



THE SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE ENTREPRENEUR



Entrepreneurs'
Organization

JUNE 2008

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Entrepreneurs' Organization

"What do entrepreneurs do when faced with a challenge? They 'jump' in, lead and make things happen."

- Kevin Burkart, "Taking Charity to New Heights," pg. 10

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Upcoming Octane topics:

Legal/Ethical Issues

People/Human Resources

Health



Octane Goes Green

EO is doing its part to be socially responsible. This issue, and each future issue, will be printed on recycled stock.

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fueling the
entrepreneurial engine

LETTER FROM THE BOARD

They say it is better to give than to receive. As entrepreneurs, we hold the power to influence and instigate change. Today, more and more EO members are realizing the benefits of social responsibility. Not only are we becoming increasingly aware of our behavior—and the lengths to which we can give back—but we’re also taking giant leaps in improving tomorrow, today.

Over the years, there has been much discussion regarding whether EO should have its own philanthropic “cause célèbre.” The rub has always occurred when trying to select one that is suitable for all. In general, EO subscribes to one main cause: to help entrepreneurs learn and grow. Through this type of information sharing, we can facilitate the efforts of our fellow members by sharing the work they do while staying focused on our core mission. Individually, EO members take it upon themselves to give back in their own special way.

In my [Sunjay’s] company, corporate social responsibility has become absolutely key to success. We started with a vision to create a company that India is proud of, and now our vision is to make our company one that the community is proud of. With this in mind, we adopted a small village in the north of India, where we teach village residents how to earn a living. I strongly believe that if we helped every Indian village export a product, we would be doing the world a lot of good. It is our endeavor to raise the daily income of everyone in our village from US\$2 a day to US\$10 a day. This is the responsibility we have, and I hope others will do what they can to make an indelible mark in their own community.

In this special issue, we captured the essence of social responsibility by highlighting several members who used their experiences, skills and success to better their environment and the world at large. They share what they’ve learned, what it takes to think outside of the box and how, paradoxically, they were taught new business skills by doing something for others. These are the stories of community leaders, of EO leaders, and they represent a growing faction of our fellow members. We hope you gain as much inspiration from them as we have.

Respectfully,



Sunjay Kapur
EO CHAIRMAN



Shelby Scarbrough
EO PRESIDENT

EO UPDATES

→ 2008 Latin American/Caribbean Conference

Approximately 125 members made their way to Querétaro, Mexico, for the LAC Conference held 6-9 March 2008. The event’s theme was “The Power of Branding Yourself.” Expert presenters discussed the importance of building a personal brand and members engaged in a number of once-in-a-lifetime experiences, such as playing soccer at the 1986 World Cup stadium and learning how to bullfight. A big “thank you” goes out to Conference Chair Gerardo de la Garza and the LAC Conference Committee for their hospitality and assistance. Also, a special thanks to the LAC regional leadership for their continued support throughout this successful event.

→ Global Leadership Conferences

For the second year in a row, incoming chapter officers flocked to the GLCs in San Francisco, California, USA, and Dubai, UAE, to learn how to be successful EO member leaders. The San Francisco GLC was led by Christina Harbridge of EO Silicon Valley and Adam Glickman of EO Los Angeles. The Dubai GLC was led by Maria Sipka and J.C. Duarte of EO Spain. Newly minted officers shared ideas with their peers in other chapters about effectively leading their chapters next year.

→ Renewal Notices

As a friendly reminder, EO Global recently e-mailed renewal notices to all members for FY2008/2009. If you haven’t already renewed your membership, please do so now. A lapse in membership may mean missing out on Forum, Universities, chapter events and opportunities to connect with members. To speed up the annual renewal process, simply enroll in Auto-Renewal. To learn how, contact eorenewals@eonetwork.org.

→ Partnership Referral Program

The EO Partnership Referral Program is a new initiative designed to raise global awareness, grow the EO network and strengthen membership value through partnerships and strategic alliances. When we join forces with organizations that align with our mission, we are able to expand our programs and resources, and create more opportunities for members to learn and grow. What do you and your chapter get out of it?

Members who introduce EO to a verified decision maker in one of our targeted organizations will receive a free full registration to a University of their choice, regardless of the negotiation’s results. If the organization signs a partnership contract with EO, you will also receive a limited participation guest registration to a University and your chapter will receive up to US\$5,000! For more information, or to review our list of target companies, visit the EOnetwork.

→ Third Annual All-Member Survey

We are happy to announce that the third annual All-Member Survey was the most successful one yet! In all, 2,379 members responded—that’s 36 percent of the membership and 300 more respondents than in 2007. Members provided ample feedback on how EO Global can improve the services we provide. Thanks to the large number of respondents, the organization will be much healthier and positioned for continued success.

Congratulations, Chapter Winners!

A special congratulations goes out to several EO chapters that recently received learning awards. EO received a record number of applications this year, and the judges had a very difficult job to do— but the decisions have been made!

The finalists and winners were announced at the GLCs in San Francisco, California, USA, and Dubai, UAE. The awards were handed out in recognition of outstanding performance in the pursuit of member learning. Congratulations to the finalists listed at right (winners are in orange) for their victory in each learning award category.



(From left to right) Tom Dunn, Todd Mendenhall, Shelby Scarbrough, keynote speaker Dick Hoyt and Sander Coovert pose during the “Gateway to Success 2008” multi-chapter event hosted by EO St. Louis.

POSITIVE TRANSFORMATION



When I learned of the theme for this issue, I wondered: “What does social responsibility really mean?” I took a step back and considered the significance. All too often, the term is misunderstood. In the wrong hands, it becomes a buzzword misappropriated at office parties and client get-togethers. Some people use the phrase as a crutch for self-aggrandizement, while others adopt it for the sole sake of “fitting in.” I’ve learned it should be used for neither of these things.

Today, one generally accepted tenet in the broad definition of a successful life for a business leader is that you spend some portion of your time in activities that make a positive impact on the world ... locally, regionally, nationally or globally. It is the “give back” portion of social responsibility, positively transforming lives through direct involvement in improving communities.

Being socially responsible is also about believing in the concept of change. It’s about navigating in and out of your area of expertise—and often, your comfort zone—to give, share, teach and promote. As entrepreneurs, you epitomize humanitarianism in every meaning of the word. You have the innate ability to unite, support and “pay it forward.” What’s more, you are a dynamic, growing group of like-minded individuals who are already

Below are the 2008 Learning Award Winners:

Best Calendar More Than 60 Members:

(Top four due to a tie for runner-up)

EO St. Louis

EO Guatemala

EO Portland

EO DC

Best Calendar Fewer Than 60 Members:

EO South Africa

EO Nashville

EO Nebraska

Personal Development:

EO Silicon Valley

EO Cleveland

EO New Jersey

Business Development:

EO New York

EO Lake Geneva

EO Seattle

Multi-Chapter Event (3+ chapters):

EO St. Louis

EO Bombay

EO NY/EO Albany/EO Fairfield/EO Westchester

Multi-Chapter Event (2 chapters):

EO San Francisco hosting EO Silicon Valley

EO Costa Rica hosting EO Las Vegas

transforming your communities through economic and business development, job creation and its attendant wealth creation. It is this passion for growth and improvement that puts you in alignment with EO’s mission, and our global structure is perfectly situated at the intersection of the world’s needs and the ability to fulfill them.

At EO, social responsibility isn’t a vogue term. It is a belief we implement across all facets of the organization. We know that being responsible means more than just using buzzwords. It means action. It means delivering results and improving the lives of EO members everywhere. It means nurturing and celebrating your sense of service. It provides the life balance of self and community. And, in the end, it helps change the world from what it is to what it can be. Pretty powerful stuff.

It is up to you to decide what kind of impact you want to make. Where will you leave your footprint?

Regards,



BOB STRADE
EO EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

REVOLUTIONARY THINKING REVOLUTIONARY RESULTS
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MAKING THE RIGHT CALL

ANDY BAILEY
EO NASHVILLE

In my wireless company, NationLink Wireless, our decision to “go green” was in many ways necessitated by the products we sell. While cell phones and other wireless products may not carry the carbon footprint of a paper mill or major manufacturer, electronic waste is a growing concern worldwide. The onus was on us to create an environmental program that eliminated electronic waste and encouraged social responsibility.

We wanted to do something that would make an impact on the environment and also help a charity at the same time. The challenge was finding the perfect way for our small company to make a big impact, one that fit with the goals and mission of our business. NationLink is a premium, value-added provider of wireless products and services, so it made sense for us to launch a cell phone recycling program. We know firsthand that cell phone recycling is imperative— we see individuals and corporations discarding old phones every day. On average, 130 million cell phones are retired annually in the US alone, but it is estimated that only 1 percent of retired cell phones are recycled or reused.

Our first step in determining how to implement a recycling program was simple: We asked our friends and clients using an online survey tool, and we got instant results. We confirmed that we were on the right track. People wanted to give back to the community, but they simply didn’t know how. As leaders in our industry, it was our responsibility to show them.

First and foremost, we knew that any recycling program we implemented would need to be easy and secure, since valuable information could still be stored on the phone. What’s more, we needed to find a reliable partner to assist in our recycling efforts. After mapping out a plan and scoping out all of the angles, we found our partner.

On 17 March 2005—St. Patrick’s Day—we officially “went green.” Our initiative, called the GreenLink Program, encourages clients to donate old cell phones and accessories. We collect the phones in person or direct

clients to our Web site. Our recycling partner then scrubs the phones of data for security and ensures that nothing ever reaches a landfill. Afterward, they make a donation in the name of the cell phone donor to Easter Seals Tennessee. Everyone wins, and all because we had the courage to go green.

Green to us means doing something positive for the environment— in this case, getting unsafe materials that are in retired cell phones, batteries and accessories out of the community. Helping children in need through the charitable donation of funds from used phones is a bonus that most green programs aren’t able to provide. We are lucky that we have a product and a program that can do both.

It’s an exciting opportunity to better the environment, but it wasn’t without its challenges. **Here is what I did to get my program off the ground:**

1. I chose a program that is relevant to my business. While I know of many great environmental projects, sustaining interest and engaging staff and clients depends on relevance.
2. I got the buy-in of potential participants before I started. Through surveys, e-mail newsletters or one-on-one conversations, I gauged the level of interest in the kind of program I was considering. I also made my clients aware of our green intentions, which turned out to be a positive marketing step.
3. I positioned my program in a way that allows for growth, long-term development and change. We named our program GreenLink to exemplify our intentions in becoming an environmentally responsible company.
4. I listened to my staff and clients. We set up a roundtable discussion and do surveys with our clients to gather ideas when we start new projects. It’s always amazing how others enhance your thoughts.

The long-term impact of our program remains to be seen. However, the potential for us to make a difference is there, and we are providing a service that both our clients and the wireless industry have told us is needed. More importantly, we have let our staff, the community and our clients know that “green” is more than just a buzzword. ☺



Andy is the president of NationLink Wireless, an Inc. 500 company that puts together easy wireless solutions to help businesses and individuals. He assists public and private sector organizations in all phases of wireless deployment. E-mail Andy at andy.bailey@mynationlink.com.

EXPERIENCING THE WORLD THROUGH THE EYES OF A LOCAL



DAVID CUNNINGHAM
EO SYDNEY

As an entrepreneur, I have experienced my share of success. I sold my first business in 2007, made a lot of money and saw my story published in several books. And yet, even with all of that wealth, I felt empty and trapped in a void. I was financially free, but I had a burning passion to continue self-employment and give back to others. The only question was: How?

After attending the 2007 EO Tokyo University and feeling inspired by the speakers, I took a “mini retirement.” I traveled for four months across Europe and South America seeking out new ideas and problems that I could solve using my keen business sense. I was on a mission to make a difference in the world, and it made me feel alive.

I found my calling while traveling. I had hired private tour guides in Bolivia, Peru, Cuba and Mexico to show me around. I was amazed at their passion, energy and level of intimate knowledge. I was equally shocked that these highly skilled people often earned less than US\$100 per month! I wanted to help and support these guides because I respected them for trying to improve their lives.

I had the option of donating to these communities, but I knew I could do so much more. I resolved to help thousands of private tour guides, especially in underdeveloped countries, earn more money. It was an unyielding promise to help the less fortunate who were already trying to help themselves. **I followed my instincts, and a dream was born.**

I quickly put the plan together. I would create a Web site that provides global exposure and user-generated ratings for tour guides around the world. This would lead to more business, which in turn meant more money for those guides struggling to feed their families. Tour guides could get paid directly in cash when they meet with the traveler, which saves them from doling out commission to local travel agents. We called this Web site OurExplorer.com.

Though I had the passion, there were a ton of problems early on. The major hurdle was deciding which location the Web site should be developed and designed from. I had zero experience in Web development and Internet marketing, so everything was new to me. We tried for nine months to develop the site out of China, but it failed. The communication was ineffective and the skills weren’t appropriate. After investing a lot of money into the first site development, we had to throw it out. It was a personal challenge for me to come back from that failure. But, with the support and guidance of my Forum, I stayed focused. The final Web site was officially developed in Sydney, Australia, in half the time and equal cost.

This entrepreneurial journey is different than any I’ve ever faced. A new industry has new challenges and obstacles to overcome. I had a dream to make a difference in people’s lives, but I didn’t have the knowledge to back it up. Luckily, I stuck with it, employed the right people and followed through on my goals. Now, when I want to relax, surf or play golf, I just think of those tour guides struggling to attract enough leads to support their families. That’s my motivation to stay at the laptop and make my dream a reality. That’s my motivation to remain socially conscious. ☺

“I’ve learned that new business startups don’t get any easier just because you’ve had success in the past.”



David is the CEO (Chief Exploring Officer) of OurExplorer.com, a Web site that helps travelers “explore the world through the eyes of a local.” The site offers users the opportunity to book and then rate local, private tourist guides from all over the planet, touch more local life and experience an unforgettable local adventure. Contact David at davec@ourexplorer.com.





BUILDING LIVES BEHIND BARS

GENE MCCUBBIN
EO HOUSTON

Several years ago, I responded to a direct mail piece asking if I was willing to teach entrepreneurialism to soon-to-be graduates of the state penal system. Like many EO members, I have always felt a pull to give back to young entrepreneurs, speak at local colleges and volunteer in the name of junior achievement. But this was different. This was unique.

I visited with the founder of the program, Catherine “Cat” Rohr, who had resigned from her job and dedicated her career, income and sanity to building the Prison Entrepreneurship Program (PEP). The PEP is a program that teaches select, pre-graduate inmates how to start their own business. Participants learn everything from selling and finance to production and service. What’s more, they graduate with a better knowledge of small business workings than most five-year entrepreneurs.

I have built a career out of developing businesses based on scalability, primarily in the services venue. I have also employed ex-inmates in the past, and I have seen many high-quality people with disfiguring scars on their resume that cause them challenges on a daily basis. I have seen scores of sharp, young men who would otherwise be able to command a larger income but were relegated to a wage-labor role due to their bad choices and subsequent incarceration.

I asked Cat to send me copies of sample business plans they had created, and I was pleasantly surprised to see a breadth of knowledge that was deeper than the bulk of entrepreneurial business plans I review as an active angel investor. I made it a point to meet these men in person. Upon visiting the prison, I expected to see thugs and other detritus of life; broken-down, worn-out humans who had already given up. Instead, what I saw was defined in one simple word: hope. The prisoners were excited that somebody finally believed in them. There was an overflow of raw enthusiasm, which stemmed from the belief that someone cared and that life might actually hold a future.

These are men who have run drug rings, car theft businesses and more, and yet they had so much passion and zest for business. They truly

enjoyed the four-month PEP class, which consisted of reading business and management books, writing a business plan and participating in an intense competition inside the prison. The competition was judged by venture capitalists, entrepreneurs and senior executives who flew in from around the country. For many of these prisoners, nobody has helped them in a long time. We give them a chance to believe in themselves. We help them take that first step toward personal and financial success.

I have personally mentored graduates, brought in additional executive and entrepreneurial participation, judged business plans and taught aspiring entrepreneurs how to sell their products or services. I worked with the PEP because I feel like I’m really making a difference. If we teach one person how to run and operate a business well, as the old adage goes, we have taught them how to fish. They can then feed themselves and others, and we no longer have to worry about recidivism, depression, drug usage or poverty—a substantial reward for the participant, the economy and everyone involved in the PEP.

By working with Cat and the participants, I have been inspired to continue pressing through the challenges my business and life provide. I have also learned that opportunities almost always lie in the areas other people look at as hard work, and that you can’t teach drive and ambition, but you can redirect it for a healthier outcome. Helping these prisoners has given me a new perspective on business, and it has taught me that everyone is entitled to greatness. Some just need a little more help than others. ☺



Gene is the President of Pop Labs, a company that offers interactive marketing solutions for small to mid-sized businesses. These services are implemented in a highly effective holistic approach, enabling the most rapid and predictable ROI. Pop Labs offers local, regional and national campaigns, as well as a unique white-label service for ad agencies, PR firms and online content providers. To contact Gene, e-mail gene@poplabs.com.



BERNARD OH
EO SINGAPORE

The importance of giving back isn’t lost on me. For years, I tried convincing the rest of my business team about the joys of giving. Living in a world that’s engulfed with expectations of receiving—the proverbial “me” culture—the element of selflessness often gets lost. It wasn’t until a natural disaster hit close to home that we started to really understand the importance of communal charity work.

Continuing our goodwill crusade, we headed to Jogjakarta, Indonesia, to build a disaster relief center for village residents. Instead of employing just my team to assist in the recovery, we offered our clients a chance to help. They jumped on the opportunity. By doing this, we grew closer with our key clients and benefited greatly. They saw us not simply as a business, but as a group of people who backed up the organization’s mission.



Until Boxing Day in 2004, most of the world had never heard of a place called Banda Aceh. That all changed when a tsunami devastated South Asia. I remember like it was yesterday. My staff and I stayed glued to television screens and watched in awe as the death toll reached 250,000 people. No one could speak of the tsunami without tears welling up in their eyes. We had friends who were affected, our clients started to steer clear of damaged countries and we couldn’t rid our minds of the horrible footage.

When the opportunity came up to assist in the rebuilding of a community centre in Banda Aceh, I couldn’t help but assist. Having previously helped in lesser-devastated areas, this experience shook me to the core. Gut-wrenching scenarios were aplenty: recently orphaned children kicking around a rusty can of soup to pass the day; toddlers’ faces covered with grime, streaks of tear tracks running down their cheeks; the people of Banda Aceh zooming past, their hand-me-down clothes too big for their recently slimmed figures.

After seeing these atrocities, I returned to the office and shared the sights, sounds and smells with my teammates, watching as the color drained from their faces. Then and there, we decided that the upcoming years of our organization would be spent giving back. It was something we were already doing, but we wanted to step it up a notch. Our care for the environment was already in full swing. We made it clear that we were an eco-friendly organization that avoided contributing to the earth’s deterioration. We weren’t afraid to educate and convince our clients to join us in the same carbon footprint war.

Soon after this initiative, we decided to create a campaign that focused on helping others. Instead of handing out gifts to clients, we informed them that the money was instead awarded to a nonprofit organization in Cambodia. Why did we do this? It’s simple: We took a stand. We had the perfect opportunity to give back to underprivileged communities, and our clients supported us all the way.

The thought of doing something so small, yet so enormous, is enough of a fix for all of us. I share these stories with clients and friends, but there’s no better feeling than doing it yourself. Throughout this entire experience, I’ve learned that charity is something that doesn’t need to be disseminated from top to bottom. It can’t be. You can’t force it on your teammates. It needs to be a personal experience. It needs to come from the heart. Then and only then will you truly make a difference. ☺



Bernard is the Founder and Executive Creative Director of The Audience Motivation Company (Asia) Pte., Ltd., a company that provides versatile solutions in ensuring an immersive, interactive and experiential theatre of sorts applicable to corporate events, conventions, product launches, meetings and exhibitions. He can be reached at bernard@amcasia.com.

TAKING CHARITY TO NEW HEIGHTS



KEVIN BURKART
EO MINNEAPOLIS/ST. PAUL



This is a story about Parkinson's disease.

It was a gorgeous morning on 31 July 1999. My friends and I had planned on camping along the Mississippi and St. Croix Rivers for the weekend. As I was driving to the meeting point, I realized I hadn't spoken to my dad that summer—at least, not as much as I would have liked. Something in my heart told me to call him. As an entrepreneur, I've learned to always trust my instincts.

I picked up my cell phone and dialed. His wife answered. I told her I had to talk to my dad and tell him I love him. She said, "Okay, I'll put him on right away." When he finally answered, I noticed she had stayed on the line. Something wasn't right. He was crying.

My dad said that the day before my call, he was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease, a degenerative disorder of the central nervous system that can impair motor skills and speech. He wondered how I knew to call and tell him I loved him. This was the start of our long and arduous journey together.

Seeking Treatment

When I learned of my father's diagnosis, what saddened me the most was that he was on the cusp of retirement. It seems we work so hard all of our lives, prepare for retirement, and then when we're finally ready to relax, heart issues, cancer or some sort of terminal disease changes our plans. Hearing about my dad's diagnosis taught me to appreciate my age and the good fortune I have in life. I was blessed to have a loving father, and I was determined to get him the treatment he needed.

My dad is a genius with a master's degree from MIT, and now he struggles with day-to-day activities. The slow decline in both motor skills and his ability to participate in activities is a sad and obvious process to witness. The struggle to cope with Parkinson's is trying and tough. The medication dad takes has a lot of side effects, including incontinence and hallucinations. He screams and wrestles in his sleep a lot, he often thinks the house is on fire and he doesn't feel comfortable driving because the medication puts him to sleep. On several occasions, he has woken up at stoplights to the sound of cars honking at him.

Worst of all, his memory has been terribly affected. It is difficult for him to connect dates and events, and oftentimes he will show up randomly at my office thinking we had an appointment. Even though his health continues to deteriorate, Dad is still hanging in there. His determination and faith has inspired me to reach out and do my part in supporting the Parkinson's community.

Raising Awareness

I am continually frustrated with the lack of support for this disease. Oddly, it receives little attention in the media or financial support for research when compared to other diseases that affect this number of people. As an entrepreneur, I know that the smallest idea can be monumental. I know that with a little elbow grease and a dream, amazing things can occur. With that in mind, I decided to launch my own campaign.



Making the Jump

I have been amazed at the generosity of my peers and community. The response has been nothing short of terrific. So far, I have raised almost US\$28,000, and I know there's a lot more to come. It's been so comforting to know how many individuals and companies have pledged to help this wonderful cause. I know that my jumping will benefit other victims of this disease, and that's the greatest reward.

Like many entrepreneurs, I'm in a position where I can make a significant difference. I can lead. I have the resources. I have a company and staff to back me up. I can leverage my resources, network and abilities to create something special. Many entrepreneurs are in the same position. Besides making business profits, we are capable of creating societal profits for others with whom we may never come in contact.

Overall, this experience has taught me a lot. I've learned that in life and business, you have to attack some problems head on, and you may have to be creative to accomplish a sense of social responsibility. Strive, create a goal, make it bombastic, gather the resources and make it real. These are the lessons I've learned. ☺

Editor's Note:

Kevin's "100 Perfect Jumps" will occur on 5 June, around the time this issue mails. If you're interested in learning how it went, visit www.eonetwork.org/Octane on 16 June to read our follow-up story!



Kevin is the President of StepStoneGroup, Inc., a comprehensive creative agency providing clients with integrated marketing, design and promotional services. Kevin can be reached via e-mail at kevin@stepstonegroup.com, or through his Web site, www.perfectjumps.com.

I created "The 100 Perfect Jumps for Parkinson's," an event that will put the spotlight on Parkinson's disease and increase funding for the Parkinson Association of Minnesota and the National Parkinson Foundation. The project combines two passions of mine: raising awareness and funds for the disease, and skydiving. My goal is to raise US\$40,000 by making 100 skydives at an elevation of 2,200 feet in one day. It's my intent to make a small impact. Not a huge impact. Not a global impact. A small, local impact.

I want to create community awareness for Parkinson's and garner support from sectors we have previously been unable to tap. From an entrepreneurial standpoint, this is where the rubber hits the road. I'm not a fundraiser, and I've never done anything like this before. I'm just an entrepreneur. And what do entrepreneurs do when faced with a challenge? They "jump" in, lead and make things happen.



DOUBT IT, DIG IN AND DREAM

GREG GARRETT
EO HAMPTON ROADS

The year was 1999. The Internet was still pretty new, and I was just learning how to “search the Web.” My wife and I were coming up on our 20th wedding anniversary, and it was my job to find a great deal on a romantic cruise.

As usual, I had gotten sidetracked.

I sat before the computer, searching not for “cruise” or “cruise ship,” but for “orphan” and “orphanage.” For many years, I had felt an internal need to help orphans and abandoned children around the world. An intense feeling swells in my chest when I think about how parents could desert their children, or why neighbors wouldn’t welcome lost children into their homes and care for them.

I was crushed by the helplessness of so many children in the world, specifically Central America. The more I searched online, the more devastated I was. At the time, I had recently discovered the vast global network of EOers, so I decided to test Member Exchange. I sent a request for information from anyone in Central America who had personal knowledge of orphanages in their region. I received a response from a member in EO El Salvador. He thought he might know of a local orphanage, and he was willing to help me.

I was encouraged by this response. But I still had to confess to my wife that my late nights on the Internet had not been spent planning a romantic getaway on an elegant resort. Instead, I told her that I had a “hot lead” on an orphanage in El Salvador. It didn’t take long for her heart to understand that we could make a very real difference.

In the first week of March 2000, we showed up at Delores Susa Orphanage in the city of San Miguel. We were shocked to learn that only six adults were struggling to care for 250 children. The poverty, the need—the entire scene was overwhelming. We promised to return, and we came back four months later with 17 US volunteers and a team of 40 Salvadoreans. In an attempt to exercise all of our options, we founded Orphan Helpers, a non-profit organization dedicated to the betterment of the world’s orphans.

Since we founded the organization, it has accomplished a lot. We conducted a vacation Bible school and a sports camp for the kids, and we mounted a huge plumbing and construction project, since none of their commodes were operational. Over the years, we established libraries,

training centers and dormitories, brought in medical teams and sent dozens of orphans to schools and colleges.

The response from the orphans was tremendous. You rarely see gratitude like that, especially when it comes to business. Still, things weren’t always rosy. Running the organization is often arduous and confusing, and the planning can be very tiring. We have employee-related problems, misunderstandings and conflicts with government officials, but they blow over. Along the way, we’ve had our share of naysayers. But when I hear “don’t” or “can’t,” my entrepreneurial DNA kicks in and I strive to prove people wrong.

Here are three things I have learned during this unexpected journey:

1. What folks call “conventional wisdom” is almost always wrong. Oftentimes, the world agrees that there is one right way to do something. Most people listen, and they don’t think to look for another solution. Entrepreneurs have it in them to doubt convention.
2. When things look bad, keep going. Things worth doing are usually hard to do. Entrepreneurs dig in and prepare for the long haul.
3. Dreams are contagious, so dream well and dream often. If a dream is meaningful, people will want to be part of it.

We now work with 1,300 orphaned, abused or incarcerated children in El Salvador and Honduras, and our dream is to reach a million kids in 100 nations. I continue my mission because I see myself and my children in their faces. I know that for every orphan I help, they may go on to help a thousand more. There’s something richly rewarding about fulfilling a dream. After all, entrepreneurs dream, and they inspire others to dream, too. ☺



Greg is the President of greggarrettrealty.com. He was the number-one real estate agent on the Virginia Peninsula when he opened his own brokerage firm at the age of 26. Since then, Greg has been recognized as an innovator in the industry and has one of the most successful firms in the area. He can be reached via e-mail at ggdirect@aol.com.

Indian IT Company Recognized for Excellence

EO Chennai member Anandan Prasad’s Opus Software received the coveted National IT Award for Best IT Package for its “Electra” suite of products. Electra topped the list of software products on criteria such as criticality of IT usage and improvement in customer service. The award is given by The Computer Society of India, the country’s oldest computer industry organization.



Serial Entrepreneur Acquires New Company

Co-Founder of the EO Toronto chapter Jeff Dennis led a group that recently acquired SonnenEnergie GmbH, a German solar integrator and power producer. The company now trades as SonnenEnergy Corp. on the Toronto Venture Exchange.



New Delhi Company Receives Premier Certification

EO New Delhi member Sharan Pasricha’s Gossini Fashion Ltd. recently became one of the few garment exporters in India to be awarded the ISO 9001:2000 certification for Quality Management Systems. GFL, a PriceWaterHouse-certified, US-compliant manufacturing facility, is one of India’s leading fashion export companies.



London Company Supports Amex in Greater China

EO London member Tammy Smulders’ company, SCB Partners, conducted a review of preferred suppliers for Hong Kong, Shanghai, Beijing and Macau in preparation for the launch of the American Express Centurion Lifestyle Services Team for Greater China. SCB identified all critical relationships with restaurants, bars, clubs, retailers, florists, etc., and facilitated introductions for Amex.



Royal Indian Celebration a Success

During the Annual Coaltrans Conference in Delhi, India, EO U.A.E. member Ahmed Buhari’s Coal & Oil Company successfully hosted a royal Indian darbar-themed party, which showcased royal Indian decor, food and dances from across India. Coal & Oil is an integrated energy company involved in coal supplies, shipping, logistics and power generation.



Singapore Company Wins Industry Award

Staging Connections, EO Singapore member Ronnie Lim Swee Hai’s parent company, recently won a Meetings & Events Industry Award. The award is judged on how event companies work with, and contribute to, the meetings and events industry. His company was also voted “Top Event Agency in Singapore” for the second consecutive year in *Marketing Magazine’s* Annual Agency of the Year Survey.



Dallas Member Featured on CNBC

Jeremy Brandt, an EO Dallas member and CEO of 1-800-CashOffer, was featured on CNBC during a special on real estate investing and foreclosures. 1-800-CashOffer is an international company that provides marketing and resources to residential investors. Visit CashOffer.com/news/CNBC/ to view the video.



Vancouver Catering Company Goes Green

Culinary Capers Catering, EO Vancouver member Debra Lykkemark’s company, recently became a member of the Green Table Network, a Vancouver-based social enterprise with an innovative program to help restaurants and food service operators do more for the environment. Debra will assess ways her company can effectively reduce their impact on the environment and help set the benchmark for sustainable food service.



Detroit Entrepreneur Published

EO Detroit Communications Chair Mark Winter recently had his company, Identity Marketing and Public Relations, profiled in *Crain’s Detroit Business*. In a state where negative headlines portraying a grim economic outlook are all too common, the article details Identity’s significant growth in the business-to-business marketing and public relations sector.



Share your news with your EO peers by sending a detailed e-mail to octane@eonetwork.org. Please include a 300 dpi headshot with your submission.

WAR AND MEMORIES

TOM BEATY
EO ATLANTA

If you ever find yourself in a US cemetery, take a second to read the tombstones. The combat veterans' markers are easy to find. War had made such an impact on these soldiers' lives that they chose to honor their commitment on their burial grounds. Above all else, they wish to be remembered for the war in which they fought and the unit in which they served.

In short, they have stories to tell.

When it comes time for my burial, I'm confident that the name of my business will not be on my tombstone, despite the passion and energy I have poured into it. Like all entrepreneurs, I have faced my share of battles, but my experiences don't compare to the trials and tribulations of military personnel. It was these stories that inspired me to create a nonprofit that changed my life.

Early in the 1990s, I found myself reading a marker for a World War II veteran and his deceased wife. The veteran's side of the stone listed only his birth date, which led me to believe he was still alive. I found his name in the phone book and offered to buy him breakfast. The former soldier recounted his fighting days. His eyes lit up when he spoke of enemies who infiltrated the perimeter through tunnels during the middle of the night. He recalled how he was taught to freeze when flares went off, how one officer died when he didn't listen, and he remembered seeing his best friend "catch bullets with his chest."

Talking to this veteran gave me a new perspective, and I soon found myself meeting with others. I was shocked to discover that few had ever recorded their amazing tales. And given that most of them were well into their seventies, it was clear the details would be lost to history. I considered this an extraordinary loss, and I knew that one day, I had to figure out a way to fix it.

Eight years later, I launched the Witness to War Foundation (www.witness-to-war.org), a nonprofit designed to capture war stories for future generations. While I was excited to finally embark on this mission, the timing could not have been worse. I had just recently launched my management consulting firm, and I had my hands full with a 2-year-old son and another on the way. It was difficult balancing a young family, young business and a nonprofit, but I knew that if I were ever to do it, it had to be now.

I decided to do the interviews primarily during working hours so that my business would be affected more than my family. I'm sure the project hin-

dered the growth of my company somewhat, but I think it has come around full circle and added a unique dimension to my life. On days I should have been growing my nascent company or changing diapers, I went to reunions and homes. I met extraordinary men and women who fought for my ability to start a business in a free country. I captured their stories.

It has been an incredible experience and one that, in many ways, surpasses my business success in terms of purpose. Like many entrepreneurs, I am motivated by success for the sake of success. My scoreboard for much of my career has been my company's revenues, my income, the number of clients we have or the jobs we created. All of these things are rewarding and fulfilling in their own way; however, the Witness to War project is more pure. Most of the veterans I interviewed have seen and felt things most of us cannot even imagine.

Throughout this project, I learned that the types of stress and challenges I face in business are almost laughable compared to the things some of the veterans faced. During the early days of my consulting firm, I felt a great deal of stress regarding whether a deal would close or if a project would turn out well. But then I would hear about real stress: of charging a German machine gun pit, of coming face to face with an enemy, of a fear so intense that a survivor's eyes tear up 60 years later. I realized I didn't know the meaning of stress.

After each interview, I would be so relaxed and thankful that it made me a better leader. I realized there were few things in business I could ever face that would compare to a single day of combat, and that helped me grow as a business owner.

As entrepreneurs, we are, almost by definition, obsessed with our businesses. However, few of us will have our company names or net incomes etched into our headstones. I have found that investing in something other than myself or my business has brought me a heightened personal satisfaction and greater business success. And for that, I am thankful. ☺



Tom is the President and CEO of Insight Sourcing Group, Inc., a management consulting firm exclusively focused on strategic sourcing and procurement-related services. Tom can be reached via e-mail at tbeaty@insightsourcing.com, or through his Web site, www.witness-to-war.org.

PLAYTIME FOR PARENTS

ARJUN KALYANPUR
EO BANGALORE

The laughter of a child can put life into perspective.

As an entrepreneur and parent, I know that firsthand. I believe that the fundamental right of each child is uninhibited and unrestricted playtime. The happiness derived from zipping down a slide, climbing up a jungle gym and bopping around on a seesaw needs no explanation or description. Unfortunately, some children in our country don't ever get to experience the wonders of a playground, let alone playtime.

All across India, there are millions of children who aren't given the opportunity to truly be a kid. This is due in large part to the fact that there simply isn't enough space for them to play. While the richer children have playgrounds at school, in their neighborhood and at the clubs they visit, the poorer children must play in the sandpits of construction sites.

As successful entrepreneurs, my wife Sunita and I felt a keen desire to give back to our community in Bangalore. Living in an exclusive neighborhood, our children have almost everything they could ever need or want. However, the same is not true for children from poorer neighborhoods. There are many families who simply cannot afford to offer their children life's simplest pleasures.

With this in mind, we decided to create the People4People trust fund for the construction of playgrounds. The mission of this trust fund is to give poor children a part of their childhood back. We provide children with reasons to laugh, smile and form memories with their peers.

When we put up our first playground in Whitefield, Bangalore, the children were on the slide even before the paint dried. They had been waiting so long for their own playground that they couldn't stand by and watch. The true joy and sparkle in their eyes was more than worth it. But although the results were beautiful, the process itself proved arduous.

One of the main hurdles we faced was finding a playground manufacturer who would deliver rapidly and at a low cost. Playgrounds for children are not a priority in India, which makes it difficult to plan for their construction. Initially, we were using our own funds and donations from friends, including those raised through an EO Bangalore chapter initiative, to build playgrounds in contract with a playground manufacturer. However,

the manufacturer's rates were high and his delivery time was slow. We decided to leverage our experience as entrepreneurs in high-tech telemedicine and build low-tech playground units. We gained the confidence and technical input we needed by picking the brains of our EO friends.

"All in all, this project has made us feel blessed. It is as if we were given the opportunity to be entrepreneurs for a reason; the ability to create wealth and the power to use that wealth for greater good."

several better ways to implement it. Entrepreneurship is a creative, passionate process, and I believe a portion of that should be directed to social good.

Since we started People4People, we have put up 30 playgrounds in India, including one in a village that had been affected by the tsunami in 2004. We will continue to rally those dedicated to the cause of children and put up playgrounds in poorer localities. All the while, we will remember that tomorrow belongs to the children of today, and that even the simplest ideas can change the lives of many. ☺

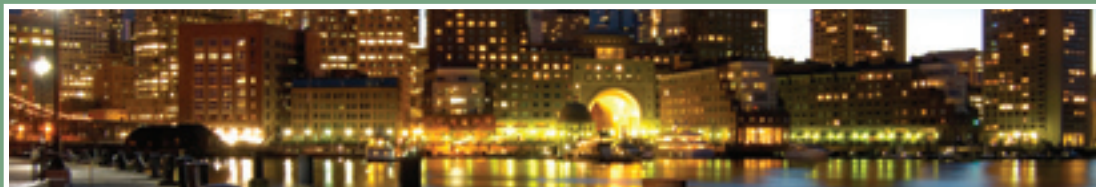


Arjun is the CEO of Teleradiology Solutions, a JCAHO-accredited company that provides teleradiology services to hospitals around the globe. The company also provides subspecialty consultations in cardiovascular and oncologic imaging to hospitals in India. Arjun can be contacted via e-mail at arjun.kalyanpur@telradsol.com.

GLOBAL LEARNING CALENDAR

EO Global events let you network with your peers from around the world, connect to experts from a variety of disciplines and create once-in-a-lifetime experiences that can only be found through EO. Make plans to attend at least one of these events, and discover the true power of a global community of entrepreneurs.

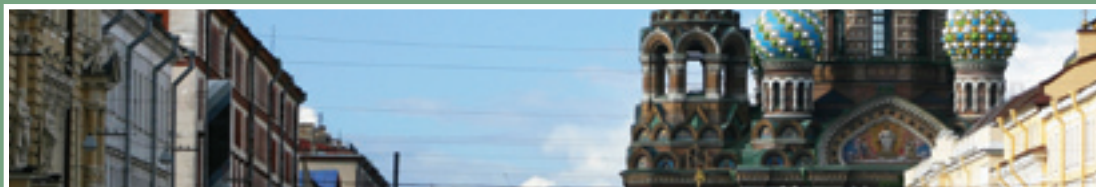
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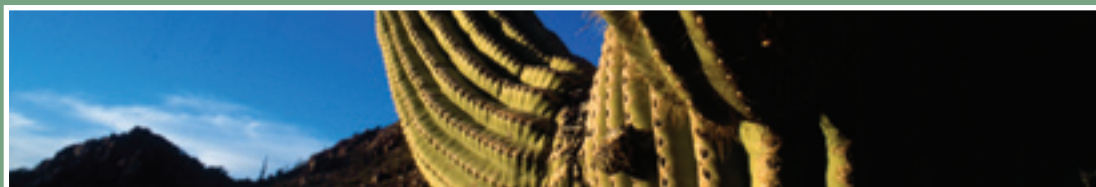
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For more information, or to register, please visit www.eonetwork.org/calendar or contact events@eonetwork.org.

THE POWER OF PRINCIPLES

MARK S. LASKA, PH.D.
EO NEW YORK

When I created Great Ecology & Environment, a company that specializes in ecological consulting, green design and habitat restoration, I wanted to do more than just build a business. I wanted to create a company that reflected my commitment to the social and environmental ideals I hold dear.

In the beginning, I chose to establish a decision-making process that was beholden to the company's principles. One of the biggest hurdles I faced was during the startup period in 2001. Because "going green" was not in vogue back then, I struggled to create a business that reflected my commitments. We managed to overcome this obstacle by continuously highlighting the benefits of our methods and remaining patient. Luckily for us, more and more people became aware that environmental responsibility has many benefits, and soon enough, we were up and running.

Running a business based on the premise of ecological responsibility takes extra effort, but the payoff, both in client and community relationships, is well worth the energy. Here's what I did to ensure my company stayed on message:

1. I understood my boundaries. We are committed to providing our clients with environmentally responsible solutions. Doing this enables us to guide stakeholders to make sustainable decisions that support their overall business objectives. In one instance, we had a big client that didn't see the environment as their top priority. I had to walk a fine line between advocating for their needs and maximizing the ecological potential of each decision. It was difficult balancing one another's goals, but by knowing my boundaries, I was able to ensure we were both happy with the results.

2. I anticipated the challenges. We always try to impose an ecological component with all of our design projects, such as by adding ecological features to landscapes, creating habitats with native plants and trying to restore lost ecological functions. When we helped create salt marshes and other habitats for the upcoming Brooklyn Bridge Park, we faced numerous challenges with large developers and government regulators. Thankfully, I anticipated the challenges in advance, prepared my design team and adjusted to them accordingly.

3. I stuck with my principles. Maintaining an ecological platform has never been an easy business decision, but it has always been an easy social decision. At GEE, we have a vested interest in the long-term health and quality of the areas in which we provide ecosystem restorations. Because we stick to our principles, we earn the respect of our clients and competitors, and we remain a profitable, viable business.

4. I learned to stay relevant. To stay relevant within the environmental framework, I have had to continuously refine my business rationale and provide a diverse set of offerings (such as adding "green roofs" to buildings and habitat features to landscapes and parks). I have been tempted to sell my ecology practice, but my passion for ecology and environmental values keeps me motivated to build and maintain an ecologically focused business. By diversifying my approaches, I've maintained a foothold in my industry.

As an entrepreneur, it is rewarding to start and grow a profitable company on the premise of social responsibility. This has now advanced with the launching of my newest business, Ecology Venture Partners, a fund whose mission is to invest in habitat restoration projects. While not all companies have such a symbiotic relationship between business and social goals, with GEE I've learned that it's important to show how far a strong environmental commitment can take you in the for-profit world. I've also learned a very valuable lesson: Profit is important, but it's not everything. It's all about the relationships I've gained and making a positive impact on our environment. That is what's truly rewarding. ☺



Mark is the CEO of Great Ecology & Environment, an ecological consulting and habitat restoration design group that provides services to the industrial, legal, real estate, conservation and design industries. He is also Managing Partner of Ecology Venture Partners, an environmental fund that invests in environmental assets. Mark can be reached via e-mail at mlaska@geeinc.net or mlaska@ecovp.com.





GOING GREEN IN COSTA RICA

AL BENNER
EO PHILADELPHIA

The frenetic pace of life in a major metro region can stifle even the most easy-going entrepreneur. Three years ago, I decided I had had enough of the city life and turned my attention to someplace simpler, a place where I could break away from my businesses, find myself and re-energize.

ONE WITH THE BREEZE

My adventure began in 1994 when I went fishing in Costa Rica with a few friends. I had the time of my life, and I vowed to someday return. Years later, I found myself dreaming of that beautiful utopia. Little did I know I was about to encounter the biggest challenge in my personal and professional life.

In 2004, I returned to Costa Rica with a plan. I was going to lay the foundation of what was to become a sustainable Costa Rican community, a place where environmentally conscious individuals could be self-sufficient and lead healthy, happy lives. These people would be adventure-oriented and respectful of the local community and culture.

My goal was to create a legacy that impacts the decisions people make regarding how they live, grow and maintain sustainability in harmony with the local environment and community. I envisioned a clean and comfortable environment with pure air and no need for heating or cooling, a place where people can produce their own food and power. The plan was daunting, but I had plenty of experience to back me up.

The first step was finding the right property. After a thorough search, I discovered the perfect setting and named it, “Finca Las Brisas,” or “Farm of the Breezes.” It encompasses more than 150 acres, has two year-round rivers, several waterfalls and is situated above the ocean. While I was overjoyed to have found my dream property, I knew bigger issues lay ahead.

Financial backing was a necessity. In order to fund my venture, I had to sell people on the plausibility of my vision. By planning ahead, organiz-

ing my ideas and highlighting my passion, I convinced three friends to become minority partners in the project. I brought them to Costa Rica to witness the exotic landscape firsthand— they were immediately hooked on my “eco-village” concept. Thanks to the support of my backers, friends and family, my tropical paradise is coming to fruition.

LOOKING AHEAD

In just a few short years, we have come a long way. We currently have 25 1.25-acre lots undergoing subdivision and the remaining 80 percent of land is being permanently preserved as a wildlife corridor for community use. As the eco-village nears completion, we continue to busy ourselves with energy-friendly projects. The village has a half-mile access road, an organic farm for future residents and a work shed with solar panels to conserve energy. Soon, renewable energy and water/waste management systems will be installed to benefit all residents.

Overall, this international project has stretched my imagination, management skills and boot-strapping abilities to new levels. The pleasures and frustrations I’ve experienced rival those of my other four businesses. It tests not only my mental toughness, ingenuity and creativity, but also my interpersonal, financial and managerial skill sets like no other project can.

Leading a multimillion-dollar development in a foreign country where a different language is spoken is incredibly challenging. At the same time, it is also very energizing. I have grown as an entrepreneur and leader by learning from my mistakes and not taking “no” for an answer. It’s still an uphill battle, but it’s worth it when you’re following your dream. ☺



Al is a serial mail-order entrepreneur, owning and operating a deer fencing business for 15 years (recently sold), a cat fence company and a moss garden firm. He can be reached via e-mail at alanbenner@gmail.com. For more information on his Costa Rican community, visit www.FincaLasBrisas.org.

Here are some of the challenges I faced and how I overcame them:

- 1. Adaptability.** The business culture in Latin America seemed slow to me. This is something that can be incredibly frustrating to new visitors. I’ve learned to come to grips with the process and accept it. This makes it easier for me to grow my dream.
- 2. Patience.** The Costa Rican culture focuses on being helpful, yet through my interactions some information gets lost. Throw in the language barrier, and for me as an American, it’s a tough ride. I’ve learned to be patient and clarify each problem one by one. This helps me understand and respect the culture.
- 3. Awareness.** The old adage is true: doing business with friends is never easy. I am the majority partner and lead on the project, and with that comes a lot of pressure and expectations. A lot of my partners are friends, and I’ve learned to include them in the decision making. This way, everyone shares in the experience.
- 4. Time Management.** I still own two other companies in the US, and with twin 2-year-olds, my days can be very long. I’ve learned to juggle everything so that my dreams can be realized. Sometimes I have to make sacrifices to accomplish my goals, but I’ve learned to stay clear on my objectives, and that helps me stay focused on what’s important in my life.



“THIS INTERNATIONAL PROJECT HAS STRETCHED MY IMAGINATION, MANAGEMENT SKILLS AND BOOT-STRAPPING ABILITIES TO NEW LEVELS.”

For entrepreneurs, giving back to your community is a popular part of running a business. But I've learned you can't be a copycat. Your staff isn't dumb; they'll see right through a feeble attempt to mimic the latest trend in modern corporate leadership. Here is how I implemented social responsibility in my workplace:

Step 1: I found my socially responsible co-workers.

Social responsibility should start from within. If I show up on Monday morning with a big announcement about "the new culture," my staff will be resistant or even suspicious, and my initiative will atrophy and die as quickly as it started. But if the news comes from co-workers other than just me, and if it grows slowly, it will dig roots, become part of our daily culture and thrive.

Step 4: I started with simple charity events in the office.

We like to throw birthday parties for folks. One time, a co-worker asked if their birthday party could be at the local food bank. So, we bagged carrots for a couple hours, and everyone loved it. By this point, volunteering was becoming an occasional activity in the office. By starting simple, I encouraged greater participation among my staff.

Step 5: I made social responsibility a regular part of the workplace.

After we had a good time at the food bank, we talked about making volunteerism a regular part of our workplace. I offered to take a full day each year and make it a volunteer day. It's a weekday, everyone gets paid, and they nominate and vote for which charity to help.

CREATING SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY IN THE WORKPLACE

DAN K. ROZYCKI
EO AUSTIN



Step 2: I helped one co-worker recruit others.

In the kitchen one morning, I found out that Elvia used to donate blood. We decided to donate together on our lunch hour. Later, I suggested she send an e-mail to the staff to see if anyone wanted to join. Each time she sends out a feeler, more and more people join. It's a grassroots approach to getting your team involved with a good cause.

Step 3: I used the first charity as the reason to talk about more charities.

I used the blood bank experience as an opportunity to bring it up at the next staff meeting. I asked who already participates in charities, and who wishes they had time to participate in something? I was given suggestions for a toy drive, a food drive and a fundraiser. I then assigned the task of organizing the events to someone other than myself.

Promoting social responsibility within my workplace wasn't a master plan. It happened naturally and gradually, and it wasn't forced on my staff. I found co-workers who exhibited the right qualities, and I supported them, which got other people interested. Also, we keep everything optional, which is important because not everyone gets interested, and that's perfectly fine. Throughout this experience, I've learned that if you live what you preach and you're sincere, you'll motivate your staff to give back to the community in no time. ☺



Dan is the president of The Transtec Group, Inc., a specialty engineering firm with award-winning expertise in pavements and pavement materials. He has been an EO member since 2006. To contact Dan, e-mail him at dan@transtec.us.



The Not-for-Much-Profit Company

DAVID DEAL
EO DC

I started working for a technology services company in 1994. The part of the company that I led focused on serving nonprofit organizations. When the company could no longer "subsidize" this philanthropic division, I was left with a tough choice: find another job and let the philanthropic division be shut down, or figure out how to make a go of it as an entrepreneur. So, in February 2001, I led the division through a friendly spin-off and we launched as Community IT Innovators.

I decided to make this jump out of a sense of duty to our nonprofit customers. I believed that the organizations we were serving would be hard-pressed to find an alternative IT provider who could do what we do for them at an affordable rate.

My company is unique in many respects, and this comes from the social mission that has been the focus since our founding. One expression

"Taking a risk and becoming an entrepreneur was a chance for me to live out my passion for technology as well as my desire for service."

of these ideals is our commitment to serving charitable nonprofits. To make this possible, we implemented a sliding fee scale that makes our rates affordable for organizations of any size. Jokingly, we refer to ourselves as the "not-for-much-profit" company, as our margins have always been lower than they could be.

An upside of the sliding fee scale is that it enables us to continue serving smaller organizations that often provide the greatest return in non-financial ways, particularly the sense of fulfillment that the staff gets from serving them. Connecting people with organizations they believe in is

a key part of our value proposition to prospective employees, and in that way, "doing good" comes full circle as a competitive advantage. A downside is that our profitability is low (but positive), so we have to be somewhat frugal in how we invest our limited profits.

The sliding fee scale is just one way in which we've established ourselves as a beacon of social responsibility. Though we were helping our clients save money, we knew we could use our experience to help make more of a long-lasting impact. In 2004, we emphasized environmental responsibility by searching for ways to help clients "green" their IT. We now recommend green Web site and server hosts, and we measure the carbon footprints of IT solutions. It costs us a little more to research these topics and include them as part of our service offerings, but the market has grown to support it, and in some cases, demand it.

With this new approach to business, I've had to alter my way of thinking. For our project to be sustainable long term, I had to find a more workable balance. That entailed letting go of responsibilities and of having a say in some things. It meant letting others make mistakes that I don't feel I would have made. Finally, I had to accept that we'd earn less money for the sake of philanthropy. In the end, I've learned that some wealth can't be quantified with dollar signs, and that being successful also means running a company that is doing some good in the world. ☺



David is the President of Community IT Innovators, an employee-owned company committed to helping social-mission organizations effectively use technology. He has been an EO member since 2001. To reach David, e-mail him at ddeal@citidc.com.



PEDRO MEDINA
YO CREO EN COLOMBIA FOUNDATION

As we transition from giving and teaching to creating systems and cultures so that people can develop better industries, the role of the entrepreneur as a socially responsible global citizen needs to change. These changes unleash wonderful opportunities, and they entail rewiring the entrepreneur and his or her roles and relationships.

I rewired myself in 1999. Through that rewiring, I was able to make my transition from success to significance and create a model of innovative, corporate social responsibility in Colombia. Before 1999, Colombia was the only Latin American nation whose economy had grown every single year for 70 years, and the only one that had always honored its international loan commitments. It was the oldest democracy in the region and a paradigm of reliability in the midst of terrible conflict.

Its great potential in terms of human, natural and physical capital was clouded by a variety of unfortunate events in the 1990s. With a corrupt president who clung to power and the decertification of Colombia by the US State Department, confidence, both domestic and international, fell; foreign reserves plunged; foreign investment plummeted; unemployment skyrocketed; and the economy found itself in a situation of negative GNP growth. This state of affairs was aggravated by guerrilla and paramilitary groups, which destroyed towns, pilfering and massacring innocent people, and by the subsequent exodus of human and financial capital.

To complete the picture, business closures reached an all-time high during 1999. That year, Colombia accounted for 80 percent of the world's kidnappings and 55 percent of terrorist acts. Almost three million Colombians had been displaced, and 60 percent lived in poverty. The country's self-esteem was at an all-time low. The massacres, the exodus, the dismal economic situation and the displaced people all contributed to a feeling of despondency.

That year, I found myself teaching a business strategy class at Universidad de Los Andes in Bogotá, while also managing Colombian operations for McDonald's. I asked my 39 students how many of them saw themselves

in Colombia in five years. Twelve students raised their hands. I asked the other 27 why they wanted to leave the country, and they answered, "Why should we stay?"

Frustrated by my inability to produce a solid argument that would sell Colombia to my students, I decided I had to do something. During an 18-month period, I led a group of 50 students from five universities in a project to research the comparative advantages of Colombia. From this effort, we put together a presentation called "Porque Creer en Colombia," or "Why one should believe in Colombia." In the first eight months, I gave that presentation 256 times.

What started as a research project became the seed of a nation-empowerment and reflective-optimism movement. The project also yielded the unleashing of a social entrepreneur. I have trained hundreds of persons to give our original talk, and we have reached 420,000 Colombians in 141 cities and 23 countries. I decided to leave the business world and dedicate the rest of my life to being a catalyst toward an empowered Colombia.

This entire experience taught me that one entrepreneur can make a global difference. I learned that if you're seriously invested in bettering your country, you'll find a way to make it happen. I understand that not all philanthropy projects can yield immediate results, and that there are a lot of hurdles one must jump to find themselves in a position of leadership. However, all it takes is an idea, a plan and the gumption to back up that plan with patience and prudence. To be a socially responsible entrepreneur, all it takes is a dream and a willingness to change perspectives. ☺



Named one of the 20 most valuable businessmen in Colombia by the business magazine *Dinero*, Pedro is the Founder and President of the Yo Creo en Colombia Foundation, a grassroots initiative that empowers Colombians to understand the achievements, potential and resources of Colombia. Pedro last spoke at the 2003 EO LAC Regional Conference. E-mail him at pmolina@yocreoencolombia.com.

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