

The Entrepreneurs' Organization Magazine
December 2015

octane

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FATHER,
LIKE SON



"We created a set of interview questions that help us assess a candidate's perspective against our values."

Five Steps to a Great Internal Hire

Kristen Harris, EO Columbus

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	Karen Hamill
	Karen Summerson

Global Support Services Office

Washington, D.C., USA

Entrepreneurs' Organization
500 Montgomery Street
Suite 700
Alexandria, VA
22314-1437 USA
info@eonetwork.org
www.eonetwork.org
T +1.703.519.6700
F +1.703.519.1864

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– Mauricio Lopez,
EO Querétaro

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Coming Together to Make a Mark



Gilberto (center), with fellow attendees at the EO Osaka Global University, held 30 September – 4 October

In the first half of FY2015/2016, the global community was confronted with a variety of challenges that have shaken, and often tested, our collective resolve. From countries fighting with one another, citizens fleeing their homes, natural disasters impacting families near and far, and large organizations operating with little transparency, it has no doubt been a challenging time. Although myriad globalization and technology efforts are trying to bring us together, often the people behind them are not. As the world's most influential community of entrepreneurs, we can set an example for others to follow. And in the past few months, we have done just that.

Building and promoting a greater sense of unity throughout the EO nation has been a primary driver since the introduction of our "EO Together" theme in July. In that time, we have worked to set the stage for togetherness at all levels of the organization. Specifically, we have hosted and supported events that have embraced this ideology and afforded members, spouses, their children and executives the chance to grow through collaboration. Recently, more than 300 members met in Osaka, Japan, at the EO Osaka Global University (see page 22) to learn about the local culture, create greater synergy and explore new ways members and leaders can work together to impact the world and their communities. We appreciate our Japanese members' way of life and honor their culture.

Another recent event, EO Ignite, also made its mark by enabling growth through unity. Held in New Zealand and hosted by the southern-most chapter in EO—EO Auckland—this regional event set an example by uniting Aussies and Kiwis in an environment fueled by engagement. These two events, and countless others held in the past six months, exemplify togetherness and serve as reminders of what can be accomplished when people unite to build a better world of empathy and appreciation of diversity. They remind us just how important it is to support one another and the next generation of entrepreneurs—the new heroes of the economy—and to have balanced lives fueled by core values.

Examples of togetherness can be found throughout this edition of *Octane*, as your peers share their insights, lessons learned and tips for business and life. Our cover story (see page 14), for example, espouses the benefits of supporting family throughout the entrepreneurial journey. Mauricio Lopez (EO Querétaro) and his entrepreneur son, Mauricio, discuss how running a business has helped strengthen their bond and created a framework of support. In step with this framework, we're diversifying our own by enhancing our support of tenured members like Mauricio, and particularly, their families. More and more sons and daughters of members are joining the organization, which is a sign that we are evolving as a community and an indication that our offerings should follow suit.

In the next six months, we will continue to engage Forums, chapters and regions the world over, while supporting the development of members, their spouses, families and children in the process. From hosting spousal-friendly events to encouraging EO children to connect with one another globally, we will further grow our EO nation and the opportunities it provides. Let's keep working as one to change the narrative, understand each other better, live with respect, learn from our shared experiences and, ultimately, create a better world—for ourselves, for our communities and for our children.

Together we stand,

Gilberto Crombé, EO Monterrey
EO Global Chairman, FY2015/2016
gcrombe@eonetwork.org

EO Together

P.S. Congratulations to EO Asia on their 20th anniversary!

Growth through Global Leadership



From left to right: Robert Glazer, Carlo Santoro, Vijay and Fletcher McKenzie at the 2015 EO Leadership Academy

In all corners of the world, EO is considered a thought leader in the entrepreneurial space; a beacon of support for leading entrepreneurs eager to accelerate their journey in business and beyond. Helping to build this EO identity are countless member leaders who, over the years, have stepped up and led all levels of the organization. In this interview, Vijay touches on the role member leaders will play in the evolution of EO and the adoption of a new narrative.

In your last interview, you introduced a new narrative to the organization and spoke to the far-reaching role it will play in EO's future. Have there been any developments since?

VT/ "Since October, I have been working with our Global Chairman, Gilberto, and the Global Board to introduce the new narrative to the EO leadership community. Specifically, we've informed member leaders through various global, on-site engagements; delivered innovative communications that speak to the over-arching plan and strategic planning cycle; coached our professional staff on how to adopt this new mindset; and stressed to all stakeholders the importance of eliminating the 'best-kept secret' label we've worn since 1987, among other key actions. Before we can take the first step on this new journey together, we need to have the right roadmap. In the past few months, we've created critical collateral designed to start the conversation, fuel it forward and set the stage for steady and continuous progress. We're nearly there, but it all starts with putting the right information in front of the right people."

What role do member leaders play in the facilitation of a new narrative, and how does EO plan on supporting them throughout this process?

VT/ "Our member leaders, much like our professional staff, are the drivers of this important initiative. Keeping them informed, and just as importantly, equipping them with the tools they need to realize next steps, is integral to our strategy of evolving the organization. The more resources and information our leadership has at their disposal, the greater their impact on a local, regional and global scale. One of the ways we're delivering this knowledge and support is through a suite of leadership documents, which are designed to educate all involved on EO's strategies, operations and wins. In fact, we're in the process of finalizing our Organizational Playbook, our first of many critical documents, and one that will serve as a fluid game plan as we work together to pursue a new narrative for EO."

How does the organization's "EO Together" theme complement this new direction and the leaders who've stepped up to support it?

VT/ "It plays a big role, certainly. As a former Global Chairman, I understand how important it is to engage likeminded peers who are committed to the same vision. Critical to the growth and development of the EO community is unity; member leaders need to know that they can rely on one another to realize the greater vision of the organization. As we continue to lay the foundation for a new narrative, we will do so with a commitment to building synergy throughout our growing community. That's why EO's theme of 'EO Together' is so important ... it underlines absolutely everything that we do. A vision is just a string of words without the heart and hard work of those members who are stepping up to execute it. That's the incredible thing about EO leadership; there's no end to the selflessness of our membership. They volunteer their time, energy and expertise to position this organization for greater things, and in my opinion, that's nothing short of remarkable."

You've been in the role of CEO for five months now. What have been some of your fondest memories to date?

VT/ "Where do I start? I don't think there's enough room in this magazine to capture everything! First, let me say that I am humbled and honored to be serving in this role and supporting the strategic direction of an organization I know and love. Going from a member to a member leader to the role of CEO, I am beyond fortunate to have been given so many opportunities to contribute to our amazing community. Looking back at the past few months, there isn't one experience that captures the magical essence of EO or the fiery spirit of the members and staff who support it—there are countless. From attending the Asia Bridge Campus in Hainan and meeting new faces at the New York Global University to engaging Japanese innovators at the Osaka Global University and working one-on-one with member leaders from around the world, it has been a rewarding journey and one that I'm excited to build on. I'm proud to be a part of such a vibrant community, and I'm excited to help take it to even greater heights."

To learn more about EO's new narrative or the organization's plans for Q3 and Q4, email Vijay at askthecoo@eonetwork.org.

LEARNING ABOUT

For one fiscal quarter, I tried an experiment to boost my firm's productivity. By the quarter's end, the results were clear—painfully clear.

Tim Hamilton
Founder of Praxent

Like many custom software agencies, we estimate and bill our work based on the hours our developers devote to client projects. Given that our developers are expected to work 40 hours each week, it seemed logical that the more hours they devoted to client work, the more productive they would be and the easier it would be to meet our quarterly fiscal goals.

In our last quarterly planning session, my management team and I decided that our quarterly theme would be about finding our groove and hunkering down into productivity. We decided we would hold the team accountable for producing 35 hours of billable client time per week. Five hours seemed like a reasonable allotment for administrative tasks like answering emails.

As the mantra says, “visibility creates accountability,” so we arranged to track our progress daily on a public, thermometer-style chart. We created themed posters encouraging the staff to call out members of the management team who interrupted and made it difficult for them to reach their 35-hour mark. We dubbed these people our “Allocation Vampires” and made note of who on the management team was the biggest vampire each week. It was an eye-opening experiment, to say the least.

Increased Productivity, Here We Come?

At first, everything started off okay. Our developers were on board and consistently hitting their targets for billable hours. It seemed all but certain that my move would pay off. But within a few weeks, I would have been utterly oblivious not to notice the changes in our office. Where once our work environment was loose and relaxed, things were now deadly quiet and tense; collaboration was once the norm, but an every-man-for-himself attitude began to take hold. It got to the point where my most tenured and trusted developers were barely greeting me or looking me in the eye.

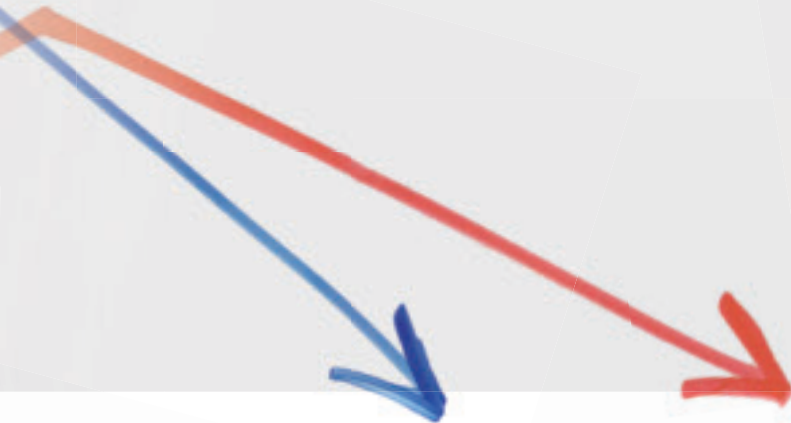
Getting an Earful

I called in one of those tenured employees for a meeting. And even though I knew I probably wouldn't like what I was about to hear, I asked him straight up, “What's wrong?” He didn't need much prodding. His dissatisfaction came out in a torrent. “I don't go out to lunch with my colleagues anymore,” he began, “because just deciding where to eat consumes too much productive time. In fact, I hardly go to lunch at all. I just eat at my desk. And I used to love jumping in to help others untangle a complicated problem. But I find myself less willing to do that because it hurts my own productivity.”

Other employees were equally unhappy, with issues stemming from the 35-hour target as the root cause. The worst part was that nearly every employee said that while they might look more productive on paper, they didn't feel like they were doing their best work. With the end of the quarter coming up, I still held a slim hope that our fiscal results might prove to them that it was all worth it ... and then I read something that convinced me it never would.

PRODUCTIVITY

(the hard way)



Seeing the Big Pixar

I had just picked up “Creativity, Inc.,” by Ed Catmull, president of the fantastically successful Pixar Animation Studios. Catmull’s behind-the-scenes stories are full of inspirational lessons for creative entrepreneurs. In one chapter, Catmull relates an anecdote about legendary management guru, W. Edwards Deming, who was sent to Japan after World War II to help rebuild the country’s manufacturing sector under the Marshall Plan.

At the time, the phrase “made in Japan” was widely interpreted as “shoddy workmanship.” Within less than a decade, Deming’s work was the catalyst that transformed its meaning to “high-quality.” When Deming arrived, Japanese manufacturers were fixated on productivity, enforced by a rigidly hierarchical management structure. Deming realized that product quality suffered because employees learned quickly that pointing out lapses in quality slowed down production—and also put their jobs at risk.

Deming also realized that poor sales due to quality issues negated any productivity gains. He convinced Japanese manufacturers that product quality, as opposed to productivity, must be each employee’s top priority. Soon, Japanese assembly-line work stations were equipped with kill switches, so any worker could stop the entire line to address a quality issue. This was a radical move, explicitly prioritizing quality over productivity. And we know how the story goes. In time, Japanese brands like Sony, Nikon and Toyota would become known for superior design and craftsmanship, envied for both their profitability and productivity.

Lessons Learned

Looking back, I realized that by imposing a strict target for billable hours, I had unwittingly encouraged our employees to emphasize productivity over quality. In our business, quality doesn’t just encompass attention to detail and reducing errors; it also means finding the most creative and elegant solutions to challenges. So, in effect, my idea didn’t incentivize the aspects of their jobs that our employees found most fulfilling.

As our end-of-quarter staff meeting approached, I had all of the information I needed to evaluate my experiment without even looking at the P&L. The anecdote about Deming and, more definitively, my employees’ dissatisfaction, told me everything I needed to know. An environment where our employees feel free to do their best work is nothing to experiment with. Armed with candid feedback from employees and clients, we’re going into our next quarter with a focus on empowering the team to collaborate better, enabling them to focus on the quality of their work and on meeting or exceeding our commitments to our clients.

Tim Hamilton (pictured) is an EO Austin member and the founder of Praxent, a custom software and web app development firm. Contact Tim at tim.hamilton@praxent.com.

ONE ONE HAPPY FORUM, FAMILY

Gibran Abidin

Head of sales and marketing for Tunggal Idaman Abdi

I joined EO Indonesia three years ago, and by an enormous stroke of luck, was welcomed into Forum Happy. We are an eclectic group of individuals ranging from first- to third-generation entrepreneurs with spouses from Indonesia, Japan and the United Kingdom. We have a lot in common, united largely by our shared passion for travelling and commitment to family. Making time to see the world beyond our busy lives is our oxygen, as is spending time with those whom we hold dear.

When we formed our Forum's constitution, we made it a point to involve our family in the EO journey. Knowing full well that our success is contingent upon those who support us, we explicitly included social events and Forum retreats that involved spouses, children and extended family. Adding this into our constitution solidifies our commitment to family and one another, and the retreats enable us to channel our common passion into a unifying experience. To make our retreats truly special, we chase once-in-a-lifetime experiences that encourage learning and growth.

Last year's retreat did just that: We went to Sri Lanka, chartered a private plane to a national park, camped in a leopard sanctuary and traversed the coast, where we visited historic sites and tasted local delicacies. During the trip, we even produced our own version of Pharrell Williams's "Happy" music video, which was subsequently featured at a local chapter event (scan the QR code to watch the video). On the flight home from Sri Lanka, I remember thinking it would be tough to beat this incredible retreat. We were up to the challenge.

While brainstorming for this year's retreat, we came up with several ideas— from travelling across Indochina to exploring Raja Ampat, Indonesia's renowned diving spot, by boat. During these discussions, the idea of a family retreat was brought up again. The challenge proved exciting: Where could we go where it would still be off the beaten track, kid-friendly and capture that once-in-a-lifetime feel? After much deliberation, we settled on a secluded resort nestled inside a coffee plantation near Borobudur, Indonesia's largest Buddhist temple and a UNESCO world-heritage site.

We picked flight times that were friendly to children, scrutinized the restaurant options and arranged customized experiences, such as meditating during sunrise. One of the learning points we took away was the ability to let go and trust each other when it came to fulfilling the assigned roles and responsibilities. By including young children, we also had to be flexible with their unpredictability and how that would, in turn, affect our pre-arranged schedule. Ultimately, we learned how to improvise on the go to meet our families' needs, while ensuring every retreat goal was achieved.

All in all, this year's retreat was one we will cherish forever. While we conducted our Forum exercises, our spouses and children engaged each other and created relationships that will last a lifetime. We even hosted special exercises that supported experience sharing and a greater sense of integration, which has since strengthened our bonds. The highlight of the retreat occurred on the final night; a barbeque was held after meat was flown in by one of the spouses, who happened to be a restaurateur.

What was the key to our successful retreat? Beyond proper role delegation and a mutual sense of empowerment between the Forum members, we were all equally focused on a core value of commitment. It's said that what you get out of your Forum experience comes from what you put into it. We applied that mantra to the family retreat, which is, I believe, the main reason why we had such a great time. As my spouse, Tania, commented:

"I have witnessed my husband grow in a multitude of ways since joining the Happy Forum. It was a privilege to step into the special world they created and witness its transformational components up close. Now officially a 'Happy Family,' our appreciation of EO's value has taken on a whole new dimension."

Gibran Abidin is an EO Indonesia member, as well as a board member of, and head of sales and marketing for, Tunggal Idaman Abdi, an Indonesian-based, family-owned pharmaceutical company. Prior to this role, he was a senior vice president at HSBC. Contact Gibran at gibran.abidin@tia-pharma.com.



ESCAPING THE PR BERMUDA TRIANGLE

Kristi Piehl

CEO of Media Minefield

“Public relations is like the Bermuda Triangle—you put money in, and you never get anything back!”

That’s a direct quote from a potential client I met with last year. She was frustrated because she was pouring her time, money and resources into a traditional PR firm and seeing zero results. I’ve met with other potential clients since then and have discovered she’s not the only one feeling this way.

As an entrepreneur and former TV reporter, I understand that successfully leveraging earned media is a challenge. The traditional approach is to hire a PR firm to churn out press releases and press kits. But if you want to escape the “PR Bermuda Triangle,” you have to utilize a different approach, ask different questions and demand different results. Here’s how you can start:

1 Know Your Message: Having a clear and consistent message is crucial to attracting clients and setting your company apart. You’d be surprised at how many entrepreneurs—or their employees—can’t effectively communicate who they are and what they do. Take the time to learn how you’re different than your competition and explore innovative ways to express that to others. For our clients, we start with a message session, and then we create a message map that outlines their key messages, communication goals and sample sound bites.

2 Say Goodbye to the Press Release: I once asked a friend of mine, who is a TV reporter, to print out all of the press releases sent to her newsroom in a single day. The stack was more than an inch tall, and I guarantee fewer than half of them were ever read by anyone at the station. The press release is a dated technique that is no longer effective. One national client we work with was hesitant to let go of their press releases, even though they never got any traction with them. Once we started approaching earned media for them the way we do best—with no press releases or paid advertising—they started seeing results and getting regular interviews in local newscasts from coast to coast.



3 Understand that Everything Matters: There’s value in every earned media opportunity, no matter how big or small the TV or radio station, print or online publication. One of our clients recently did an interview with a blog, which, in turn, got the interest of a major newspaper. One week later, she had an exclusive interview with “The Today Show” and “NBC Nightly News.” It may never have happened if not for that first blog interview. Just because a media outlet is small, it doesn’t mean it’s not powerful or valuable.

4 Always Be Social: A TV interview typically lasts three to four minutes, but its impact can extend far beyond that by utilizing social media. By taking an interview and targeting it through social media, you can help your message reach the right audience. Watch out for firms that promise a large number of “likes” to your Facebook page. A client came to us with hundreds of “likes,” but once we started digging, we realized they were purchased. Not only that, but they were all from people who live overseas! If you’re hiring a firm to do your social media, ask who they intend to target. It should be someone with whom you could actually do business.

If your goal is to make headlines or land a TV news interview, ask the PR firm you want to hire if their staff has real-world newsroom experience. The more they—and you—understand the impact of earned media, the better chance you’ll have at escaping the “PR Bermuda Triangle.”

Kristi Piehl (pictured) is an EO Minnesota member, as well as the founder and CEO of Media Minefield, a Minneapolis-based, news-driven PR agency on a mission to change the perception of the industry. Contact Kristi at kristi@media-minefield.com.



TRUSTING YOUR Entrepreneurial

David MacLaren

President and CEO of MediaValet, Inc.

When a traffic light turns yellow, there's a split second where your brain and your gut will pull you in opposing directions. Your brain screams "brake" while your gut says "gun it." It's the same when it comes to your business decisions. At those crucial moments, you need to know when to go with your gut and gun it, and when to brake for reason.

In 2000, I founded VRX Studios, a global photography company for the travel and hospitality industry. A decade later, we were struggling operationally under 20 terabytes of high-definition media assets. We weren't focusing on what we do well—taking photos. So, we created our own digital asset management system (DAMS) that could meet our specific needs. Over the following three years, companies began to take an interest in our system. Against sound advice, I decided to put my foot on the pedal and gun it. I separated the two companies, sold VRX Studios and focused my time on the DAMS project.

It's been an adventure since I made that crucial decision, and I'm still not sure what the future holds. That said, we've raised a round of financing, we're growing at breakneck speed and we're much closer to profitability. It wasn't easy by any stretch, but over those 24 months, the valuation of our new company went from zero to US\$20 million— and we're just getting started. As the founder of any successful startup knows, if I would have ignored my gut and listened to other people's advice, I would have missed the opportunity of a lifetime. So, how do you know when to ignore common sense and go for it? In the spirit of my driving analogy, here's what I've learned so far:

Look Outside Your Windshield

Each of us experiences a unique view of the world. If I had listened to others, I would have probably grown my first company's customer base by 5,000 over the next few years. Instead, I saw a bigger opportunity. I realized VRX Studios wasn't my business. It had taken its own path— and that path wasn't mine. Once I realized this, making the decision to spin off our DAMS project and create MediaValet was easy. I felt an excitement and joy that I hadn't felt in years. When we get too rigid and focus solely on our original business plan, we forget to look for new opportunities and are more likely to slam on the brakes. Don't get me wrong, we all still want to drive our business and point it in the right direction. Just

David MacLaren is an EO Vancouver member and the founder and CEO of MediaValet, a cloud-based, digital asset management company. Contact David at david.maclaren@mediavalet.com.

Instincts

remember to listen to your business, customers and colleagues, and always keep your eyes open—you never know what's coming around the corner.

Don't Stop in the Intersection

You can't let your passengers out of the car in an intersection; they could be seriously injured. In the same way, you can't spin out a business idea before it has a chance to show its stuff. It takes time to see if an idea has what it takes to survive by itself. That means you need solid evidence that there's actually a market for your product, that you've priced it correctly, that you can build it to meet the needs of the market, that you can attract the right team and that ultimately, you can sell your product or service. This might take a few months, or in our case, several years. But when an idea grows its own legs, gun it! Whether you follow it or not, it's another choice to make, and this time, it might be a bigger one.

It's Time to Gun It

When your gut says gun it, I say slam on the accelerator and go for it. But you need to commit 100% of your time and energy, or the risks increase exponentially. In my case, MediaValet is now a year old. I'm loving life because I took a risk and saw it through. I feel like I'm making a difference to marketing teams around the world, and I'm thankful I still listen to my gut regularly. As entrepreneurs, I think we should always listen to what our instincts are telling us. After all, they could be signaling big change.

What was your biggest hurdle when starting your business?

// It would have to be juggling my family life with my work life. When I first launched my business, I was searching for a new home and school for my two toddlers, all while managing the needs of new clients. Although we've settled in, I still need to balance the needs of my girls (now teenagers), 40 staff and countless clients. Hopefully with time I can get better at the juggling act!"

Nicola Nel (EO Cape Town)
Founder of Atmosphere Communications

// Public-speaking was probably my biggest hurdle. I was scared to death! Now I do it all the time. Also, not having any income for the first three years was a huge challenge."

Cliff Cole (EO Kansas City)
Founder of More Floods

// I would say raising funds. Here in Tanzania, we still don't have the traditional mortgaging facilities found in many parts of the world. To do any kind of real estate funding, you either have to come up with your own cash, or when relying on banks, place another real estate property valued at 120% or more against the borrowing amount. Coming up with creative financing options was a tough challenge."

Alpesh Sanghvi (EO East Africa – Dar es Salaam)
Founder of Anikuzo Designs

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The Pros and Cons of STRESS



When it comes to better business, keeping your staff energized and ensuring you have a functional operating system is crucial. The same is true for your health. In this interview, **Heidi Hanna, PhD.**, an EO speaker and the CEO and founder of SYNERGY, shares her insights into the significance of stress and how it can be harnessed to recharge the business owner battery.

What is the biggest contributor to stress, and how can entrepreneurs avoid it?

HH/ “Stress in itself isn’t a bad thing, so we don’t necessarily want to avoid it. A completely stress-free life would actually lead to atrophy and breakdown because we would lose the stimulation for growth. The problem with stress lies in our interpretation of it, how we perceive it and our inability to balance it with adequate recovery. The primary reason why stress affects people in negative ways is because they don’t have the energy necessary to keep up with its demands. It’s the energy deficit, not the specific stressor, which causes problems across multiple dimensions— body, mind and spirit. Therefore, the key to a successful relationship with stress is maintaining adequate energy throughout the day by oscillating periods of expending energy with strategic energy investments.”

How can entrepreneurs better manage the stress of maintaining a work/life balance?

HH/ “Work/life balance shouldn’t be measured by the amount of time we spend on each, as most entrepreneurs know there are seasons where different aspects of our lives demand more focused attention. The reality is that balance comes by creating harmony between the different elements of life as they all interact with one another and training ourselves to be more fully focused on each moment we are in, rather than constantly multitasking or worrying about things that we could or should be doing elsewhere. This mental gymnastics wears us out and leaves us depleted at the end of the day, so we’re unable to give our best energy to those we love at home.

“By managing our energy more effectively throughout the day, taking breaks consistently and training our brains to be more engaged in the present moment, we can have more energy to spend in the time we do have with friends and family. If we obsess over how much time we have or don’t have, we can easily find ourselves just going through the motions— physically present but mentally or emotionally out of it. The key is training ourselves to show up fully in the moments that matter most.”

How can entrepreneurs recharge without feeling like they’re failing their business?

HH/ “Studies show that even short recharge breaks can help individuals manage energy more effectively, leading to greater levels of productivity and engagement. Learning to relax is not only good for keeping entrepreneurs charged for action, but it also significantly improves their ability to be creative and access intuition, two skills that have been shown to be critical to entrepreneurial success. Unfortunately, when we’re stuck in stress mode, the brain experiences cortical inhibition, which locks us into doing things the way we’ve always done them before because it feels safe. This can also mentally prevent us from trying recharging techniques because the fear of losing precious time triggers this type of brain freeze.

“The best advice I can give to an entrepreneur is to try recharging rituals for a week and monitor their progress in areas such as energy levels, productivity and engagement. Once you see the personal benefits that you can receive in such a short time investment, it will be hard to justify not making recharge breaks



Dr. Heidi Hanna is the CEO and founder of SYNERGY, an integrative neuroscience partnership that provides brain-based training for individuals and organizations. She also frequently teaches at the EO Leadership Academy. Contact Heidi at Heidi@synergyprograms.com.

part of your regular routine. People say they feel guilty taking down time when they should be working, but if you really recognize the value of down time in boosting your productivity, creativity and adaptable effectiveness, you should feel guilty not making it a mandatory part of your day!"

What are the long-term effects of stress?

HH/ "Unmanaged chronic stress has been linked to all major diseases and disorders, including heart disease, cancer, diabetes, stroke and dementia. Stress does not cause disease to happen, but it speeds up the development of anything that might be wrong in the body or brain. When stress is acute, it actually causes

short-term health improvements as a way to help protect the body. But when it's chronic or long-term in nature, or even just perceived as being a long-term threat (such as never having enough time, never having enough energy, never having enough resources, etc.), it causes the worst type of internal wear and tear, increasing inflammation, strain on the heart and arteries, and eventually even depleting brain chemicals needed for optimal thinking and feeling. When stress continues to be a problem, we can feel exhausted, overwhelmed and burnt out not just from a helpless perspective, but also because our brain chemistry is so depleted that the lens through which we see the world is literally dark and gloomy."

How does stress affect the day-to-day operations of a business?

HH/ "When stress is chronic or feels out of control, it quickly depletes human capital by keeping employees stuck in 'fight or flight' mode, hindering their ability to think clearly and pushing them toward multitasking as the norm. Studies have shown that multitasking not only 'dumbs' us down, but it also wastes time as it can take up to 20 minutes to get back into a focused mindset after a distraction. Stress can also shift individual and group perceptions to one that is more fear-based, leading to overreacting to challenges, an increase in frequency and intensity of errors, ineffective communication and a lack of trust in leadership. All of these negative interpersonal dynamics ultimately waste our most precious time and energy resources.

"What most people don't realize is that stress doesn't need to be eliminated, but can actually become a stimulant for growth instead of breakdown; it just needs to be managed more effectively. Excess stress should be minimized

through simple shifts like noise reduction, lighting adjustments and giving employees more encouragement to get access to fresh air. Systemic changes in the business operations can create an even more significant impact, such as scheduling in 50-minute increments instead of one hour (or 25 minutes instead of a half hour) to allow time for transition between appointments; creating a culture of energy management by providing healthy snacks and movement breaks; and incorporating strategic down time as company policy. Employees should be rewarded for investing in their own personal energy as a resource they can share with the company, and leaders must lead by example by managing their own energy first and showing up fully in the moments that matter most."

BRIDGING

the Generational Gap

Sandy Fekete

President of Marketing Works

As a “Baby Boomer” entrepreneur, I have to stay flexible when it comes to managing staff expectations. That’s especially true now that my firm is attracting younger employees. More and more Millennials, specifically, have joined my business over the years. In this time, I’ve learned that they want change—and they want it now. Millennials thrive on opportunity; money doesn’t matter as much as intangibles like personal growth and skills development. What’s more, they not only embrace company culture, they hold you accountable for it. And yet, it doesn’t necessarily retain them.



Sandy Fekete is an EO Columbus member and the CEO of Marketing Works (staff pictured), a B2B strategic marketing and public relations firm. Sandy is also the founder and owner of Companies Are People, Too, an organizational personality assessment tool. Contact Sandy at feketes@marketing-works.net.

To help with employee retention in my company, I hired a coaching consultant who specializes in the Millennial generation to serve as a “bridging voice” in our operations. I call her a Culture Catalyst (CC), and she works to align each individual’s goals for growth with our culture and business goals, while also delivering metrics-based results on employee satisfaction and productivity. One of our team members describes this approach as a “hybrid of professional business coaching from a work standpoint, but also life coaching from a personal standpoint.”

We’ve had a lot of great feedback regarding this approach, and I’m often asked if this communication model is transferrable to other businesses. Absolutely! Here are the steps we took to implement an internal coaching and support program:

- 1. Set a Clear Foundation:** Success with a CC is dependent upon a defined vision and set of values, as well as solid goals, good strategy and a plan to get there. To make sure we achieved this clarity within our staff, we implemented the Entrepreneur’s Operating System, as described in the book, “Traction,” by Gino Wickman, an EO Detroit member. This system helps inform our team about where we want to go as a company and what personal drive or passion is leading everyone to realize their ultimate goal.
- 2. Find Someone Trustworthy and Relatable:** Whether it’s an external or internal resource, find someone you can trust. We saw the need for a trained coach, and two of her defining strengths include her relatability to Millennials and her business savvy. She pushes the team to take risks, helps them understand what goes on behind the scenes and provides a safe place for transparent communication. She also encourages them to grow as a team by keeping each other accountable and asking challenging questions. The leadership team ranks this hire as the best investment we’ve made, based on employee feedback.
- 3. Set Goals that Connect Individuals with the Company:** Our CC plays a large role in facilitating communication between our team and administration. She meets with each team member bi-weekly and establishes a personal growth plan with them. Monthly, she surveys the entire team. Afterward, she reports to leadership with a dashboard of metrics for each goal, along with useful insights, trends and recommendations. Feedback like this is also gathered on a larger scale semi-annually with an all-team roundtable.
- 4. Respect Confidentiality:** As much as our company wants open communication channels, we also respect confidentiality and allow team members to work out conflicts with each other. If this can’t be done by individuals themselves, we ask our CC to facilitate a formal exchange. Allowing a third party to manage this keeps administration out of any low-level drama, and also informs suggestions or tactics the CC might propose for business growth and success.
- 5. Continue Nurturing Internal Relationships:** The CC or coach can’t act as a substitute for my relationship with my team. We all continue to communicate one-on-one and as a group often. We also celebrate and encourage milestones. Our CC enhances these victories, both big and small, because she helps make them possible. As much as she is a third party, she’s a special part of our team, too.

Perhaps the most compelling result of this initiative is that the staff ranks coaching as the number-one benefit they receive. It improves their skill sets, as well as their ability to achieve goals based on where and how they define success. That’s a win in my book!

Achieving Success through Solidarity

The concept of solidarity isn't lost on EO members, especially when it comes to making a mark in the EO or global community. In this interview, **Judy Briggs**, a former Chapter President of EO Boston, highlights the powerful influence of the women entrepreneurs in her chapter.

Boston is a hot entrepreneurial market right now. Why do you think that is?

JB/ "The Boston area is filled with so much entrepreneurial talent and spirit. With incredible schools like MIT, Harvard, Babson and more, we have a lot of young energy that keeps our market thriving. Groups like EO Boston, in particular, provide a support system for rising entrepreneurs and help take collaboration and focus to the next level. People here are passionate about what they do—when they see an opportunity, they take advantage of it."

What has been the result of your local support so far?

JB/ "Together, we're building a stronger community. EO Boston has made a significant impact locally, and we continue to expand our influence. For example, the number of women in our chapter grew by 27% in the past year. I served as Chapter President for the FY2014/2015 term, and a fellow female member will serve in the role next year. We continue to thrive because we show others in the community that being a woman isn't a setback."

How are you empowering yourselves and others in the community?

JB/ "The women in our chapter aren't just entrepreneurs. We are moms, friends, volunteers and more. We are showing that you can have it all, despite the stereotypes and roadblocks you may think stand in your way. Ultimately, our goal is to help one another continually grow, personally and professionally, and we do that extremely well."



*Judy, pictured second from right
Photo by Lipofsky Photography*

Does EO Boston represent the growth of entrepreneurship in your region?

JB/ "Absolutely. There are so many powerful entrepreneurs in the Boston area and they all represent our city really well. As I mentioned earlier, when people are presented with an opportunity here, they take it. There's a lot of passion and determination in our chapter that inspires local entrepreneurs to be the best they can be."

How are you all making a mark in your community?

JB/ "From collaborating with other members in our chapter to involvement in non-profit work, our members are immersing themselves in the local community. We are proud of our city, state and region, and we are doing our best to support each other so that we can all succeed."

To learn more about EO Boston's success and the women who fuel it, contact Judy at judith.briggs@1800gotjunk.com.





LIKE FATHER, LIKE SON

As an entrepreneur, business is in your blood. In many ways, the ability to turn a concept into a company is hardwired into your genetic makeup. This entrepreneurial DNA can do more than just build businesses, though—it can bridge generations. In this special spotlight, longtime entrepreneur and EO Querétaro member, **Mauricio Lopez**, and his son, Mauricio Lopez Zorrilla, share how the entrepreneurial spirit has bonded them in business and beyond.

On growing up in an entrepreneurial family:

MLZ/ “You always hear about how the entrepreneurial gene can be passed down from one generation to the next, and in our case, that’s absolutely true. I come from a family of entrepreneurs. My grandfather owned and operated a successful dry-cleaning business, and my father started his own law firm. Growing up, surrounded by that entrepreneurial energy, I was inspired to follow in their footsteps and make a mark of my own. My family was a great example of what it was like to be entrepreneurial and what it took to be successful in business. Seeing firsthand the value entrepreneurship provides and the discipline it creates, I knew I wanted to share that with my own family one day.

“Entrepreneurship has a powerful way of bringing people together. In my family, it’s become a common thread that has united us over the years. We’ve always been close, but sharing a passion for business has helped us get closer. For the past nine years, my wife has been running a kindergarten; my son, Mauricio, started Cuffs, a custom-made dress shirt business, three years ago; and my other son, Patricio, who is still in school, is pursuing a t-shirt design business with the help of his older brother. As an entrepreneur—and especially as a father—I want to instill the values I share with my father and grandfather, while giving my sons the support they need to pursue their own dreams.”

MLZ/ “Having been born into a home full of entrepreneurs, much like my father, I have always been surrounded

and mesmerized by the entrepreneurial spirit. In many ways, this has motivated me to dream big. My father is a tremendous role model. He has been a businessman since he was a teenager and has owned several different companies over the years—from a restaurant-supply business and convenience store to real estate and technology companies. He has a lot to offer when it comes to business, and he is always eager to help me out as I navigate my own entrepreneurial journey. Best of all, he gives me the freedom to make my own decisions and learn from my mistakes, much like his father did for him and his father before that.”

On the awakening of the entrepreneurial spirit:

MLZ/ “I never thought having a son with an entrepreneurial spirit would be so rewarding, difficult and not to mention a little scary. It all started when Mauricio was in fifth grade. Around that time, I became a partner in a corner store that sold soda and junk food. Mauricio had gotten into trouble at school, so I sent him to work in the store as a punishment. To my surprise, he loved it ... and learned a few things about business along the way. He went from working two days a week to spending most of his weekends in the store. If I had any doubts about my son’s enthusiasm for business, a call from the school principal assured me the entrepreneurial spirit had kicked in.

“As it turns out, Mauricio was operating his own business during recess, where he sold junk food at half the price the school store was selling them. To meet the demands of his growing customer base, he set up a before-school ordering system. The principal, suffice it to say, wasn’t pleased with the competition.

He demanded Mauricio stop what he was doing. Suddenly, I found myself faced with a dilemma: Do I cut my son’s entrepreneurial wings, even as I was pursuing a career with that same spirited drive, or do I let him continue to thrive? I couldn’t stop him. I would never kill his entrepreneurial energy, so instead I told him to be careful. The next time I got a call from the school, he would have to stop.”

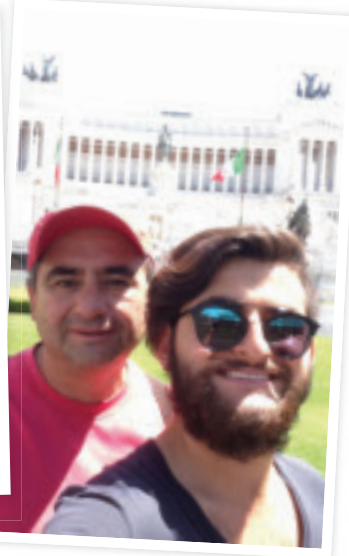
MLZ/ “I remember coming home from school that day, and I was afraid of what my parents would say. I was afraid they were going to punish me and tell me what I was doing was wrong. But they did the opposite. They supported me. If my father had told me to stop, to no longer pursue my passion for the business, I don’t know that I would have ever become an entrepreneur. His thoughtful reaction and his support from the beginning was a turning point for me. It was the first step on my path to becoming an entrepreneur. It defined me, and most of all, it taught me that my family would always be behind me, no matter what I wanted to do with my life.”

ML/ “As it turned out, we wound up moving soon after that phone call, but by that time the entrepreneurial spirit was alive and well in my son. Mauricio shifted from selling junk food to organizing bike races for profit, until he turned 18, the legal age in Mexico to start a business. As his birthday present, he asked me to invest in a dress shirt company he was thinking about creating. He





Mauricio, with his sons, Patricio (left) and Mauricio (right)



MLZ/ “I have always looked up to my father, but following in his footsteps definitely helped us become closer. In fact, the entrepreneurial spirit has helped my entire family become more united, as my brother explores his own entrepreneurial ambitions and my mother continues to make a mark in the community through her kindergarten. We have so much to talk about, and we are always sharing ideas. It’s amazing that the four of us get to help each other become better entrepreneurs and leaders. Thanks to entrepreneurship, we’ve learned more about each other than we ever would have.”

explained that all of the shirts he and his friends wore to clubs were too expensive, so he wanted to start his own brand; one that would leverage local resources and encourage people to contribute to the Querétaro economy by buying within the region. At that point, I knew my son would make it as an entrepreneur. I gladly became his first investor.”

MLZ/ “I’ve always thought the best way to learn about something is to do it. Starting out, the worst thing that could happen was that I would have to ask my father for lunch money (and that happened a lot). As I got into a rhythm, my father taught me that you have to keep practicing and moving forward. He hadn’t always been profitable, but even so, he never gave up. Not only was my dad my first investor, but in many ways he has been my compass. Inheriting his entrepreneurial spirit has given me the chance of a lifetime: I get to pursue a business in an industry I love, while giving back to a city that represents everything we stand for. That’s amazing.”

On strengthening the father/son bond through entrepreneurship:

ML/ “In many ways, entrepreneurship has helped us become closer as father and son. I’m constantly reminded of just how much we have in common. When I was Mauricio’s age, I was starting my first business while attending school at Tecnológico de Monterrey. I partnered with a classmate and created a concept business that involved selling supplies to local restaurants. What started out as a school project turned into a viable business with my classmate-turned-business partner, and before I knew it, my entrepreneurial journey had begun. Like with Mauricio, I learned the ins and outs of the business by immersing myself in the industry. And like him, I leaned on my family for support.

“Mauricio and I have always been close, but sharing an entrepreneurial spirit has given us even more opportunities to learn and grow together. We’re always talking, reading the same business books and leveraging our strengths to help each other out. Where I bring decades of experience to the table, Mauricio has an in-depth knowledge of what young people are looking for and the technology they use. Mauricio is my teacher in that capacity. He’s also a tremendous salesperson, just like his younger brother. He’s shown me that you don’t have to operate a traditional sales model to achieve success; that you can do things like sell shirts out of the trunk of a car to hit your sales goal.”

On the importance of sharing the EO experience:

MLZ/ “My father joined EO in 2008, and every time he talks about the value of the organization, he has a goofy smile on his face. He attributes a lot of his success to the organization and is always sharing his experiences with us. The more I learned about the value of EO, the more I told myself I would be the youngest entrepreneur in his chapter one day. Since then, I have participated in EO GSEA, attended countless chapter events and become friends with local members. I even started a junior Forum with the son of a local member so we can benefit from the successful EO model. My dream is to learn alongside my father in EO Querétaro one day, and I’m almost there.”

ML/ “Ever since I told Mauricio about EO, he has wanted to be a part of the global community. He gets a lot out of the chapter events he attends with me and is spreading the word about EO to other young entrepreneurs in the region. Personally, EO has played a big role in my success as an entrepreneur. I’ve especially enjoyed learning from different cultures, embracing new perspectives and serving in leadership positions. In many ways, EO is another family I’m thankful to belong to, and I can’t wait to share the experience of membership with Mauricio. I know one day he will be a member right alongside me, and I couldn’t be more proud.”

On the far-reaching impact of entrepreneurship on families:

ML/ “Watching Mauricio follow in my footsteps has been very rewarding, and it reminds me just how powerful entrepreneurship can be. We always talk about how entrepreneurship can impact industries, communities and economies, but it can also make a lasting mark on families. It can bring loved ones closer together, teach important lessons and serve as a foundation for building a family united by core values. I’ve witnessed that in my own family and now my sons are witnessing it. One day, if they choose, they’ll pass on the entrepreneurial gene to their kids and continue the cycle. Either way, I’m thankful to be by their side as we explore business and life together.”



Mauricio Lopez is an EO member leader and the founder and CEO of Conferex, an audio web-conferencing firm. To learn more about he and his son’s journey, scan the QR code for a special video or contact Mauricio at mlopez@ofintel.com.mx.

Thriving through Teamwork

Gaurav Agarwala

Managing Director of Neora Hydro, Ltd.

Sometimes as an entrepreneur, you learn your greatest lessons outside of business. I recently shared in an experience that reminded me just how powerful togetherness can be, especially when it comes to the EO community we know and love.

Last year, a handful of EO peers and I began planning a trek to Everest Base Camp, one of the most beautiful and challenging places to explore on earth. I was tasked with leading the first-time trekkers, a mighty responsibility that tested my leadership skills and awoke in me abilities I never knew I had. I knew going in that there were two approaches I could employ: I could respect each individual and guide him or her to take a shot at the trek independently, or I could take the group by the scruffs of their necks and build myself a team out of the motley bunch. I chose the latter.


The preparation wasn't pretty. Three months of 5 a.m. wake-up calls, long walks with heavy backpacks, weekend stair-climbing (we were effectively climbing the Birj Khalifa every Sunday), Friday yoga sessions and my constant badgering to get the appropriate gear did not make me the most popular person in the city. The last straw was my diktat on abstinence. Alcohol was allowable only once a week, smoking was severely limited and miscellaneous vices were curbed. We needed to focus. We needed to train. I was the jail warden and the nagging mother rolled into one.

In early April, we landed in Lukla at the most dangerous airport in the world. Spirits were high and our enthusiasm was unmatched. By the second day of the trek, you could hear erstwhile marathon

runners pant from a distance and witness fashionistas shiver under layers of unflattering wool. The troika of the steep climb, the lack of oxygen and the bitter cold had hit home with unanticipated severity and unreal consequences. There was one case of severe trekker's diarrhea, sporadic altitude-induced headaches and a bad fall in an icy stream; overnight, our once-high spirits plummeted. There were calls for going back from some and unexplained tears from others.

My choices were once again clear. I disallowed my personal struggles to surface and resorted to a new set of tricks to enable this splintered group to come together and complete the mission. Failure was not an option. I was no more the fastest climber but the casual companion to the weakest link of the day. When people needed medical attention, I ignored my blisters and tagged along so as to curb negative conversation on the way. Together, we pushed forward. By the ninth day, most of the team was intact. We were bruised and tired beyond imagination, but we were thriving.

The end result was that a dozen first-time trekkers reached Everest Base Camp safely and on schedule. The feeling associated with this feat is unexplainable and can hardly be expressed in an article. I cite the success of this endeavor to the indomitable spirit of each individual and the fact that, no matter what the mountain threw at us, we excelled as one unit. Failure was never an option for the crew or its accidental captain. I'll never forget this EO adventure. It was a life-defining achievement and a reminder of just how powerful a role unity plays in life.



EO Together

Gaurav Agarwala (pictured) is an EO Kolkata member and the managing director of Neora Hydro, Ltd., a power company involved in building mini hydro-power plants. Contact Gaurav at gaurav@animark.com.

Taking a SIXT Sabbatical

Charlie Holder

Owner of Home Instead Care, Advantage Testing
and Sure-Shot Game Calls

For most entrepreneurs, taking a vacation is akin to hitting the lottery—it rarely happens. And yet, removing yourself from the day-to-day grind is integral to one's health and wellbeing. That's especially true when you work in a high-demand environment that requires you to recharge your battery on a regular basis. Recently, I was able to do just that, thanks to the support of my colleagues and EO's strategic partnership with SIXT.

I found my inspiration to "let go" after a fishing trip with Robert Wagnon, an EO Houston member, friend and mentor. In between baiting our lines, we talked about the processes and people he had put in place at his company, which afforded him the freedom to move beyond the daily operations. By putting the right systems in place, Robert was able to spend valuable time with his family. The conversation really resonated with me, as I had been thinking about how I could set my own teams up for success while removing myself from the operational weeds.

Around this time, I came across Verne Harnish's website, Gazelles.com, which contains several free resources on better business, including information on sabbaticals. I dove deep into the learning and walked away with an ambitious goal: take summers off to be with my kids. A year out, I began to brainstorm ways I could make my vision a reality. I explored how to set my businesses up for success in my absence. I hired a top accounting firm to handle our books and reporting; gleaned ideas from my Forum on how to run parts of my businesses on auto-pilot; scheduled daily meetings with executive teams to review KPIs and establish a communications rhythm; and used EO's partner benefits to my advantage.

I've been an EO member since 2005, and over the years I've seen the tremendous value associated with engaging EO's

partnerships. I was determined to maximize the opportunities available to me and create a once-in-a-lifetime experience for my family. Once I had my business teams in place and my processes on track, I was able to embark on a one-of-a-kind trip throughout Europe. For starters, we used EO's British Airways partnership to travel to London, and then we took a high-speed train to Disneyland Paris, where we picked up a rental car from SIXT. Alan McClain, another EO Houston member, told me the best way to see Europe is by driving. Looking back, we agree!

By leveraging EO's partnership with SIXT, we were able to make our trip truly memorable. Not only did we save a lot of money, but we didn't have to worry about changing rental cars, which helped us have a seamless experience. What's more, the BMW X5 we were given had navigation functionality and access to the internet, which made searching for hotels and restaurants even easier. All in all, we were on our excursion for the greater part of July and saw a total of nine countries. We travelled more than 4,000 miles and spent 150 hours behind the wheel. Looking back, signing up with SIXT proved not only to be cost-effective, but it helped our family enjoy the vacation of a lifetime.

How did my companies do in my absence? It turns out everyone was able to manage without me. What's more, revenues grew in all three businesses! I was reminded that sometimes as business owners, the best thing we can do is get out of the way and give our leaders the freedom to lead. As Michael Gerber wrote in his book, "The E Myth," the goal is to work on your business and not in it. Thanks, EO and SIXT, for letting me do just that!

Charlie Holder (pictured with his family while on vacation) is an EO At Large – U.S. member. SIXT is a global EO partner that sponsored this trip. To learn how you can take advantage of this partnership, or others, please contact Simone Echeverri-Gent, EO's Director of Strategic Alliances, at secheverri-gent@eonetwork.org.



For many business owners, coffee serves as fuel for their entrepreneurial engine.

Praveen Varshney, an EO Vancouver member and co-founder of G-KUP, is capitalizing on the caffeine craze and helping the environment through the introduction of eco-friendly coffee pods.

1 What inspired you to create the world's first wholly biodegradable coffee pod?

PV/ "I'm always looking for new ways to innovate. With the success of Keurig, I saw an opportunity to create 100%-compostable coffee pods that taste great and help the planet."

2 How did you get your foot in the door of this competitive industry?

PV/ "When Keurig's K-Cup patent expired in 2012, the floodgates opened for companies to get in on the action. Suddenly, roasters who may not have had single-serve options began to put their beans in coffee pods without having to go through Keurig. We saw an opportunity in packaging the product in a smarter way."

3 Why do you think the coffee pod market is so lucrative?

PV/ "It's all about convenience. People went from spending 15 minutes making coffee to pushing a button that brewed their favorite café's roast in 30 seconds, at home no less. We all have busy schedules, so that's a sizeable amount of time and money saved each week by this product."

4 Can traditional coffee pods be recycled?

PV/ "Parts of them can be, but it's notoriously difficult. It would involve peeling off the tinfoil lid to recycle, ripping out the filter, emptying the coffee to compost and then throwing the plastic shell into the garbage. By the time people have done that, they're not saving any time or enjoying the convenience."

5 Don't partially biodegradable coffee pods already solve the problem?

PV/ "Virtually no composters will take anything less than a 100%-compostable product into their organics waste stream and risk contamination. So, these end up in the trash, too."

6 Are these plastic coffee pods really damaging the environment?

PV/ "Absolutely. In 2014, it was estimated that almost one billion pounds of K-Cups ended up in landfills, and 60 billion pods have gone to landfills to date. That's enough to circle the world eleven times!"

7 How does your product solve this problem without adding any extra hassle?

PV/ "G-KUP can be thrown into a green bin organics recycling program or backyard compost pile after use, and it will turn into soil in less than 90 days. No dismantling or additional steps are required!"

8 What motivated you to introduce such an innovative product into market?

PV/ "My co-founder, Darren Footz, and I wanted to do something amazing for the planet and our kids' futures, while also building an exciting new packaging company."

9 How do you plan to make a dent in an already popular industry?

PV/ "With the help of the Composites Research Network at the University of British Columbia, we're commercializing the G-KUP and hoping to break into the massive single-serve coffee industry with a solid, well-researched product."

10 Can this technology be applied to other types of packaging?

PV/ "Definitely! We've already begun applying this same technology to develop eco-friendly packaging for other products like ketchup, peanut butter, jam and margarine."



5 Steps to a GREAT Internal Hire

Kristen Harris

COO and co-founder of Portfolio Creative

You're only as good as your team. As the owner of a recruiting and staffing firm, that statement rings true, especially when it comes time to getting the right people in the right positions. Lately, we've been doing a lot of internal candidate interviews. Even though we're in the business of assessing talent for our clients, doing it for ourselves can still prove difficult. We're more personally invested, and it's harder to be objective when we're interviewing people we already know. Here are five steps that have helped us conduct better interviews and retain quality employees:



Kristen Harris is a member of EO Columbus, as well as the COO and co-founder of Portfolio Creative, the nation's fastest-growing recruiting and staffing firm focused solely on the creative sector. Contact Kristen at kristen@portfoliocreative.com.

1 Clarify Values: First, we had to get very clear about who we are and what we stand for. Our leadership team took a critical look at the company's internal values and mission, and while they were nice, they didn't spell out defined behaviors that our team could point to. We worked together to identify "Passion," "Growth," "Drive," "Excellence" and "Accountability" as inherent to our company. This wasn't a change from who we were; we just identified what really matters to us. Having this level of clarity continues to give us a solid benchmark to work from when we assess both internal and external candidates.

2 Develop More Thoughtful Questions: We created a set of interview questions that help us assess a candidate's perspective against our values. For example, we ask questions like, "What does excellence mean to you?" or "Describe a past failure and what you learned from the experience." I think asking questions that focus on difficult experiences are important because often, a person's true character shines through when things don't go as planned. By using the same open-ended questions for every candidate, we gave each of them the opportunity to talk about things we care about and could evaluate them consistently.

3 Interview for Values: Our leadership team does a values interview with each final candidate (internal or external), where they ask more in-depth, experience-based questions. The hiring manager has already assessed skills, background and other requirements of the job. At this point, we are looking for more clues as to how well this person truly fits within our culture and expectations. There's definitely a difference between an employee knowing how a company operates and actually operating within a company's values.

4 Be Exclusive: We value the closeness, worth and trust that's been built within our internal team. This has taken valuable time, so we treat employment as an exclusive club with strict requirements for entry. We know one bad fit can tip the delicate balance, so the candidate needs to be just the right person to be invited in. While there aren't any right or wrong answers to our open-ended questions, we do look for "red flags" that might signal something different than the candidate is trying to portray.

5 Leverage Your Network: We do ask candidates for references, but I always assume those are carefully chosen people who are sure to say good things. In this interconnected world, it's not hard to find someone who knows the person I'm interviewing. I always reach out to a few trusted people to get their perspective on the candidate. These connections have no vested interest, but I do know they wish the best for me and my business. It's helped us find wonderful people and avoid potential hires that wouldn't have fit well with us in the future.

To me, there's nothing worse than hiring the wrong person, whether it's for our client or for us. No hiring process is perfect or foolproof, but this values-based interview approach has given us a better way to assess whether or not a candidate is the best fit for our team.

LIVING AND LEARNING IN THE MOMENT

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In true EO fashion, we kicked off a year of learning with a global event that saw nearly 400 members and guests from 79 chapters and 30 countries embrace Japanese philosophy in Osaka and Kyoto, Japan. With a theme of “Ichigo Ichie,” the **EO Osaka Global University**—held 30 September-4 October—offered attendees four days of learning and networking, while inviting them to embrace the significance of shared experiences and explore new ways to live in the moment.



Highlights of the University included: learning from communications experts, artists and local business moguls; participating in a Japanese summer festival; visiting the 1,200-year-old Daikaku-ji Temple; and engaging titans of business like Ramen Kairikiya, among other one-of-a-kind experiences. Many thanks to EO Osaka, the University committee and EO APAC region for hosting the event!

Pitch Perfect: When Competition Meets Collaboration



Julie (left), with Hamish McKenzie

Julie Mitchell

Founding partner of Parcel Design

As part of our firm's rebranding strategy for McKenzie Pitch Partners, which was anchored by the publication of founder Hamish McKenzie's new book, we held an innovative event in New York City that showcased Hamish's philosophy in action. Since "Pitch: What You're Not Doing Makes All the Difference" is a guide to navigating the strategy, story and presentation phases of pitch preparation, we decided to hold a live pitch competition at the event.

In February, an exclusive invitation went out to members of EO Accelerator to submit videos for the contest. Hamish chose two finalists to compete for a consultation package: Colin Kennedy, co-founder of Neuron Global in New York, and Tim de Kraker, CEO and founder of Bardigo Smart Hospitality in Amsterdam. When Hamish contacted the finalists to set up coaching sessions prior to the competition, a funny thing happened. Well, funny, unless you know how the EO network typically works: Colin and Tim

wanted to work together in advance to help with each other's pitches. They agreed to do the coaching on a conference call, workshop-style. Honing their strategies and stories with Hamish, both got their best pitches together.

On 16 April, the two finalists presented their improved pitches to a panel of judges that included: Chris Hanahan, EO Accelerator Chair; Darryl Brown, U.S. president of Global Corporate Payments for American Express; Lisa Lisson, president of Federal Express Canada; and Pierre Bergevin, managing partner of Brookfield Financial. Colin pitched Gem Shelf, a next-generation, cloud-based content management system, while Tim sold the judges on his plans to expand his BarDoggy app, which connects bars with patrons. Also present was an audience of business leaders, fellow entrepreneurs and media. Tim's pitch won US\$10,000 worth of pitch consulting from McKenzie Pitch Partners, but both EO Accelerator finalists agreed the event was a win for all involved.

"I learned a number of valuable things from Hamish, but if I had to distill it down, the biggest lessons learned would be the importance of applying simplicity and structure to my presentations. Also, the workshop-style approach we used for the coaching sessions made the experience so much better. Meanwhile, Tim taught me the importance of letting your personality shine through when presenting."

—Colin Kennedy

"Hamish taught me that the key to getting your story right is getting the right story to tell, and that you should plan your pitch story with the end in mind. From the moment we started, Colin and I agreed on not seeing this as a competition, and we both got some open and honest feedback in return. Because we communicated in this way, we benefited greatly from the program, and it made us winners."

—Tim de Kraker

Julie Mitchell is an EO Toronto member, as well as a founding partner of Parcel Design, an integrated creative firm that helps leadership teams develop new directions for their business. Contact Julie at julie@parceldesign.com.



Capitalizing On Your Media Opportunities

In November, Deb Gabor, an EO Austin member and founder of Sol Marketing, was spotlighted by *The Wall Street Journal* in an article titled, “A Startup’s Founder Blames Herself for Lack of Growth.” Deb leveraged EO Press Pass, a member benefit that connects them with reporters in leading publications, to share the highs and lows of running a startup. We asked Deb about her experience engaging EO Press Pass, the results and if she had any best practices she could share with her EO peers when they land similar opportunities in prominent publications. She replied:

Business after the article has been really good. In the true style of experience-sharing in EO, I gave a very open and candid pitch. Luckily, the editors were interested in what I had to say. I ended up on the front page of the “C-Suite Strategies Leadership” section of the newspaper, and my picture was featured right next to the CEOs of General Motors and Sprint. That was a huge boost to the credibility of my business!

As soon as the article was published, the phone started to ring off the hook. People came out of the woodwork; some whom I hadn’t spoken to in awhile, co-strategists from a business development project and random strangers all contacted me with new business and networking opportunities, which was really fun. Beyond the hype of being featured, I learned four important tactics that any entrepreneur should use if they’re featured in a prominent publication:

1. Don’t blame the editor. A funny story about the article: Initially, I had only seen the online edition of the piece. That morning, my significant other sent me a message saying, “Deb, I saw the digital edition, and it had a really negative headline.” I was horrified. Unfortunately, the print edition’s title wasn’t much better. But I read the story, and it really didn’t have that negative slant to it. It was a click-bait headline, which I understand with my media background. I know the editors don’t actually write the headlines; it’s a copy-editor trying to sell “clicks” at my

expense. Despite all of that, the people I really cared about and those who reached out to me obviously read beyond some nasty headlines to what was actually a really good story. People contacted me and said, “Thanks for being so honest. That’s true leadership, and it’s really inspiring that you let yourself be so vulnerable.”

- 2. Spread the word.** One of the first things Sol Marketing did was share the article gratuitously within our social and content-marketing channels; it’s a great way to boost your profile. Third-party endorsement of your credibility as an organization can only help, especially if it’s a legitimate news source.
- 3. Act as a connection.** Another thing people might not readily think of is to position yourself as a resource when working with the editor that’s covering you. For example, as I was going through the process of preparing this article, I learned that the editor is a freelancer who also writes for other financial publications. I offered myself as someone who could help her when she’s working on various stories, especially if she wants to get in touch with some of my clients, EO Austin members or those in my personal referral network. She has reached out to me several times since then; that’s a good way to make yourself indispensable to the media.
- 4. Be helpful.** Any time you get a request from the media, realize that they’re trying to complete a job, just like you, and a “quid pro quo” attitude will take you a long way. If you’re forthcoming, helpful and open to them, the better your coverage can be. For example, this particular editor was interested in coupling the story with third-party data, so she asked what kind of data I would recommend. As a resource to her, I suggested data from Gallup.com and directed her toward current research studies I had consulted. I call it “gift-wrapping” the story, so the writer/editor has everything she needs and doesn’t have to work incredibly hard to put something together.

Deb Gabor (pictured) was interviewed by Karen Summerson, an EO writer/editor on staff. To learn more about Deb’s experience, contact her at deb@solmarketing.com. To learn more about EO Press Pass, contact Taylor Collison, EO’s Marketing Manager, at tcollison@eonetwork.org.

Photo by Arthur Bryan Marroquin (ABM Photography)

YOU'RE LIMITING YOURSELF

More than You Think

Rahul Nawab

President of IQR Consulting, Inc.

I'll be honest: I underestimated how difficult being an entrepreneur would be. In truth, there is nothing easy about it. Starting a business requires equal parts courage and vision ... with a hint of madness. When I started my analytics company a few years ago, my friends and mentors advised me to seek out professional guidance to help grow the company. I didn't take their suggestions seriously. I viewed myself as the quintessential entrepreneur, well-versed in my field and confident in my abilities.

Fueled by boundless energy and enthusiasm, I was unaware of the frustration, uncertainty and myriad details that would rob me of my time and deplete me of my determination. In the first year alone, nearly every hour of the day was devoted to getting my business off the ground. It was exhausting, to say the least. Being the bulldog that I am, I held on, only to learn that no one person can do it by themselves. This realization allowed me to accept other truths that challenged my conceptions of how a lucrative business should operate.

The Concept of Control

One concept I stubbornly held on to was the need to be a part of every decision. Moreover, I thought I needed to do all of it better than anyone else. After all, I was the boss. But what good was having talented, capable employees if I wouldn't allow them to do their jobs? This humbling realization allowed me to see the value of not only putting the right team in place, but giving them room to make their own decisions, missteps and solutions. Over time, I have added a layer of senior managers who are confident in their abilities, and by giving them room to grow, they have developed the ability to preempt conflicts and act accordingly. I'm reaping the rewards of delegating, not the least of which is a regular sleep schedule and downtime. I still slip up from time to time, but I'm getting better at relinquishing control and focusing on strategies and relationships.

Play Nicely in the Proverbial Sandbox

One of the most strident voices in my head used to shout, "Don't give up equity in your company!" As a result, I was reluctant to entertain any inquiries of partnering with others. But if it takes a village to raise a child, creating strategic partnerships to form a strong team can't be a bad idea. The key was finding partners whose expertise complemented that of our company. For instance, since 2010, our business has collaborated with TMG (The Members Group), which specializes in improving the performance of credit and debit card portfolios. Since we provide customized



Rahul Nawab is an EO DC and EO Gujarat member, as well as the president of IQR Consulting, Inc., a provider of analytics solutions to industries like financial institutions, retail and insurance. Contact Rahul at rahul.nawab@iqrconsulting.com.

analytics services, we accentuate each other's strengths; our partnership has yielded great success so far. When the team is firing on all cylinders, it's like watching an orchestra, with each section performing their part to perfection.

Growth Often Means Change

We start companies because we excel in a trade or skill and want to communicate that value to others. In my case, business analytics fascinated me, and I saw the potential to help others make great decisions using informed data. At a certain point, though, I needed to focus on higher-level tasks if we were going to operate a multi-country business. Where I used to spend 80% of my time on data analysis, I'm lucky now if I can devote 10% of my energy toward that original passion. While this can seem sad, my thirst to learn and grow the company means having mental flexibility. Our roles need to morph and change if we want to progress in our entrepreneurial journeys.

A good business plan, a strong team and valuable, strategic partners can, and did, set the stage for our continued success. Amid this business growth, the biggest hurdle, and potentially my most crucial step, was getting out of my own way.

Introducing the EO Leadership Academy: *Class of 2015*

From 1-5 November, 20 global members met in Washington, D.C., to explore new levels of leadership at the 2015 EO Leadership Academy. A prestigious, five-day program designed to help select members become stronger, more complete leaders in their personal and professional lives, the EO Leadership Academy is one of EO's most highly rated Executive Education programs and one that continues to contribute to the leadership development of members the world over. On behalf of the EO community, we would like to congratulate the graduating class of this year's program: Rawwaf Alhasan; David Carnes; Joaquin Cordero; John Cornelsen; Karl Funke; Niren Gawarvala; Tim Heitmann; James Keirstead; Vijay Khatnani; Michel Kripalani; Bob LaBonne; Dan Lionello; Paul Meester; Cristiano Miano; Daniel Nel; Laura Partridge; Ben Poirier; Karen Purcell; Sasamon Sanguansin; and Nicholas Thiede.

To learn more about the EO Leadership Academy, please contact EOLeadershipAcademy@eonetwork.org.



Growth & Greatness IN EO MEPA

The EO Middle East/Pakistan (EO MEPA) region continues to make a mark in the global community!

In November, EO Oman became the latest chapter in the region to go over the 25-member mark, a feat that speaks volumes regarding its impact and influence. Earlier, on 23 October, the region welcomed its newest chapter—EO Jordan—a testament to the thriving entrepreneurial landscape in the Middle East. The chapter launch event was attended by the founding members and spouses of EO Jordan, committee

members from around the world, U.S. and U.K. ambassadors and special guests, including EO's Global Chairman, Gilberto Crombé, and EO MEPA's Regional Director, Fadi Fallaha. EO Jordan reflects the organization's plans to expand into the Middle East and become the world's most influential community of entrepreneurs. Congratulations, EO Oman, and welcome to the #EONATION, EO Jordan!

NEW MEMBER SPOTLIGHT



Wendy Papasan

EO Austin

Owner of Papasan Properties Group

Joined EO in October 2015

What inspired you to join the EO community?

WP/ "They say that when the student is ready, the teacher appears. I had been craving some high-level business conversation in Austin, and then I started

hearing about EO from all sorts of people. First, my kids' teacher was talking about it and then my real estate attorney mentioned it, so I investigated, applied and voila! I'm hoping to have some high-level business conversations in a safe environment. Also, our chapter seems to have a lot of fun, so that's a bonus for a realtor."

What's your biggest lesson learned as an entrepreneur so far?

WP/ "That's easy: Hire talented people as quickly as possible so you can do the things you're good at and not be stuck doing activities that hold you back from growing."

What are your core values as an entrepreneur, and how do they help drive you?

WP/ "Perfect timing! We just did a goal-setting retreat and came up with our company values. They are: 'Leadership,' 'Excellence,' 'Learning-Based,' 'Bold' and

'Contribution.' I believe the best way to grow is by hiring people who are more talented than you so you can deliver the best customer experience possible."

What would people be surprised to learn about the real estate industry?

WP/ "The real estate industry is changing rapidly, and one of the big trends is moving away from an individual agent model to the team approach. I think in the next 10 years, many, if not all individual agents, will be out of business or working on a team (hint, hint ... we're hiring)."

Your personal brand plays an integral role in real estate.

What's the best tip you can offer when it comes to perfecting your personal brand?

WP/ "Be yourself. Everyone else is taken."

Welcome Wendy to EO— contact her at wendy@papasanproperties.com!

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The 2016 EO Global Leadership Conference, to be held 12-15 May in Bangkok, Thailand, is offering an exclusive opportunity for exhibitors to engage leading entrepreneurs through on-site demonstrations. By signing up for the **EOXpo Bangkok 2016**, your company will receive exhibit space, ample logo placement, opportunities to distribute promotional materials and other benefits without violating EO's non-solicitation policy.

Want to learn more? Contact eoexpo@eonetwork.org!



Los Angeles Member Earns #1 Spot on Inc. 500 | 5000 List

Rizwan Kassim's company, Ultra Mobile, was recently named to *Inc.* magazine's "Fastest-Growing Private Companies in America" list, where it earned the #1 spot, growing to US\$118 million in revenue in its first three years. Ultra Mobile is a nationwide mobile carrier offering first-of-its-kind mobile phone services and unlimited international communications.



Cape Town Member Launches New Enterprise

Recognized as an "Africa's Women of Influence 2015" finalist, Lesley Waterkeyn, founder of marketing agency, Colourworks, recently announced the launch of Over the Rainbow, a social enterprise aimed at empowering new South African entrepreneurs. The initiative is the brainchild of Lesley and Sandy van Dyk, an education specialist.

DC Member Spotlighted for Growth and Innovation

Gavin Bowie's firm, Wingate Hughes Architects, ranked 48th on Texas A&M's "Aggie 100" list of the world's fastest-growing, Aggie-owned companies, and was also profiled in *Architecture Magazine* and DCInno.com for their designs and innovative use of plastics. The firm is renowned for a relationship-driven approach to architectural services.



Turkey Member Recognized by Deloitte

Gül Gürer's company, SMG Multimedia, was recently included in the "Deloitte Technology Fast50," a prestigious listing that recognizes the 50 fastest-growing companies in Turkey. The Deloitte Technology Fast50 Turkey Program recognizes the "best of the best" technology businesses throughout the country.

Sacramento Member Wins Award for Company Excellence

John Finegan's word-of-mouth marketing firm, Beck Ag, recently earned the Demeter Award of Excellence as "Company of the Year" for 2015 by Women in Agribusiness. With 67% of the company's ranks being women, Beck Ag is committed to developing and compensating women fairly.



Oman Member Mentioned in Inc. Magazine

Qais al-Khonji, owner of Qais Enterprises, was recently recognized in *Inc.* magazine as one of the 50 most powerful Arab businessmen in the world, thanks to his influence in business and politics, as well as his encouragement of entrepreneurship in the community.

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2016



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For more event information, visit events.eonetwork.org
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- » **EO Unlimited** – Rotterdam, Netherlands; 8-11 June 2016
- » **LACademy** – Colombia; September 2016
- » **EO Thrive** – Chicago, Illinois, USA; 19-21 September 2016

For more information, scan the QR code at right.



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OUR MISSION

To engage leading entrepreneurs to learn and grow.

EO GSEA

GLOBAL STUDENT ENTREPRENEUR AWARDS

Make a Mark on the Next Generation of Entrepreneurs!

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Register for the EO GSEA Global Finals and get a front-row view as the "best of the best" student entrepreneurs in the world share how they're innovating through entrepreneurship!



To learn how you can get involved, email us at gsea@eonetwork.org.