

the best of  
**overdrive**  
The Entrepreneurs' Organization eNewsletter

**FY2007/2008**



**Best of *Overdrive*  
FY2007/2008**

Dear *Overdrive* Readers,

The Entrepreneurs' Organization (EO) is proud to present the following collection of "Top 10" *Overdrive* articles from FY2007/2008. I hope that you will read these fine articles and gain important takeaway value for your personal and professional development.

For EO, 2007 was a year of milestones and record-breaking achievements. For the first time in the organization's 20-year history, EO reached the 7,000+ member mark. In addition to this accomplishment, EO hosted several highly ranked Global events, gathered new partners, instituted exciting programs for member growth and established an unprecedented online presence that encouraged members to leverage their network

Read on to discover what our members did throughout the year, and discover for yourself the integral role EO plays in the lives of entrepreneurs around the world.

Best,

Nicholas Thomas  
Managing Editor, *Overdrive*

## My Extraordinary EO University Experience

By [Graeme Speak](#), EO Perth

The [EO Berlin University](#) was my first University experience. Simply put, it far exceeded my expectations, and here's why:

1. **Incredible Location.** Berlin is an amazing, vibrant city. The Ritz-Carlton, Berlin is one of the many flashy new developments, and it's set alongside beautiful new skyscrapers and shopping plazas that, 18 years ago, were located in what was called the "Green Zone" or "Death Zone" along the Berlin Wall. The theme for the University was "Tearing Down Walls."
2. **Memorable Speakers.** [Shelby Scarbrough](#), our new EO President, gave one of the most moving opening speeches. She recounted the last time she visited Berlin in 1987, when she worked on United States President Ronald Reagan's personal staff. That was when Reagan made his famous speech at the Brandenburg Gate and declared, "Mr. Gorbachev, open this gate. Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!"



- In addition, our University host, [Marcel "Otto" Yon](#), delivered a presentation on what it meant for Germans who experienced the Wall's creation and how it divided a country, friends and families. Otto demonstrated the sheer emotion of those unbelievable events that occurred on 9 November 1989, when the Wall was finally torn down. Every single person in that room was touched by the emotion, and there wasn't a dry eye in the place.
3. **Invaluable Connections.** I soon came to realise that for me, the take-home value of the University was not the events or what I learned from the keynote speakers; it was the relationships and friendships I built with some of the most incredible people I've ever met in my life.
  4. **Outstanding Activities.** We had dinner at the Mercedes-Benz Financial Complex and danced to a cello quartet that played Led Zeppelin. We also had a tour of the beautiful museums and art galleries of East Berlin. And then there were the after-parties. And the after-after-parties. More incredible people and friendships were formed.

- The culminating event for Berlin was a gala dinner on the pristine lawn of the [Berlin Olympic Athletic Stadium](#). Nothing like this has ever been allowed before, since the facility is only used for major events such as the [FIFA World Cup](#). It was truly an amazing experience. And to cap it all off, they marched us into the stadium in the order of our home country as we carried our country flags and listened to our national anthems. It sounded like the entire stadium roof was actually one enormous loud speaker, and you couldn't help yourself from cracking an ear-to-ear smile.
5. **Stellar Business Networking Opportunities.** I'm currently raising investment capital to take my new company, [GO.PC](#), to Silicon Valley. So you can only imagine how thrilled I was when we had the opportunity to tour eBay Europe. I have eBay pegged as one potential exit partner, so this was truly a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for me. The Managing Director of eBay gave a fantastic presentation about eBay Europe and its US\$2 billion takeover of Skype. eBay Europe's creator was also there, and after the presentation I asked him if he could talk about my GO.PC project. He said, "Sure, I'm actually an EO member and attending the University, too, so let's talk back at the hotel." The next day, he and another Internet mogul friend sat with me for two hours and saw my full investor presentation about GO.PC. What an incredible opportunity. Where else on earth would I have been able to have such an encounter, and then find myself making friends with these guys?!

I'm so thankful that I made the effort to attend an EO University. I met people who made this experience one of the most unique and personally rewarding experiences of my entire career. I'll certainly be attending another University as soon as I can.

## Hello, My Name is Jon, and I'm an Entrepreneur-Aholic

By [Jon Carder](#), EO San Diego

Just like business, surfing is all about the risk versus reward payoff. As the waves get bigger, the consequences become more severe, but the rush of surviving a 10-foot barrel is indescribably addictive.



Starting and growing a business is just as wild a ride, with huge potential rewards, such as changing the world and acquiring fortune and fame. But the risks – failure, bankruptcy and even jail – are high, too. Everyday we're putting it all on the line, and that rush you feel when you hit the level of success you've been striving for is what has us all hooked. I'll be the first to say it out loud: "My name is Jon, and I'm an entrepreneur-aholic."

Like most entrepreneurs, I started my current business – it's my third one; I also suffer from entrepreneurial ADD – because I found a problem that I just had to solve. I was frustrated by an experience I had with the Yellow Pages when I used them to find a moving company. There was no way of knowing which mover was the best, so I took the "Yellow Pages Gamble" and lost. The company I selected gave horrible service and charged me triple the quote; they even held my TV hostage until I paid the inflated price. I decided then and there that we need a website on which everyone could voice their opinions and rate businesses so that we can all benefit from knowing who's the best and who to avoid. First I just needed to figure out how to build it and how to make money from it.

I like mixing business with pleasure; it gives me a creative edge and helps me stay balanced. So it was on a surfing trip to Indonesia when I completed the business plan for my new idea, [MojoPages.com](#). Accompanied by my long-time friend and now MojoPages' Chief Revenue Officer, we rode epic waves in the Mentawai Islands while drawing preliminary sketches of the website, finalizing our sales and marketing strategy, and connecting with investors, advisors and team members via fax and satellite phone.

While enjoying my two favorite passions, I realized how similar the addictive characteristics of each are. So it's no surprise that surfing has taught me helpful and insightful lessons that I've learned to apply toward business:

- Surfing has an honesty and purity that has helped it thrive and spread. People surf for the right reasons. At MojoPages, we've embraced this "for the right reasons" philosophy, creating our 3H mantra: "Always embrace humor, humility and honesty when showcasing the company and conducting business."
- Surfing has a risk of death. Fortunately, I learned early on that a good surfboard is critical when riding a life-threatening wave. In business, your employees are your surfboard, and motivation and morale is critical to keeping your business alive, especially during the wild ride of a startup.
- Like the counter culture that erupted from surfing, traditional corporate culture – the 9 to 5 suit and ties – are being taken over by a new type of business culture. To beat the big boys, most startups require significantly superior creativity, adaptability and speed. Doing away with traditional corporate behavior and adopting a more comfortable, open-minded environment that cultivates new ways of thinking has worked well for MojoPages.

I'm sure a new problem will come along someday that I'll need to solve and turn into a new business, but in the meantime, I'm enjoying this current wave of entrepreneurial endorphins.

## The Power of Forum

By [Karen Brookman](#), EO Toronto

It was an early Wednesday morning, and I was on the highway driving home to Toronto, Canada. For the first time in a long time, I felt elated and optimistic about my life, my career and my future. The sun was shining, and as I drank my coffee, my head was clear. I was suddenly aware of how much I enjoyed driving my car— the car that I had worked so hard to afford. It was the day after my first Forum retreat, and I felt powerful, refreshed and supported.



Four years have passed since that memorable morning, and I still reflect on it frequently.

I think I was born an entrepreneur, and despite efforts during the years to change my career path, my destiny has always led me back to my entrepreneurial roots. Don't get me wrong; there are many things I love about being an entrepreneur— the freedom ... the creativity ... the possibilities. Yet, in the 10 years since I started my journey toward building my company, I haven't always been happy. There have been many years when I felt passionate and excited about my choices, and many other years when I would have sold the company for a dollar just to find myself again.

Somewhere along the way, I came to terms with the reality that there would always be aspects of my career that would inspire me and other aspects I would just have to live with. If I wasn't always fulfilled, at minimum the acceptance of my reality would keep me centered and committed (and would ensure that my bills were paid).

I experienced a significant change during the 60 hours I spent at my first Forum retreat. And after two and a half days with my Forum members – during which we laughed, shared experiences and drank a glass of wine or two – I realized that Forum wasn't just about spending time with an intimate group of peers who shared experiences. It was about tackling head on the toughest issues in all aspects of our lives. For me, it was an empathetic and safe environment that encouraged me to face the very issues and challenges I had learned to tolerate. Forum was my ticket to the kind of rich, fulfilling, passion-filled life I always wanted to live. In that moment of realization, my life changed.

Today, I love my job, and my business is more financially successful than any other time in our history. I am in a loving, committed relationship and enjoy quality time with my family. I have made some tough decisions and changes in the past four years, and most of the significant ones originated through my Forum. My life isn't perfect by any stretch, and I am still faced with challenges daily, but the difference is that I feel empowered to keep reaching for my goals.

After all, I have the power of my Forum behind me.

*Karen Brookman is now a Forum Co-Chair on the EO Toronto Board. If you would like more information on how you can get more involved in Forum, contact [Renee Manning](#), Vice President of Forum.*

## The EO Effect

By [Anju Rupal](#), EO Zurich

If you hang around other EOers long enough, you might just get inspired to start another company.

Take me, for instance. Thanks to my Indian genes, I have always been a passionate and avid matchmaker. Within EO, I finally found a perfect outlet for my passion— my second company, [Sense2love](#), which was founded with fellow member [Bill Liao](#) of EO Germany.



Statistically speaking, most long-term relationships are found at school or your workplace. Within my own circle of friends, I realized that many had "missed the boat" for various reasons. They now had the time and energy to invest in a sustainable relationship, but traditional dating sites did not appeal to them.

I thought that it would be great to have an easy alternative to tacky dating sites so that I could match my single friends, so Bill and I got to work. We built an invitation-only network that serves the natural matchmaker in us all. Inspired by Indian traditions and new trends in social networking, the site is an easy tool that allows people to build a network of trusted friends so that those who are matched by our system have some connection through their "six degrees of affection."

First, people join as "matchmakers" and can then decide if they would like to be matched themselves. To find a match, people must first discover what their "lovesense" is by answering a brief, 25-question survey, which provides us with the information needed to create a "lovesense" profile. The profile takes into account the affective, cognitive and behavioral traits unique to each person and then helps find compatible matches.

The site is different than other dating sites— it's confidential and doesn't contain pictures, lists, adverts, profiles or search tools. I created it this way based on feedback and support from my fellow EO members.

I have been an EO member since 2004, but the past one-and-a-half years in particular have taken me on quite a journey. I have attended EO University circuits and approached my peers as a sounding board for my ideas. EO has become for me an extended family with an upside— it provides a nurturing environment that lets me grow and thrive while I share experiences, ideas and fears – however bizarre they sound – with friends. I am infinitely grateful to those who have supported me along the way and allowed me to tap into their knowledge and experiences.

We just launched the Sense2love beta site, and I'm confident that I will continue to get constructive feedback and encouragement from other EOers.

I'm also excited about putting together a great Sense2love team that can help me redefine ideas and concepts while keeping our main goal in mind— finally bringing friends "to their senses."

## The EO New Delhi University Was a Mind-Altering Experience

Simran Bhargava, the [2008 EO New Delhi University](#) keynote speaker, said, "You cannot look at India with your rational mind. You must look at this country of contradictions with your irrational mind to truly appreciate India in all its grandeur and spectacle."



Until they heard Ms. Bhargava explain this, many EOers had mixed feelings about India and its capitol city, New Delhi. For those who didn't attend the University, imagine this: people hustling in the streets; hundreds of cars whizzing by; cows and monkeys along the highway; austere poverty contrasted by beautiful homes; and the positive attitude of Indians, despite the seemingly grim status of life.

Simran was absolutely right: You can't think rationally about a country caught in such a paradox. But EOers embraced the country and saw it for what it really is: hospitable, generous, warm and welcoming.

Attendees of the New Delhi University learned about business, communications, sales and personal development, as well as the numerous business opportunities available in a country that not only needs them but is also proving that it's well on its way toward becoming a major international competitor.

As members mingled during the "James Bond Night," they used new communication tools they had just learned from breakout speaker [Christina Harbridge](#). For instance, did you know that pumping your fists while your arms are at your sides can bring your adrenaline down if you're nervous? Christina also stressed the importance of being yourself when communicating with others. "People just want to see you be yourself, the you that you are with your closest friend. This is the ONE THING to be. Your singular experience makes you the perfect person, and the only person, to present your ideas," said Christina.

Members also learned a thing or two from keynote speaker [Atul Punj](#), who talked about how to deal with family members when running a family business. In addition, breakout speaker [Rajiv Memani](#) and keynote speaker [Nandan Nilekani](#) opened EOers' eyes, and minds, to India's financial markets by discussing the country's burgeoning economy and increasing global presence. And no one could forget the beauty of the opening night's traditional Indian wedding of EO Spain members JC Duarte and [Maria Sipka](#)— only to be contrasted by the rambunctious singing and dancing at the closing night's "Bollywood Extravaganza."

The EO New Delhi University was "a mind-altering experience," said [John Martin St. Valery](#) of EO U.A.E. "The energy and enthusiasm shared by fellow members, along with such a warm welcome from our Indian hosts, reshaped my business focus and injected vigor in me, for which I am sure my family and staff will be grateful!"

"As a cynical entrepreneur and new EO member, I embarked upon my first University experience on my own and felt like it was my first day at a new school. But this experience has changed my business perspective indelibly," said John.

## The Incredible EO Member Network

By [Jessie Frank](#), *EO Atlanta*

In 2007, my six-year-old daughter, Perri, was diagnosed with Type 1 Diabetes— the incurable kind that strikes only 5 percent of diabetics. Insulin must be delivered into my child's bloodstream via a tube into her body 24/7 for the rest of her life.

The [Jonas Brothers](#) are a popular Disney teen boy band, and the youngest brother, 15-year-old Nick Jonas, was also recently diagnosed with Type 1 Diabetes. Perri saw some video clips of Nick announcing that he has diabetes, and the inspiration and connection for her was immediate and overwhelming. For the first time since her diagnosis, it started making sense to her.

In one of the video clips, Nick says, "Why me?" and Perri screamed, "That's what I said!"



Nick has provided an answer that makes some sort of sense to my confused, and often bewildered, child.

After seeing the clips, Perri longed to meet Nick Jonas. If it were any other celebrity, I would have held back on the indulgence, but I knew that just a brief conversation with Nick could provide years of inspiration for Perri.

At the time, I didn't have any connections to accomplish this, so I sent an e-mail to the EO LA chapter hoping that someone had a connection and could help.

Almost immediately, [Doug Pick](#) from EO LA forwarded my e-mail to his friend, Scot Finck— the Vice President of Disney Records!

Twenty seconds after Doug wrote his e-mail, Scot called to let him know that Perri's wish would come true. We would see the Jonas Brothers—and meet them backstage—at the Georgia National Fair!

The e-mail chain continued, and we also received free earplugs and blood sugar stabilizing drinks for the concert from other EOers who were touched by our story.

The concert was amazing. Before the show, Perri and the rest of our crew met the three Jonas boys. Perri told Nick about her diabetes, and they compared insulin pumps. A photographer even spotted them and asked Perri and her friend to come back later and pose for pictures alone with Nick. Wow!

Before she fell asleep that night, Perri proclaimed, "Mommy, this was the best day of my life so far!"

I can't thank Doug Pick and Scot Finck—and the others who helped along the way—enough for their generosity. I felt such overwhelming emotion, knowing that I could provide my daughter with some purpose to this senseless disease.

What an incredible network we EO members have!

## How I Leveraged Technology to Grow my Business

By [James Cotton](#), EO London

Running a technology company almost implies that technology runs your company. In many cases, I have discovered that this is far from true, and indeed, sometimes even with the best of intentions, it can be a battle. I try to keep our office paperless, because it ensures that all information can be extracted readily; however, it is not always so easy to find the perfect technology solution to help grow your business.



Here's a recent example: accounting and [Customer Relationship Management \(CRM\) software](#). Whilst there are many well-marketed accounting and CRM software products available—such as [NetSuite](#) and [Salesforce.com](#)—we have had issues implementing such technologies. We recently reviewed a lot of accounting software packages, both offline and online versions. In theory, the thought of a Web-hosted accounting package is almost nirvana; you can access company financials anytime and anywhere, whether it's to simply create an invoice or run complex reports. I imagine a lot of fellow EO members also have this state of mind. After all, a lot of us have small offices scattered around the world, and it can be a challenge to keep track of activities remotely.

Hence, we spent a lot of time reviewing the hosted software available, but when it came to the crunch, the software ran so much slower than our traditional desktop accounting software. It was simply too frustrating from a data entry perspective.

I thought that the Internet had sped up to a sufficient degree to ensure that such software was not prohibitively slow; however, it seems that once the Internet gets faster, we stuff more information into it, so applications hosted on the Web do not really increase in speed! We almost ended up back at square one. We are now using a multi-user version of [QuickBooks](#), where we have the application running locally on desktops, but the database is hosted on one of our servers. So we get the best of both worlds— the speed of the desktop application and the remote access provided for by the hosted applications.

We continue to evolve and ensure that we are leveraging technology to grow our business. I can now issue invoices from the beach. I just need a [BlackBerry](#) version of QuickBooks so I can then issue them from my waterproof BlackBerry whilst surfing!

## **The EO Rainmakers**

*By Pablo Hernandez O'Hagan, EO Mexico DF*

Rainmakers of long ago were tribe members who could make it rain through certain rituals and special dances. All kinds of people tried to make it rain, but only the lucky ones could artificially induce the precipitation.

In today's corporate world, the rainmaker is the person who, no matter what, brings in tons of sales. Many companies have lots of salespeople, but only a few of them make the big sales. Only a few can make the "Ka-ching! Ka-ching!" cash register sound all the time.

So how do they manage to do it? Is there some kind of secret formula?

In México City, a few of us were inspired by the idea of rainmaking, so we discussed it in our chapter. We decided that we wanted our chapter and our whole organization to grow. More members means more fun, growth, great friends, sharing, learning and once-in-a-lifetime experiences for all of us. So EO-just like any organization or company-needs great rainmakers.

After all our discussion, we invented a new contest called The EO Rainmakers. Together with my great friend and co-Membership Chair, Juan Pablo Garcia, I started promoting our contest. We e-mail a small report to our members each month, which lists the members who have referred entrepreneurs (who later became new EO members). This sparks a lot of competition, and our chapter members sure want to make it rain!

We also have a prize for the three rainmakers who hit the top numbers and recruit the most members. We recognize them at an annual event, and they receive money for their Forum retreat. This is a great way to keep everybody up to date and inspired to keep growing the organization.

I guarantee that every chapter has rainmakers. We just have to encourage them to work their magic.

\*\*\*

Adding quality new members to your chapter brings new perspectives, networks and ideas to our organization. New members can enhance the Forum experience and provide a new pool of future leaders.

So go ahead- be a rainmaker! If you have a client, business associate, supplier or friend who qualifies for EO membership, click the banner below to send his or her information directly to the Membership Chair of any chapter.

## **EO Chapter Creates the EO Village**

By [Karla Campos](#), EO Philippines

About a year ago, EO Philippines decided it was time to give back as an organization. We were well aware that most members do their own share of outreach programs within their own companies, but our chapter board decided it was time to do something together. Thus, the Philanthropy Committee was born.



Our first project is called “The EO Village.” EO Philippines' goal is to build a village in one of the depressed areas of Manila that will consist of at least 40-50 homes for our less fortunate countrymen. Raising the funds has been easy, but we're quickly realizing that actually building these homes is more challenging than we had anticipated.

With [Gawad Kalinga](#)—the Philippines' version of [Habitat for Humanity](#)—as a partner, our goal is to encourage the residents to build the homes themselves. They will contribute their sweat equity, and that way we won't simply dole out the houses. They will learn to value their homes even more.

EO members host a build every two to three months to encourage and motivate the residents. We go to the site to demolish homes and build new ones, and actually constructing these homes is no joke, especially when you're doing it for others. Chapter members and Forum groups are out there mixing cement, shoveling, carrying hollow blocks, bending steel, cementing walls and floors, and painting the houses.

EO members leave the construction site feeling overwhelmed and exhausted, but knowing that we've helped improve the lives of others is a powerful thing. We go home to our families and back to our own life and can't help but feel grateful.

We have now experienced the joy of turning over three new homes to three families, and we are just about to finish and turn over seven more within the next 60 days. For a little less than US\$2,000 for the cost of each house, how can we go wrong? Why settle for 50 houses if we can build 100 or 1,000 and rightly call it The EO Village?

After all, we're not just building the physical houses; we're also building a better community for these people and a brighter future for all involved.

\*\*\*

If you would like more information about The EO Village, please contact [Karla Campos](#).

## Debunking Chinese Manufacturing Myths

By [Albert Shiu](#), EO Hong Kong

With last year's recalls and recent misunderstandings about products manufactured in China, a bunch of EO Hong Kong members—who have been in the manufacturing business for a period of time—hope to educate other EOers on the myths and facts of manufacturing in China and what to look for when sourcing from China. We have received a lot of questions from members in other chapters around the world, so we think it may be valuable to debunk some of the rumours associated with our products.



When Jack Cafferty, a [CNN](#) journalist, said, “We continue to import their [Chinese] junk with the lead paint on them and the poisoned pet food...,” he was referring to the Chinese government and the Chinese in general.

Forty percent of EO Hong Kong's members are in the manufacturing business, and all of our factories are in China, so we see what goes on firsthand. The good news is that the Chinese government never told us manufacturers to make poor products, and we do not wish to poison our customers.

All of our chapter members were educated in the West, and many of us returned to Hong Kong to start new business ventures or manage family businesses. Our companies are not only professional and innovative, but they are also socially responsible. Our products meet international quality and safety standards. Our management complies with local laws, including labor laws, and we are also environmentally conscious. We run our companies with high ethical standards and much dignity.

The truth is that China is one of the few countries to have export regulations, which require the testing of goods before they are exported. Products, especially toys, have to pass their destination markets' standards before we are allowed to ship them. If the destination market doesn't have a standard, then we have to use the Chinese standard, which, in general, is significantly more stringent than US and European standards.

Broadly speaking, most Chinese manufacturers are very aware of these requirements and conduct regular tests. The biggest threat for us is when goods are returned, which, nowadays, would mean that the Chinese authorities would immediately close our factories.

It is fair to say that the Chinese government tries to ensure that goods exported from China are safe. It is unfortunate, however, that because so much is made in China and there are so many factories, having 100 percent control is unrealistic and improbable.

EO Hong Kong's hope is that our fellow EO members from around the world question what they hear from the media. This organization allows us to build bridges and leverage our network of entrepreneurs. So when things like this turn up in the news, we hope to keep the lines of communications open and the truth always revealed.