of honesty and hard work. I discovered the true meaning of faith from my mother, who strongly believed in prayer. My family all believed that if we worked hard, we would be OK. I learned a great deal from my experience growing up, but there was one lesson in particular that I took to heart. When my father was fifty years old he was pensioned off for only ten dollars a week. He had no job and a growing family to support. His employer betrayed him. For the first time in my life I saw my father, a strong man from all of the physical labor, just break down and cry. I decided then that I would never work for someone else. That's where my entrepreneurial spirit came from.

I put myself through Skidmore working for a local ice company. The next year they gave me the shot of a lifetime, letting me buy a

truck to start my own ice delivery service. I soon had more money than I thought a person could make. I bought more trucks and delivered more ice, all while attending college full-time.

SM: I imagine that taught you time management.

JB: Yes, and it also taught me to be committed. I got married my freshman year of college which, along with my work, really forced me to look at things in a larger perspective.

SM: So was your wife the person who influenced you most?

JB: At that point yes, but the turning point in my life came much earlier than that. In seventh grade, I had a teacher named Sister Marcia, who truly took an interest in me. She taught me Latin so I could qualify to be an altar boy. She nurtured my self-esteem and taught me to ignore the insults that I got in school for being poor. She played a great role in making me who I am today.

SM: What did you do after college?

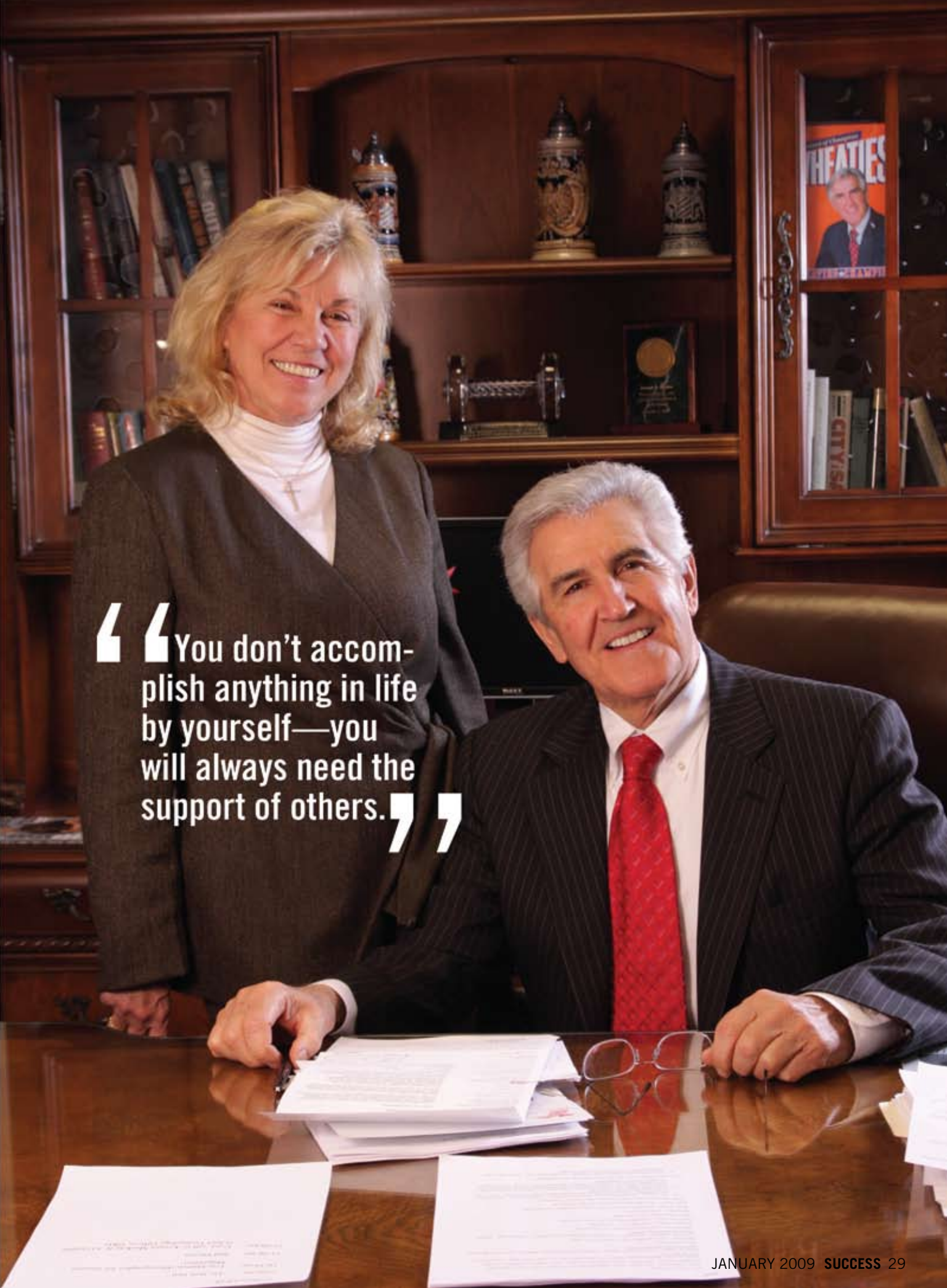
JB: I was drafted into the Army and sent to Korea. I went there a Private and came back a First Sergeant. Once the war ended, they kept us as occupied as possible with clean-up duty, patrols, and the like. The Army also had a boxing tournament and I became the undefeated lightweight boxing champion. I only joined to get out of the pointless patrols and busy-work—I never expected to get that far.

SM: What about when you came home?

JB: I took a position as a salesman for the first company in the area that was selling computerized telephone services. We ended up doing very well and went public on the New York Stock Exchange. Shortly after that, I ran for the State Senate. My interest in public service was sparked at a young age and can be attributed, once again, to Sister Marcia. I thought becoming an elected official would be the highest form of public service, so I threw my hat into the ring. Since the State Senate was part-time, I was able to continue with my business.

When I got into the Senate, I had two main goals: To limit the government's control on people's lives, and to try to increase the government's tacit support of businesses. After eighteen years in the Senate,

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“ You don't accomplish anything in life by yourself—you will always need the support of others.” ”



I knew there had to be greater change, so I challenged the sitting Majority Leader for his position. I believe it was the first time in state history that a sitting leader was challenged. I was voted in by my fellow Senators and held the position of Majority Leader for over a decade.

SM: How did your entrepreneurial approach to the Senate give you an advantage?

JB: I recognized that the leadership was not the most efficient or responsive. I knew in my heart that I could do a better job for New York State. Perhaps most importantly, what makes an entrepreneur is the will to put in the effort and the guts to take risks. You have to be totally committed to what you are doing, and that I was.

SM: What do you think is the most important trait for success?

JB: I think the most important trait for success is persistence. You are going to get knocked around in life and you need to be able to get back up and try even harder the second time around.

SM: How has your daily life changed since relinquishing your Senate seat?

JB: My time is spent quite differently. I am traveling more than ever before because we have offices and clients in various locations across the country.

SM: What has been the most enjoyable aspect of working in the private sector?

JB: I have really enjoyed the new challenges and all of the people whom I have had the chance to work with—employees, partners, and clients.

SM: Do you miss the Senate?

JB: This is an entirely different life, and I can't help but reflect on my time in the Senate. I believe, however, in always moving forward and not looking back. I am so interested in my business that I don't have much time to miss the Senate. I am also enjoying more time with my family, which is important to me.

SM: What do you think about the Republicans losing the majority in this past election?

JB: I have always believed that the public is better served with checks and balances in government.

SM: What do you attribute this loss to?

JB: A lot of it can be credited to the Obama tsunami in some of the districts.

SM: Can New York Republicans recover from this defeat?

JB: Yes. They have to rebuild the party with the people of the State, getting back to their roots—less government, fewer taxes, less regulation, and a strong focus on family values.

SM: What is your hope for the future of New York State?

JB: Economic growth. I want to see young people having opportunities to grow, be educated, and find productive careers, all within New York State.

SM: You have commented that your business experience helped you as a politician. How has your political career helped to better prepare you for your role with CMA?

JB: Management, leadership, communicating, negotiating—these are all assets in both business and politics. It's all about relating to people.

SM: It was reported that you were approached by a number of companies. Why did you choose CMA Consulting Services?

JB: CMA is privately owned, and the largest female owned technology business in the state. CMA is recognized for their outstanding work, and they excel in innovative and creative ways. The growth potential is phenomenal. I really believe that technology will offer many of the solutions that will improve our quality of life—in medicine, in business, and in our personal lives.

SM: It must not have been a difficult decision for you, as you signed on within a matter of days. Why did you feel so strongly about this choice?

JB: I came from technology, having started a telecommunications company many years ago. I wanted to be in a growth area. I respect, trust and admire the founder, Kay Stafford. I have known Kay for many years through her late husband Ron Stafford (a former colleague of mine in the Senate). I had met a number of the executives in the company and quickly learned to respect them, their knowledge, and their ability.

SM: What are your goals, both short-term and long-term, for your role as CEO of CMA?

JB: I look forward to capitalizing on CMA's past performance, publicizing their accomplishments, improving our performance, and growing our customer base.

SM: How do you plan to implement these goals?

JB: Together, Kay and I have restructured the management of the company, helping it to function more efficiently. We are continuing to develop new software applications, and we are opening markets in other areas like healthcare. We are also focusing on municipalities within New York State, and expanding into other states. We are continually improving relationships with our current customer base.

SM: What is the most important quality for a leader to have?

JB: A great leader needs to have a vision, be articulate and decisive.

SM: You have an extensive list of accomplishments. What are you most proud of?

JB: Creating jobs—economic growth.

SM: What is the most important thing you have learned during your three decade long political career?

JB: Get results. Be willing to compromise to get results. You don't accomplish anything in life by yourself—you will always need the support of others.

