

The Entrepreneurs' Organization Magazine  
March 2016

# octane



STARTING   
**SPARK**



timbang oleh Ben's Boy  
ain oleh Anouska dan La



"Ben's entrepreneurial journey reminded me that we shouldn't assume we know what is best for others."

## How My Son Taught Me the Meaning of Charity

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# The Entrepreneurs' Organization Magazine

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## Continuing On a Path of Growth and Greatness

# EO GURGAON Launch Event

16 FEB 2016

**"Let's keep the momentum going. It all starts with us. It all starts in EO."**



*Gilberto, speaking at the EO Gurgaon launch in February.*

It seems like just yesterday I was introducing EO Together, a theme that speaks to the spirit of unity that inspired EO's founding nearly 30 years ago. Since July, we have been working as one to enhance the EO experience, strengthen our leadership cycle, maximize our membership value and set the stage for continued growth. Let's take a look at some of our biggest wins to date:

- » **Together**, we grew our #EONATION to include several new chapters: EO Durban, EO Hainan, EO Puerto Rico, EO Tohoku, EO Germany – Southwest, EO Grand Rapids, EO Gurgaon, EO Dhaka and EO Porto Alegre
- » **Together**, we strengthened our leadership structure by creating an Organizational Playbook that will drive our efforts on the local, regional and global level, as well as support our new EO 2020 Vision, a strategic plan resulting from an all-inclusive leadership session
- » **Together**, we held several popular events and programs around the world: EO Global Leadership Academy, EO Key Executive Program, EO Osaka Global University and EO Banff Global University
- » **Together**, we introduced new executive-education offerings and enhanced existing learning programs: EO@Wharton: Elevating Finance + Operations, an EO podcast series and EO24, a revamped virtual learning event
- » **Together**, we provided additional member value through new regional partners: Grand and Toy (Canada), Marriott (South Asia), Jet Airways (South Asia), Ernst & Young (MEPA) and an alliance with Ashoka, the world's largest network of social entrepreneurs

» **Together**, we strengthened our voice through the Global Entrepreneur Indicator, which 3,671 members engaged, and the All Member Survey, which saw a record 7,034 participants

» **Together**, we made great strides in our technology by consolidating and securely storing all member data in a single archive to support a new members-only website

These are just a few of our wins thus far, all of which speak to the role unity plays in our far-reaching efforts. Thanks to your support and that of our staff, member leaders and other EO stakeholders, we've set the stage for a tremendous conclusion to the year. In the next few months, we will build on our success by using our Organizational Playbook as a compass and following the new organizational strategy cycle, which emphasizes inclusivity, accountability and continuity.

As we continue to work together, let us remember to keep an open mind and heart, and be thankful to our friends and family who support us along our EO journey. Let us rely on one another, always pursue new opportunities to engage, and above all, unite to drive a single, powerful vision: To ensure EO is no longer a best-kept secret but recognized globally as the most influential community of entrepreneurs in the world. Let's keep the momentum going. It all starts with us. It all starts in EO.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gilberto", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Gilberto Cromb , EO Monterrey  
EO Global Chairman, FY2015/2016  
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**EO Together**

## A Season of Organizational Strategy



Vijay (pictured second from left), with EO Canada members.

As any entrepreneur can attest, the success of a business is contingent upon the model that supports it. Since July, EO has been laying the groundwork for a stronger, more unified infrastructure, one that will enhance existing elements and invite new waves of innovation. In this interview, **Vijay K. Tirathrai**, EO's CEO, walks us through our progress to date while emphasizing the organization's new narrative.

**There are differing viewpoints on what EO's "new narrative" is all about. How would you describe this philosophy, and how does it factor into the future of EO?**

**VT/** "That's a great question, and it's one I get often when I'm engaging members around the world. As a former Global Chairman and longtime EO Malaysia member, I've witnessed the incredible evolution of this organization. In the span of nearly 30 years, we went from being a small community supporting a handful of entrepreneurs to a vibrant EO nation representing 11,000+ members in 50 countries. And as you read in Gilberto Crombe's Global Chairman column, we're still growing! Fueling this growth are strategies that align with both our core values and organizational objectives. My role as CEO is to help ensure the realization of these strategies and set the vision so that current members—and those whom wish to be among them some day—will always get the EO experience they expect and deserve. That's where our 'new narrative' comes into play.

"Simply put, this 'new narrative' is a label for our new organizational philosophy. It speaks to the shift in thinking that's occurring at all levels of our operations—from our hard-working member leaders and staff professionals, to the vendors, partners and alliances whom we engage. More than that, though, it

represents an opportunity to inject new life into all we do. We've accomplished so much since 1987, certainly, but to reach that next level of organizational excellence, we need to adopt a new mindset, one that emphasizes two critical elements: perfecting our internal processes (to ensure a consistently unified, inclusive and strong infrastructure) and supporting the entrepreneurial public (those millions of future EOers). Only by building internally and broadening our view externally can we truly become the world's most influential community of entrepreneurs."

**What role do member leaders play in this new organizational approach?**

**VT/** "All members who've stepped up through the Path of Leadership process play an integral role in our long-term vision ... but they're not the only ones. Every member and staff professional is driving this new narrative by being ambassadors of EO. Specific to our member leadership, though, we kicked off our strategy season a few months ago with our Presidents' Meetings and Strategy Summits, followed by a Five-Year Strategy Retreat, where we created an 'EO 2020 Vision' that is anchored by six priorities and that which will replace the completed Three-Year Strategic Plan and drive us toward 2020. This plan was the centerpiece of our recent Operational Planning Meeting, where we defined next steps for FY2016/2017, and will serve a similar role in our upcoming Global Leadership Conference (GLC) in May and All-Committee Meeting in June. The next few months will be fueled by a commitment to leadership development and organizational strategy as we set sail for the new fiscal year and beyond."

**How will EO keep the momentum going in the next few months?**

**VT/** "Our focus is still locked in on transitioning to a new mindset, leadership training and cementing in place new strategies that will be spearheaded by Ivan Ting, our incoming Global Chairman. Under Ivan's leadership, and with our EO 2020 Vision as a compass, EO will continue to make strides toward its goal of becoming the source for entrepreneurial support globally. Our investment in leadership, and in turn, the future of EO, has never been greater. To reach our short- and long-term goals, we need to create a stronger leadership infrastructure, and that starts with training from the ground up. And, as EO's annual theme suggests, we need to strengthen our foundation of unity. We need to drive the new narrative, equip our member leaders with the right strategies and further unite to ensure FY2016/2017 delivers significant influence and impact. I'm confident that when we do all of these things, and do it together, EO will be positioned for even bigger and better things ahead."

*To learn more about EO's strategies, contact Vijay at [CEO@eonetnetwork.org](mailto:CEO@eonetnetwork.org).*

# A Letter To My 21-YEAR-OLD Self

**Richard Walton**  
Founder of Avirtual

Dear Richard:

Look at you— you're an entrepreneur! I know you think you've got it all under control and that you know better than me, but I've got 20 years of experience on you, so listen up. Listening, in fact, is one of the most useful things you can do when you're starting out— not just to me, your older and wiser self, but to everyone who is willing to give you advice. Here are a few more nuggets you'll need to know to get the most out of your entrepreneurial journey.

People love to help; they're not all out to steal your ideas. Find yourself a mentor or business partner who has the skills and experiences you don't, and really listen to them. Don't zone out when they start talking statistics; take notes and try the things they're taking the time to suggest. And schedule regular meetings so you can make the most of their knowledge. Trust me. It's worth investing the time now. You will save a huge amount of heartache, effort and money in the future.

Since we're on the subject of learning, read books and articles on business. Fill your head with as much information as you can. I know you don't think you need to, but you do. While you're at it, join an association so you're surrounded by likeminded people. Being an entrepreneur can be painfully lonely. Most of your friends don't have a clue what you're doing now, and that's fine, but build a network of people who do understand and can help you expand your circle. That's where the most exciting collaborations and partnerships come from.

Make the most of your fearlessness. It won't be the same when you're 40 with a family and bills to pay. The best opportunities lie in the unknown, and to find it, you have to get out and do it— don't worry about being younger than everyone else. No one cares. I once bought a pair of prescription glasses on the side of the road before going into a business meeting just to make myself look more professional. They were so strong, I could barely see. Fake glasses are a waste of money; it's your passion and enthusiasm that matter. You can learn the rest along the way.

The most important advice I can give you whilst you're starting out is to focus on profit and costs. I used to think that the growth of a company was everything and that if I grew, everything else would be fine. I've since realised this is probably the worst way to run a business. Every business goes through a black hole—normally after a couple years—and fast growth could very well end up bankrupting you, so wrap your head around costs now. Just do it.

Here's another piece of advice: Don't just hire people you like. Friends can work well as employees, but put some serious thought

and effort into hiring. A really good person will do three times the amount of work as an average person, so it's worth figuring out if they really are good before they're in the door. And always be recruiting for potential people to join your business. Be patient, the right person will come along.

While I'm at it, don't be fooled into thinking that being an entrepreneur is like Charlie Sheen's character in "Wall Street." It's not that sexy. Being an entrepreneur is all-encompassing. It takes time. And the truth is you'll never really have a holiday again. Whether you're sitting on a chairlift ready to ski or lying on a beach, you will be thinking about your business, and if you're not, something's not right.

Above all, believe you can succeed, embrace your idealism and promote your passion. It's an amazing strength to have. But remember to put checks and balances in place so you won't run completely wild and end up sleeping on the streets after two months. Finally, if you think you've got a good idea, start immediately. Don't wait. And good luck!

Richard

P.S. You'll find that a run at the end of the day is just as effective a stress reliever as a couple of beers ... and it's better to start exercising now than offsetting the damages at 40!



Richard Walton (pictured) is an EO Cape Town member and the founder of Avirtual, which supplies virtual personal assistants to professionals, small teams and entrepreneurs. Contact Richard at [richard@avirtual.co.uk](mailto:richard@avirtual.co.uk).



## An Entrepreneurial Reminder

# PUTTING YOUR WELL-BEING BEFORE YOUR BUSINESS

**Adam J. Levinter**

*Founder and President of ScriberBase, Inc.*

On 16 April, 2014, my father—an entrepreneur—suffered from both a stroke and a heart attack at the age of 67. When I found him on his condo floor, he was nearly motionless. Today, he lives with a full-time caregiver who helps him dress, bathe and eat. He can't walk or work without assistance. The business he founded 20 years ago, the company I watched him build, remains dormant.

Like my father, I also own a business. I'm married, and I recently became a dad to two beautiful children. When I'm not working or with my family, I manage my father's company and personal finances. There are weeks when I fight to keep my head above water, juggling the affairs of my own business with those of my father's. I want to help my beloved father, but I don't want to suffer the same fate.

When my father started his business, his attention began to shift. Work became a mainstay, and within a couple of years of incorporating, he was pushing 18-hour days. Running a business became an addiction, one that worsened over time. I spent years trying to get him to create a better balance, to invest more in his health so he could thrive alongside his business. I nagged him about exercising, sleeping and eating well, but the more I spoke up, the more guilt I felt in projecting advice like a parent.

Since my father's health issues occurred, I've been paying close attention to the way fellow entrepreneurs live, many of them approaching life the way my father did: getting little to no exercise; putting in long hours at work; and ingesting high amounts of caffeine, sugars and stimulants just to keep up with the grind. I'm noticing a common theme—prioritizing one's business over one's body. Most of the corporate world has slipped into this trap. Many people believe there won't be a cost to their neglect. I was given a reminder that there's always a cost.

My father took care of business first and everything else was second. I believe this type of mindset is flawed; entrepreneurs should foster a new shift in behavior so they don't continue to view exercise and personal wellness as time wasters. Admittedly, I fell into this trap when I started out in business. I was concerned that partners, suppliers and clients would see my exercise routines as lazy, since I wasn't in the office "early" like everybody else. But ever since my father's stroke, I no longer hide behind how I structure my day. In fact, I actively embrace it.

Today, I put my health ahead of everything on the "to-do" list. Regular exercise, meditation, journaling and good nutrition are the first "profit and loss" items I focus on. I start my mornings eating a healthy breakfast with my kids, followed by writing in a journal or a workout. I am not at my desk before 9:30 a.m. ever. When I share this approach with my staff and clients, the responses I get



are mostly positive. People don't think I'm lazy. Instead, they envy the control I have over my time and day. Better yet, this routine has made me more productive, focused and energized in my business life. I now know that if I take care of myself, everything else will follow suit.

I wanted to share my story in hopes that all EO members start putting themselves first. Work priorities can be endless, I know, yet the list of health priorities should never be empty. As entrepreneurs, we have the luxury to decide how and when we do things, so let's start taking control of our health and wellness. Consider the obvious irrelevance of everything else when we don't have it.

*Adam J. Levinter (pictured left, with his father) is an EO Toronto member, as well as the founder and president of ScriberBase, Inc., a subscription solutions company. Contact Adam at [adam@scriberbase.com](mailto:adam@scriberbase.com).*

# HOW TO BALANCE MAINTENANCE with INNOVATION

## Victoria Bondoc

Founder of Gemini Industries, Inc.

**M**y company has served the U.S. federal government for the past 30 years, operating in five states and the District of Columbia. As a business owner who considers her company as family, I am proud of our accomplishments. And yet, we've long struggled with managing the day-to-day tasks necessary in any organization, while nurturing our teams' products and solutions. Any entrepreneur knows this isn't an easy road, and while none of us can ever reach perfection, I think my company has finally found a "secret sauce" to keep our teams encouraged while getting everything done in between.

### The Three Critical Components

Any effective balance between maintenance and innovation rests on three critical components: communication, goal-setting and attitude. First, you must fully communicate the impact of innovation

throughout the organization. Second, you must set goals and consistently measure where everyone is in relation to achieving them. Third, your teams must maintain an attitude of adventure. It's easy to focus on everyday issues, rather than creating a journey that's fun for everyone. Here are a few action steps we take to drive home these three components:

**Brainstorm:** Part of preparing teams for brainstorming is through the sharing of failures. If you don't have ideas that are a "bust," you're not having enough good ideas. Another misconception is the confusion between innovation and invention. Some people don't see themselves as creative and don't know how they can be "innovative." But innovation is not the same thing as invention; we define innovation as "change adding value to an organization or customer." After prefacing the brainstorm, we provide several forums for employees to give suggestions. These include weekly meetings and discussion blogs on our intranet.

**Enact:** Ideas deemed worthy of pursuing are then mapped out in meetings, where employees can define goals and discuss their anxieties or fears. From here, leaders meet with their teams to map out targets, and then the project begins. There are times, of course, when employees get "stuck." In these cases, our leaders pose questions and give ideas to help staff solve the issue on their own. When people can't see beyond the barriers, we ask them to assign a number to each obstacle: "Okay, that's excuse number 621. Now, let's focus on solving the problem."

**Reward:** I have an annual incentive program that, in part, rewards innovative solutions. I take nominations from peers, supervisors and even self-nominations. But the reward doesn't just go toward performance; the performance needs to have resulted in a quantifiable solution, in terms of cost savings or increased efficiency. And these bonuses go to working-level employees who go above and beyond the role they're expected to perform. We also ask for recommendations from clients. This may seem unusual, but it's an opportunity for them to provide recognition to individuals without having to spend money.

It's not often in the national security business that people see how the acts of an individual or team can impact the rest of the world. However, when we're recognized at a higher level—by the Pentagon, for example—there's no better reward for us. Best of all, you can see the pride beaming from each and every employee, and that's the biggest indication of a job well done.

Victoria Bondoc (pictured) is an EO Boston member and the founder of Gemini Industries, Inc., which delivers resources, technology and execution plans to support national security projects. Contact Victoria at [vrb@gemini-ind.com](mailto:vrb@gemini-ind.com).



Photo credit: Margaret Lampert Photography





# How My Son Taught Me the MEANING OF CHARITY

**James Breeze**  
CEO of Objective Experience

Recently, my 7-year-old son, Ben, approached me with the idea of starting a charity.

"I want to help poor kids in Bali."

Not quite sure if he knew what he was saying, I asked him what his idea of a charity was.

"It's taking money from rich people and giving it to poor people," he responded with a Robin Hood-like swagger.

I didn't have the heart to tell my son that starting a charity isn't that simple. Instead, I decided to show him. What I didn't anticipate was that I would learn more from him than he ever would from me.

Ben wanted to reach out to local Bali children in need; specifically, to help them realize that different cultures and income segments have drastically different life experiences. He wanted kids to believe in their ability to make a difference through helping others. As it happened, raising money for this venture turned out to be the easy part. I suggested we create a crowd-funding page and link it to Facebook. Within 48 hours, "Ben's Boxes" had raised US\$1,200.

Ben was excited to see such a positive response to his appeal. He decided to ask his older schoolmates for ideas on how to put the money to good use. They suggested he invest in the Bali Life School, a local center that serves as a refuge for women and children who work on the garbage tip. While mothers at the center participate in skills training, their children are encouraged to attend informal classes. The school would greatly benefit from Ben's monetary donation, and in turn, my son would see how his money would be used to help other children his age.

As a psychologist working in the customer experience field, I'm always reminding business professionals to consider their audience;

their product solutions should speak intuitively to their consumers. When we visited the Bali Life School, I spent hours speaking with teachers and administrators about what these children needed most. Food, clothing and books all seemed to be smart choices. I was satisfied that we, as adults, knew what was best. During this time, Ben had been interacting with the kids. When I asked him what he thought the school needed, Ben said, "A playground. It's a bit boring here." I hadn't even thought of that! He was right. These children needed a place where they could feel safe and just be kids.

I told Ben his idea was within his budget, and he couldn't believe it. To engage his schoolmates, he and his class held a competition to design the center's new playground. Ultimately, the playground ended up having a more significant impact than we had foreseen; more and more kids started going to the Bali Life School not just for food, but to have fun!

One could ask how much of a difference a playground really makes for children who are without basic necessities, though Ben's entrepreneurial journey reminded me that we shouldn't assume we know what is best for others. This experience has shown me the importance of encouraging new perspectives in my children and within myself. As EO members, we should consider how our charitable actions help young people learn about the world around them. And we should also accept their naïve assumptions, for their ideas are probably better than ours.

*James Breeze is an EO At Large – APAC member and CEO of Objective Experience. He and Ben are currently campaigning to save endangered animals and rain forests from the impacts of slash-and-burn palm oil farming via Kids Cut Palm Oil, which has garnered support from Jane Goodall and her foundation. Contact James at [jbreeze@objectiveexperience.com](mailto:jbreeze@objectiveexperience.com) and Ben at [benjbreeze@gmail.com](mailto:benjbreeze@gmail.com).*

# The Purpose of Life is a Life of Purpose

## Matt Leedham

EO's Vice President of the Americas

**R**ecently, I made a trip to Guatemala to visit with Regional Director, Enrique “Kikoy” Montano, where we discussed EO’s growing presence in Latin America. While there, I spent a Saturday volunteering with an organization called Believe Guatemala, which empowers Guatemala City’s poor through education. That day, I helped deliver water filters to families desperate for clean water. Only after returning home did I discover that the filters are created by EO Guatemala’s **Philip Wilson**. Kikoy was quick to provide an introduction, and we connected a few weeks later for this interview.

A 15-year member of EO, Philip graduated from the University of Pennsylvania’s Wharton School of Business and has spent the past 20 years building profitable enterprises. However, it wasn’t until 2012 that his true purpose came into focus: providing clean water for those in need. To realize his vision, Philip created EcoFiltro, a social business that affords families throughout Central America access to potable water through a clay pot filtration system. I sat down with Philip to talk about his journey, what inspires him and the lessons he’s learned along the way.

After years of corporate work, what motivated you to start a social business?

**PW/** “After I turned 40, I was questioning the meaning of life and looking to make a change. Although I had successfully built businesses and made good money over the years, I was having trouble getting out of bed in the morning. I don’t think entrepreneurs talk about this enough: Once we achieve a certain level of success, many of us go through the process of asking, ‘What’s next?’ I’m not into buying yachts and Ferraris—I don’t need a lot of material things. I wanted my life to have substance and purpose, yet still enjoy success. My sister is a social worker and nutritionist. She spends her time working in rural communities, and I would occasionally join her. Visiting with the people of these villages, understanding their unique needs and offering assistance always felt good to me. I knew I would be inspired to build something meaningful if I could use my business skills to transform lives.”

How would you describe the challenge your product is trying to solve?

**PW/** “There are two primary problems with ensuring all humans have clean water to drink. The first is a lack of water, which is more of a problem in Africa. The second is the quality of water, our biggest challenge in Central America. Take Guatemala, for example: 97 percent of lakes, rivers and streams contain bacteria of fecal origin. More than half of the population does not have access to clean water, resulting in one out of 20 children not reaching age five. This is an urgent problem that needs to be addressed. The EcoFiltro water-purification system I created uses a clay pot to convert contaminated water into clean water, in turn providing more than two years of drinking water to those in need.”

Your business model is built to scale. Why is this important to reaching your goals?

**PW/** “My vision is to reach one million families with clean water, and I have learned many important lessons as we have grown. First, we do not treat EcoFiltro as a non-profit organization. This is a social business with the emphasis on *business*. I knew I needed to create a sustainable, scalable model to reach our vision. In order to do that, we have to treat the rural, poor families we serve as clients, rather than recipients of charity. Once we made that shift in mindset, everything changed because they became a part of their own solution.

“For example, we don’t give away our filters. When families pay for the filter, they feel a sense of pride and ownership. The challenge was to design a payment structure that allowed families to make affordable payments in the span of three months. We employ local, budding entrepreneurs to be our sales force on the ground and manage payment collection. This way, families have clean water, the local representative earns a living, and we are able to expand and reach more families. Everyone wins!

*Philip Wilson (pictured right in a blue dress shirt) is the founder of EcoFiltro, a social business with the goal of providing one million rural Guatemalans with clean water by 2020. Contact Philip at [pwilson@ecofiltro.com](mailto:pwilson@ecofiltro.com) or Matt (pictured far right in a black jacket) at [mleedham@eonetwork.org](mailto:mleedham@eonetwork.org).*



"Another big lesson I learned about scaling was to create a product that will be culturally accepted by your clientele. When my sister and I first visited villages, we would educate families on chlorination as a means to purify water. However, families did not trust that this was a safe way to purify water, and they didn't like the taste. We found they would use the chlorine to wash clothes and dishes but not to purify water—the product was not adopted. Once we designed our current product using clay pots, all of the families loved it, and they now purify water daily."

What lessons can you share about finding meaning in your work?

**PW/** "My story is really one of life and happiness. I wish this for every EO member. As many of us mature, you have less tomorrows than yesterdays, and we may find ourselves questioning the direction of our lives. When I graduated from Wharton, all I thought about was making money. Today, I am most inspired by finding a way to help others in a sustainable, scalable way. I've learned that you don't have to be Mother Theresa to transform lives. In fact, what allows me to make a big difference is building a business that makes money, can afford to pay its staff competitive rates and operates like a for-profit company in the way that it markets and sells to its clients. Using my entrepreneurial talents to help others has become my life purpose."



# Personal Branding **ISN'T**

## **Shameless** Self-Promotion

**Glen Carlson**

*Co-Founder of the Key Person of Influence Business Accelerator*

Consider the three types of branding you can develop as a business owner: a company brand, product brand and personal brand. In today's competitive landscape, we've seen how personal branding has become a vital tool for entrepreneurs to communicate value, create demand for their experience and grow their business. So why do so many people resist it?

Often, there's an underlying fear that people will lose their privacy and be viewed as insincere. This assumption isn't unfounded. We've all come across the brazen self-promoter who bleached their teeth, over-styled their hair and shamelessly flaunted themselves in the name of branding. They're great at

making themselves the center of attention, but not much else. This misguided approach does little for developing an ability to influence; luckily, your brand never needs to be this showy veneer.

Instead, consider your brand in terms of representation; it's nothing more than what you're personally known for. What if you could predetermine what people say about you or your business? That's what designing a personal brand is really about— not creating a show for the masses, but engineering a powerful reputation among your peers. I've identified five key principles I use to continually develop my personal brand:

- 1. Perfect Your Pitch:** The foundation for creating a successful personal brand is being able to effectively communicate what you want both yourself and your company to be known for. This mustn't be something like "customer service" or "integrity" because this is entirely egocentric. It's all about you and your product. The truth is: People don't care about you or your product; they care about themselves and their problems. Your customers care about results. When you can craft a compelling pitch about the results you and your organisation deliver, that becomes the foundation for a well-respected personal brand.
- 2. Constantly Publish Content:** Publishing content in the form of blogs, articles, reports, etc. is about taking your business pitch and scaling it. It's not about vanity. It's about packaging your sales pitch into compelling and sharable content. When prospects invest time (their most precious asset) in consuming your content, they become pre-sold on the idea of spending money with your company. Having a strong content strategy shortens sales cycles and expands your reach, while allowing you to charge premium prices through increased demand.
- 3. Create Hot Products for Specific People:** If you're reading this, you likely already have well-performing products and services. What people sometimes forget is that products can be designed to achieve different objectives. In the same way Apple has an ascending transaction model where they get you using iTunes, which then sells you music and movies (and then you buy an iPad, an iPhone, a Macbook, etc.), it's the product ecosystems that make money, not the individual products. A chef without a product ecosystem is just a chef. A chef with a product ecosystem is Jamie Oliver.
- 4. Establish a Profile:** A strong profile—both online and in the media—attracts more inbound opportunities. It can take decades to build a reputation in an industry organically. Over and over, I've heard business owners say: "I'll let my work speak for itself." Unfortunately, two or three years later—despite their hard work—they're still struggling. By strategically highlighting your accomplishments through awards, appearances, Google, earned media and owned media, you can build visibility and credibility with your target audiences quickly and effectively.
- 5. Partner for Growth:** Partnerships and joint ventures with key people and brands can give our companies leverage and enable us to become known by the people and businesses with whom we associate. When I look for businesses to collaborate with, I make sure their highest values (as well as their customer base) match closely to mine. Otherwise, it won't be a rewarding experience for anyone involved.

*Glen Carlson is an EO Sydney member and co-founder of the Key Person of Influence Business Accelerator, the world's leading personal and business brand accelerator. Contact Glen at [glen@keypersonofinfluence.com.au](mailto:glen@keypersonofinfluence.com.au).*



# NAVIGATING the NEGOTIATION PROCESS

An integral part of the entrepreneurial journey is knowing how to negotiate a business deal.

**Deepak Malhotra**, the Eli Goldston Professor of Business Administration at Harvard Business School and a workshop facilitator for EO, shares insights from his new book, "Negotiating the Impossible."

*In your book, you talk about the power of framing, process and empathy. What roles do these factors play in the negotiation process?*

**DM/** "The first part of my book focuses on the amazing potential of framing. As readers will discover, it is often possible to break deadlock without throwing more money at the table or getting

aggressive. Effective negotiators know that how you articulate or structure your proposals can be as important as what you are proposing. The second part of the book focuses on the decisive role of process in determining outcomes. Crafting the right—or a more advantageous—process can be more important than bargaining hard on the substance of the deal. Finally, the third part of my book focuses on the tremendous power of empathy. We look closely at how, exactly, a dispassionate and methodical approach to understanding the real interests and perspectives of all the relevant players can help to resolve even the ugliest of conflicts."

*What is the most difficult or interesting negotiation you've ever led?*

**DM/** "The most interesting business negotiations—challenging, but also fun—are when I'm advising small companies (e.g., early stage ventures) who are negotiating with big players for complex or high-stakes strategic deals. As for 'the most difficult' negotiations, these are situations where governments are trying to negotiate an end to armed conflicts. There are many parties, a long history of antagonism and grievances, mutual mistrust, and interests that range from economic to political, ideological and even matters of self-identity. And yet, I believe that any problem created by humans can be solved by humans. It may not be solved today. It may not even be possible to solve immediately (or on the timescale of a business deal), but we can be smarter and more effective in how we chart a path that might lead to eventual resolution—or at least to an improved outcome for all."

*Are the negotiation tactics you highlight in your book applicable to everyday life?*

**DM/** "Negotiation is not about dollars or cents, nor is it about contracts or deal terms. No matter what context you are in, negotiation, fundamentally, is about human interaction. Whether we are negotiating contract provisions or a ceasefire, a higher salary or better legislation, with a customer or with our spouse or children, the question we are trying to answer in negotiation is always the following: How might we engage with other human beings in a way that leads to better understandings and agreements? In my book, I use stories from history, business, sports and elsewhere to highlight ways in which we might engage more effectively, even when things look impossible. My hope is that the principles and strategies I share will help people not only achieve better outcomes professionally, but also personally."



*In 2014, Deepak Malhotra (pictured) was chosen by Poets & Quants to be among their "40 Under 40," a listing of the best business school professors in the world. Deepak conducts negotiation training, consulting and advisory work for companies around the world. To learn more, visit [www.NegotiatingTheImpossible.com](http://www.NegotiatingTheImpossible.com).*

# FINDING THE RIGHT

## Executive Search Firm

**Stuart Crisp**

*Director of Rothbury Kinross Executive Search*

When it comes to hiring, there are no guarantees you'll always find the best candidate. That's especially true when you're hiring for an executive-level position. As the founder of an executive search firm, I know how important it is to identify and secure a well-suited search firm before you begin the hiring process. Here are a few steps to consider before and during the search process:

### ✓ The Assessment

Prior to engaging a firm, make sure you've established your needs internally. Ensure you have buy-in from all stakeholders, including agreement on the scope and breadth of the role; a draft job description; benefits composition; reporting lines; and potential career progression, so you can update the search firm accordingly. If you don't have a relationship with a specific firm, ask your networks for recommendations. In addition to the larger firms, consider niche boutique firms who offer in-depth coverage and detailed knowledge of your sector or type of business. Ask your preferred firm(s) for a proposal outlining their fees, terms and conditions, guarantee period, etc. Once you're comfortable with a firm, prepare the briefing.

### ✓ The Brief

Before you officially hire a search firm, a thorough briefing is needed; engage the firm like you would a potential business partner. The firm must want to meet you, fully know the job description, learn where the position fits in your organization, understand how it contributes to your business goals and ask about opportunities for career development. Your ideal firm should also embrace your plans for the future, as well as engage direct reports and/or peers to the role for additional information gathering. The firm should then return with their understanding of your brief and help finalise the job description to ensure everyone is focused on the same goal.

### ✓ The Search

A smart search strategy leads to the best candidates and enables a fast start. The search firm you hired should manage expectations on how challenging the search for an executive hire is likely to be from the outset. They should also outline a thorough process, proposing target markets and companies, and should "benchmark" candidates (including likely compensation) to ensure the search is as focused as possible. An agreed-upon search strategy will help you and the firm stay on track; remember to have a record of all agreements

should there be a need to change direction. Discuss all requirements upfront so the firm can ensure you are supplied with the best pool of candidates. What's more, establish timelines regarding when the firm should deliver long and short lists of candidates, and make sure all the key members of your team who need to be involved are available.

### ✓ The Review

When it comes time to the candidate-vetting process, your search firm should meet all top leads face-to-face or via a video conference, interview them against your specifications and gain third-party viewpoints. The firm should then provide you with a detailed report assessing each candidate against your requirements. This should include current and future compensation expectations, a notice period with the current employer, availability to start and other associated matters. Above all, the firm should perform due diligence on all of the finalists, which should include psychometric assessments and detailed references.

### ✓ The Engagement

Be available throughout the candidate search process. A good firm will want to check in to discuss market feedback and progress. In my experience, weekly calls ensure everyone is on the same page. The search firm is there to provide you with options, advice and guidance, but it is ultimately your decision as to whom you hire. If you aren't confident with the final candidates, discuss this with your search partner and either seek additional information or be prepared to "go around" again to ensure you have a candidate who is a great fit for the role. When you finally hire the right person, conduct a thorough debriefing with the firm and provide feedback to ensure your partnership continues to grow.

*Stuart Crisp is an EO Auckland member and director of Rothbury Kinross Executive Search, a boutique executive search team of trusted advisors based in New Zealand. Contact Stuart at [stuart@rothburykinross.com](mailto:stuart@rothburykinross.com).*





# Making Failure Your Friend

**Russ Perry**

Founder of Design Pickle

As an entrepreneur, it is jokingly said that we suffer from “shiny object syndrome,” where there’s always a great opportunity around the corner and everything is an optimistic path toward achieving the next million dollars. When I had to close my B2B marketing and branding agency in September of 2014, that feeling of optimism shifted toward desperation. I was 10 years into my entrepreneurial journey, unemployed, with zero savings and no back-up plan.

With nowhere to turn, I decided to invest my time in coaching. I didn’t want to make a rash decision for a short-term paycheck, and I figured coaching would give me a sounding board that could help during my transition. Around this time, I joined another entrepreneurial group called “The Dynamite Circle,” and through their blog, I was introduced to Taylor Pearson, a coach and writer who is both thoughtful and analytical— exactly what I needed. He introduced me to a concept called a “decision filter,” which I would go on to use as a compass.

This decision filter would be the outcome of a homework assignment consisting of two parts: First, I had to describe where I needed to be in three years, personally and professionally. But there was a catch: I had to stay away from picking a specific business category. That was the point of the exercise. Second, using those outcomes, I had to decide what factors my future business needed to have in order to make my goals a reality. For example, I knew I wanted to spend summers traveling with my family, so one of my factors became a location-independent business model. I couldn’t own a business that required me to be in an office every day. My other factors were: matches my background and experience; is a niche area that allows me to be an expert; has a prospective market and monthly recurring revenue; and is easily explained to prospective customers.

All of these factors were tied to my core values. If an idea didn’t include these tenants, it wasn’t a good fit. I can’t begin to describe the huge release of anxiety I felt after making decisions through this new filter. Almost immediately, I had the clarity I needed to move in the right direction, and when I looked back at all of the short-term opportunities I was offered, none of them passed my decision filter. With my new mindset, I took on several consulting jobs and waited for the right idea to present itself, which it finally did in December of that year. By January, I had launched Design Pickle. In the first week, we went from zero to US\$6,000 in monthly recurring revenue (MRR) in sales, and as of our first anniversary, we’ve surpassed US\$100,000 MRR. I couldn’t be more proud.

I think the most empowering thing about this whole process was that I made these important decisions for myself. Taylor facilitated the process, and I had the support of my friends and family along the way, but in the end, I was the one to choose the business proposition that was best for me and my family. Early on in my entrepreneurial journey, I sought external validation far too many times, rather than look inside myself when I needed answers. It wasn’t until I jumped in and fully trusted my instincts that I realized just how strong failure can make you. In fact, failure turned out to be my best beginning. Now I’m using this experience as a building block for bigger and better things.

*Russ Perry (pictured) is an EO Arizona member and founder of Design Pickle, an unlimited and flat-rate graphic design service. Contact Russ at [russ@designpickle.com](mailto:russ@designpickle.com).*







# STARTING A SPARK

Sometimes all it takes is a little spark to start a revolution. Just ask **Stacey Brewer** and **Ryan Harrison**, EO Johannesburg members who are redefining the educational ecosystem in South Africa. In this special feature, the co-founders of SPARK Schools discuss the state of education in their home country, the far-reaching value of their hybrid learning model and how, through entrepreneurship, they're changing lives, one student at a time.

**Historically, South Africa ranks among the worst-performing education systems in the world. Why do you think that is, and how are you hoping to reverse that trend?**

**SB/** "The state of education in South Africa is stark at the moment. We're spending the greatest portion of our budget and GDP toward education, but it's not translating into anything of value. Overall, we are performing at the bottom of the world in education, particularly in math and sciences. In terms of the teaching profession, it's the easiest degree to get in South Africa. When you can't sign up for any other degrees, the universities recommend you become a teacher. The respect of the education industry is at an all-time low; no one really wants to be a teacher. When Ryan and I decided to get involved in the education sector, comments from peers were along the lines of: 'Oh, that's sweet' and 'Are you doing that full-time?' We want to change the local mindset when it comes to education."

**RH/** "And really, that's where SPARK Schools comes in. In 2011, we launched the first primary school chain in Africa that employs a blended learning model. We're making a mark through disruptive change, but we realize we can't compete with the 25,000 schools throughout South Africa alone. What we can do, however, is help bridge the gap.



We can provide exceptional education at equal or less than what the vast majority of government-funded schools are running on. And in doing so, SPARK can become an inflection point. People will see that we're achieving greater results at a quarter or half of our competitors' prices; results that are a year or two ahead of students in other institutions. In pursuing this approach, we hope to permanently shift the way South African education is currently being run."

**You both hail from a business background, not an educational one. What ignited the idea to start an independent school system?**

**SB/** "Ryan and I have known each other for a long time, and we've always been passionate about giving back to a country that has given us so much over the years. As it turns out, entrepreneurship was the vehicle to do just that. While pursuing an MBA at the Gordon Institute of Business Science, we saw an opportunity to leverage our business acumen to drive growth in South Africa's educational sector. Our 'a-ha' moment came after we visited the United States to learn more about the learning models that are employed there. We reviewed the successful methodologies in place, and when we found a model that we felt could drive the mission and vision of SPARK, we knew we had to fit it into the South African context. Although we didn't have any experience in the industry, we believed our innovative approach to education, combined with our strong business knowledge, would offer a sustainable solution to the education crisis in South Africa."

**RH/** "Like any true entrepreneur, rather than wait for others to effect positive change, we decided to make a mark on our own. It's not enough to sit on the sidelines and wait for solutions. We wanted to create schools where we would be proud and confident enough to send our own children one day. So after exploring our options, Stacey and I formed SPARK Schools, a series of private schools for underserved communities. Our mission is to provide a model that is affordable and produces internationally competitive scholars. From a more macro perspective, we want to create a blueprint for South African education; a foundation that could contribute to the success of our country as a holistic entity. Since our founding five years ago, we have been committed to offering high-quality education at a cost the country can afford, and the results have been spectacular."

**You're strengthening communities through an innovative approach to education. What makes your learning model so unique?**

**SB/** "Our model is the first of its kind for primary school students in Africa. We promote individualized learning by combining teacher-led and computer-based instruction, and emphasizing face-to-face and online learning, while traditional schools focus largely on book learning. We designed our academic program to encourage students to develop a genuine love of learning. Students rotate from classroom to classroom for subject-specific lessons, as in a traditional high school. This model allows our students to learn from teachers who specialize in a single subject and are extremely effective at customizing lessons within that subject for students of all abilities. By offering personalized educational opportunities for students of varying backgrounds, we're able to drive home the importance of quality education, as well as character development, physical fitness and technology."

**RH/** "Building on what Stacey said, our education model is a combination of technology- and classroom-based learning, which significantly reduces the amount of resources it takes to run a school. Because of this, for the first time ever in South Africa, we can deliver high-quality education in an emerging market. Our model relies on excellent teaching and family support to ensure students' success in the classroom and beyond. We invest a lot in our teachers, devoting 250 hours of training per year, which is more than the average state schoolteacher receives in a decade. And we ask all families to complete 30 volunteer hours over the course of the school year. These service hours can be completed in a variety of ways, including assisting with classroom tasks, taking part in a parent committee or attending school events. When parents start engaging with the school, when they realize the responsibility to encourage the child is on both sides, the results are mind-blowing."

**Core values play an integral role in the success of your organization. What are yours, and how do they define and drive your operations?**

**SB/** "Our continual pursuit of educational excellence is not only fueled by academic achievement but by character development. To that end, our schools emphasize the following core values: Service, Persistence, Achievement, Responsibility and Kindness ... or SPARK. We are a non-denominational school system serving children from all backgrounds, so these core values are essential to setting our scholars on a path toward success in the classroom and beyond. These values are deeply engrained in the culture and fabric of SPARK. We expect everyone to live by them—from the teachers and







(clockwise) Ryan, with SPARK scholars; the “Sparks Fly” morning routine; Stacey, with a student; a typical SPARK classroom; and students at a Learning Lab.



tutors, to the principles, students and parents. It’s a universal set of values, so no matter where you go, it will empower you.”

**RH/** “Additionally, each of our eight schools has its own theme or ‘sixth core value,’ as we sometimes call it. It’s an opportunity for the founding principal to make a mark on his or her school. They get to choose it, and it becomes a part of the school’s creed and culture. But more importantly, it’s something for the school to focus on; to differentiate themselves slightly from the SPARK model, have something unique to live by and guide their projects. Examples include ‘Compassion’ and ‘Integrity.’ Our values also drive our schools’ daily routines, like ‘Sparks Fly,’ a morning celebration that emphasizes our creed, delivers an academic review and offers a choreographed song and dance for the kids. It’s a fantastic time for the parents, teachers and students to bond, and it’s a great example of how our core values unite us as one family committed to learning and growing together.”

**SB/** “Families from all backgrounds—underprivileged and privileged alike—arrive at SPARK after hearing about our unique approach to education. Often, their children are told by other teachers that they have learning problems and will never do well in school. But within a few months at SPARK, you can start to see the changes. For example, one of our Grade R students was at a birthday party with peers from other schools, and he was the only one in the room who could read his birthday card. It was quite a reality check for the parents regarding what SPARK can offer in terms of quality education. Ryan and I believe that any child can achieve when they’re in the right system.”

**A William Yeats quote aptly summarizes your mission: “Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire.” How do you intend to keep that fire going?**

**RH/** “We’ve been fortunate to be able to build SPARK Schools from the ground up. Most educational institutions in Africa, specifically those offering direct instruction, are plagued by a culture derived from an archaic time, and they are just now trying to reform it. On the other hand, we got to build a solution in our own image, which has afforded us a lot of opportunities to innovate without restriction. The results so far have been incredible, and the best is yet to come. Personally, it’s been amazing to see how an idea in 2011 has turned into a strong institution that’s changing lives from the ground up. We’re excited to expand our influence and impact, while incentivizing communities throughout all of Africa to see education as a solution for familial, communal and economic growth.”

**SB/** “Education is a long-term investment; it’s not a quick fix. That being said, South African parents deserve better educational opportunities for their children, so we’re not stopping in Johannesburg. Since launching our first school, where we started out supporting approximately 160

students, we have achieved substantial growth. Today, we have eight schools, teach more than 2,500 students and employ 270 staff ... and we’re just getting started. Our short-term goal is to have 20 schools by 2019, and our long-term goal is to make a similar mark in other African countries where quality education is lacking. It’s been a roller-coaster ride so far, one that’s gone far beyond our expectations. We’re excited to see what the future will bring!”

*To learn more about how Stacey and Ryan are using entrepreneurship to ignite education in South Africa, contact them at [stacey@eadvance.co.za](mailto:stacey@eadvance.co.za) and [ryan@eadvance.co.za](mailto:ryan@eadvance.co.za). For more information on SPARK Schools, visit [www.sparkschools.co.za](http://www.sparkschools.co.za).*



#### Starting a SPARK in Africa

Discover how Stacey and Ryan are strengthening local communities through education—scan the QR code or visit <http://blog.eonetwork.org/spark>.



# What You Don't Know about Your Online Brand May Hurt You

## Rusty Shelton

CEO of Shelton Interactive

I sat down to meet Matt for the first time at a coffee shop. Our mutual friend thought we would hit it off because we both work in the PR industry. Prior to the meeting, I did what I always do: I Googled Matt and reviewed his website and social media, immediately forming a first impression of the person I was about to meet.

Before he ever sat down, I knew about Matt's recent trip to the Cayman Islands and his thoughts on the GOP debate. I also knew about last year's client, who was unhappy with the work his agency did (and the lack of response from his agency regarding that complaint). I am sure Matt did the same review on me prior to walking in the door, each of us forming an opinion about the other that was going to be difficult for either of us to change.

Have you ever thought about how often people are forming opinions of you based on what they find online? In today's digital environment, the first place most people will interact with you and your brand won't be in person (even when you're meeting them in person!)—it will be via your website, social media and the first page of a Google search. Do you know what kind of impression you're making? If not, it's time to do an online brand audit. Here are four tips to help you get started:


**Inspect page one of Google.** The first step is to get a clear view of how well you own page one of Google on a search for your name. If you can't be found online by your customers, you're losing opportunities every day. If you don't own your name as a URL, stop reading this article and reserve it for US\$10. Those who have a website in place with their name as the domain have a decided advantage because they own that online channel and have complete control over the information on it.

### **Understand whether you own or rent the real estate found on page one.**

Many of you may be thinking, "Page one looks great!" because the hits all connect back to you. But are those hits a bio on your company website, your Twitter account or a mention in the media? These are all nice wins, but they sit on a platform that you don't own or control. There are three categories of information connected to your personal brand online: owned (your website and blog), earned (media coverage and customers' reviews) and rented (your social media channels). Anytime you don't "own" the top result, you're leaving your first impression up to others. Wouldn't you rather introduce yourself?

**Treat your social media infrastructure like an online press kit.** Understand that many people will find your social media channels first and use them as an on-ramp to your brand. Because of that, these rented channels make up your virtual press kit, and you must make sure that your branding, messaging and visuals are consistent. Furthermore, provide value in every space where you are represented; remember to regularly refresh the bio and content on your social media channels. And, if you have social media accounts that are decaying, get current or get rid of them.

**Go beyond your name.** The most basic level of an online brand audit is a review of a search on your name, but in many cases, potential customers or journalists will start with a search via topics like "accounting services in central Ohio." It's harder to land on page one of Google for a "search by" topic, but there are ways to increase the odds. Become more discoverable by being timely with content. Start with information making news, or that which is part of a trend in your industry, and offer an opinion or viewpoint that your readers might want to share with their networks. Be intentional, timely and topical to widen your expertise net. It could land you on national television.



Rusty Shelton (pictured) is an EO Austin member and the CEO of Shelton Interactive, an award-winning digital marketing and PR agency, as well as the co-author of "Mastering the New Media Landscape: Embrace the Micromedia Mindset." Contact Rusty at [rusty@sheltoninteractive.com](mailto:rusty@sheltoninteractive.com).



# 10 TIPS for Family Business Success

## Frank Fantozzi

President and Founder of Planned Financial Services

The family business model can be extremely rewarding for entrepreneurs, especially when it comes to creating a legacy that brings about pride, honor and family fulfillment. However, as family businesses expand, they face unique performance and governance challenges. As the founder of Planned Financial Services, I've always made it a priority to ensure multi-generational family businesses are able to succeed now and well into the future. That begins with understanding the key drivers of business longevity and following a few tips we share with the entrepreneurial families we advise:

- 1. Maintain open communication.** Communicate clearly, concisely, candidly and continuously. Open and ongoing communication is vital to building trust and creating a safe environment for all family members.
- 2. Respect the business as its own entity.** The success of the business must remain paramount, regardless of family politics or ties. How the business provides for the lives of the family members and employees it supports, and how it contributes to the surrounding community, should always remain top of mind.
- 3. Eliminate emotion from decision-making.** The business leader is ultimately the voice of the family business. He or she must assume and retain a position of authority, as well as the ability to make tough decisions for the sake of the business, even if decisions are not popular with all family members.
- 4. Have a plan to deal with family discord.** Whether it's a difference of opinion or a performance issue, dealing with discord among family members within a business setting can get complicated. Document lines of authority, roles, responsibilities and job descriptions with measurable accountabilities. Also, be sure to establish clear policies and procedures for dealing with conflicts that arise.
- 5. Develop family business employment agreements.** Employment agreements help you create clarity in each role by setting expectations, responsibilities and accountabilities.
- 6. Create a board of advisors (directors).** Perspective from outside advisors can help eliminate family biases and can go a long way toward helping family business owners resolve issues. The increased intellectual bandwidth can also provide a fresh perspective to challenge the business thinking, while helping the family business grow and prosper with insightful ideas.
- 7. Separate personal and business finances.** It's not just common sense but also good business sense to separate personal finances from company finances. Employees notice if the company's finances are used for personal pleasure, which creates an unhealthy business culture.
- 8. Set expectations for family owners and non-family members with an ownership interest.** Educate and create transparency for all interested parties where the company's financial performance is concerned, including balance sheets, shareholder dividends and liquidity policies.
- 9. Know when to let go.** Staying on too long can hurt the long-term growth of the organization, discourage and frustrate potential future leaders, and can drive them away from the business.
- 10. Identify the next leader and develop an executable succession plan.** An effective succession plan—one that goes well beyond "blood is thicker than water"—is perhaps the most critical element of ensuring ongoing business success. In certain circumstances, it may require the organization to look outside the bloodline to perpetuate the family business.



Frank Fantozzi (pictured) is an EO Cleveland member, as well as the president and founder of Planned Financial Services, a financial and investment management firm that helps families and businesses use their wealth to experience the life they desire (Return On Life®). Contact Frank at [Frank@PlannedFinancial.com](mailto:Frank@PlannedFinancial.com).

When it comes to entrepreneurship, inspiration can be found in a variety of places. For **Michie Nagaoka**, founder of renowned engineering firm, Miracle Solution, Inc., Japan's innovative culture serves as great motivation.

**1 What is the best business advice you've ever received?**

**MN/** "I put a great amount of importance on the phrase 'natural result,' which means results will come naturally if you do what you can in the moment. I had originally heard this phrase from my grandfather, but it seems like more of a Buddhist teaching."

**2 What was the biggest challenge you've had to overcome as an entrepreneur?**

**MN/** "In business, I've never thought being a woman was a drawback. However, we don't participate in after-hours business entertaining, called 'Settai,' which is a typical Japanese way of business communication that may lead to contracts. I think female entrepreneurs have to win business contracts solely through the quality of services we provide. However, that's a world standard."

**3 What core values drive your business?**

**MN/** "In order to create the world's best engineering company, I aim to control the management of the engineers, by the engineers, for the engineers."

**4 What value does EO provide you?**

**MN/** "There are many things I've learned from my Forum and chapter events. I have been largely influenced by meeting wonderful people and inspired by their accomplishments."

**5 What type of support did you receive when you first started your business?**

**MN/** "My mother gave me the support I needed in accounting, and colleagues helped me in the technical and managerial fields. Also, my experience and network in the local IT industry helped a great deal."

**6 What are some advantages of working in Japan?**

**MN/** "In Japan, there are a lot of business opportunities, not to mention a great infrastructure. It's a lot of fun running a business in such a progressive environment."

**7 Are there any challenges associated with running a business in Japan?**

**MN/** "The biggest challenge is that engineering remains an industry that lacks manpower, especially in Japan. Another disadvantage is high taxes."



**Michie Nagaoka**

EO Tokyo

EO member since 2011

**8 What characteristics do you look for in an employee?**

**MN/** "I look for people who have excellent abilities and good personalities, as well as those who are unique and fun. It's an added bonus if they have a good sense of humor!"

**9 How do you manage your work/life balance?**

**MN/** "For starters, I make sure I eat well and drink alcohol in moderation. Recently, I've been trying not to work on weekends and rest more. This way, I can have more energy and concentrate during the week."

**10 Where do you see your business in five years?**

**MN/** "Our company will have approximately 100 IT engineers who will help solidify our role as the world's best engineering company. Additionally, we will grow to earn one billion yen each year."





# MAKING ROOM FOR ROLE MODELS

**Naomi Simson**

*Founding Director of RedBalloon and REDii*

*“We all need role models— someone to lead the way  
and drag others along with them.”*

**B**ack in 2011, I attended an Ernst & Young “Young Women’s Entrepreneur Workshop,” and that quote from speaker Avril Henry still resonates with me. She explained that one of the entrepreneur’s traits is that “we are there for the long term.” We do not give up easily— we are fiercely opportunistic and are forever looking at the next success story. As business owners, success is in our blood. We are attracted to others who share this trait, and they often become our mentors.

I am not sure I fit the conventional mould when it comes to having “mentors” in my life. Instead, I think of those inspirational people from whom I’ve drawn wisdom, experience, knowledge and life purpose as role models. My mother, in particular, was a role model of mine growing up. She spent much of her career as a systems analyst for Aspect Computing, a business Lyndsey Cattermole founded and sold for US\$215 million. When I was at university, Mum said to me: “If Lyndsey can do it, you can, too.” I guess that’s where my entrepreneurial mantra came from, which has evolved into: “If it is meant to be, it is up to me.”

I am not alone in thinking Lyndsey is one of Australia’s most successful entrepreneurs. At the age of 25, she founded the largest software and services business in the country, which went on to become a major force in Australian information and communication technology. My mother was one of Lyndsey’s longest-serving employees, and she would often invite me to company events. I remember Lyndsey being larger than life— she was always talking loudly and full of enthusiasm. Most of all, she was engaging. She would give me little gems of wisdom, such as: “study hard, work hard and follow your passions.”

Role models are people that you observe from a distance; you learn from them, read what they write and watch their behavior. They are different than mentors. Recently, I have been collecting gems of wisdom from hundreds of role models, most of whom I will never meet. But their words come to me when I need them most, which is especially helpful as an entrepreneur. These role models had an original thought, a vision or a desire to simply do things *differently*. They share my entrepreneurial spirit, and above all, they inspire me to be a role model for others.

There are hundreds of outstanding role models if we choose to look. If you’re seeking one, reach out to me, and I can share a few from my personal collection!



*Naomi Simson (pictured) is an EO Sydney member, as well as the founding director of RedBalloon and REDii. She is also a professional speaker, the author of “Live What You Love” and one of five “Sharks” on TEN’s reality television show, “Shark Tank.” Contact Naomi at [naomi@naomisimson.com](mailto:naomi@naomisimson.com).*

# The Happiness

**David Tomás**

Co-Founder of Cyberclick Group

**“Happiness”** and **“work”** are two terms that, when put together, some may say form an oxymoron. The key to creating a happy workplace is to ensure that these two terms are synonyms for each of your employees. I’ve learned over the years that employee well-being has a crucial impact on the overall success of a company, and ensuring your employees are continually happy is the key to sustained prosperity. Here are three steps I’ve implemented in my business to achieve just that:

## Step One: Traffic Light Survey

If your company wants to increase profit, they can compare the current period’s profit amount with those of previous periods. Increasing company happiness is no different. You must be aware of current happiness levels to be sure that levels are increasing. Start by asking three questions each day through an easy-to-use online form, which includes a comment section. The first two questions will ask employees to choose between the choices of “super green,” “green,” “yellow” and “red.”

- In what mood did you arrive today?
- In what mood are you leaving today?
- On a scale of one to four, how much did you like the tasks you did today?

This quick survey becomes part of the daily routines and habits of employees. Not only does this survey give you a sense of the happiness levels in the office, but it also encourages employees to be more frank and self-aware. There are various ways to analyze the results. One way is to use a Google document that sends outcomes to a central location, collects the data and compiles it all in one document. This document will then be used as a comparison tool against the previous periods to be discussed openly. In addition to this once-a-day form, a more extensive once-a-month form will enhance your knowledge of employee well-being. This monthly survey should discuss a wider variety of topics, including remuneration, employee relations, work/life balance, alignment of company goals and personal goals, etc.

## Step Two: Hold an Open Discussion

After collecting all of the data, it’s time for the most important part: an open discussion of the results and brainstorming of solutions. Incorporate this discussion into your weekly meeting. An employee needs to read the results, stating averages and any good or bad comments. It is crucial that this employee is not always the boss since this survey is not meant to be an evaluation, but rather an open discussion. This structure builds trust in the workplace.





# Factor

The boss isn't analyzing results and giving feedback; this isn't a pass/fail exam for employees. This is an exercise with the pure intention of, as a team, being more aware of the office's collective happiness and taking actions to increase it.

The "super green" or "green" results hold essentially the same meaning as it does on the road: keep going. A "yellow" response signifies that you need to slow down and leave it to the person to decide if there is an issue or if it has since been resolved. A "red" response signifies that you need to stop and address the issue. It is extremely important to maintain open communication in the office, allowing employees to speak in private about an issue if they feel the need. A monthly meeting is also an ideal time to discuss the results obtained from the once-a-month survey. During this more extensive discussion, you are able to go over the statistics as compared to previous months, while discussing opportunities for growth and ways to improve results for the upcoming months.

## Step Three: Take Action

Once your team has discussed all of the results and explored solutions, it's time to take action. Doing so makes the entire process valuable and worthwhile for the team. If some tasks cause stress for an employee, then it is crucial to find realistic things you can do to decrease the stress. In the following weeks, you can determine the real impact of these actions based on the outcomes of the survey as compared to previous ones. Being able to measure the outcome of these actions provides you with conclusive results that determine if you are, in fact, increasing employee well-being, or if you need to return to the drawing board for new ideas and solutions.

If you want to improve productivity, increase motivation and enhance the flow of positivity in your company, you have to start somewhere. For me, the traffic light and surveys provide my team with tangible results that can be monitored. Just as with anything else in business that needs to be improved, you need a benchmark; a way to know when the results are favorable or when tweaks need to be made. These methods provide you with this benchmark at a low cost of time and money, proving it will surely provide you the best return on investment you've seen yet.

*David Tomás (pictured far right in white) is an EO Spain – Barcelona member and the co-founder of Cyberclick Group, a leading digital-marketing company. Contact David at dtomas@cyberclick.net.*

## Which social media tool do you rely on the most in business?



I rely heavily on Facebook because it allows me to easily communicate with my customers and know what's happening not only in their businesses, but in their personal lives. I enjoy showing them I'm interested in who they are, not just what they provide to my business."



*Page Thornton (EO Bryan – College Station)  
Founder of Aggieland Title Company*

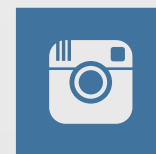


We use a variety of platforms, but primarily LinkedIn and our company blog. I was skeptical about the value of blogging, but I regularly hear customers, potential employees and vendors mention things we post, which helps a lot."

*Dan Lansman (EO South Florida)  
Founder of BMI Elite*

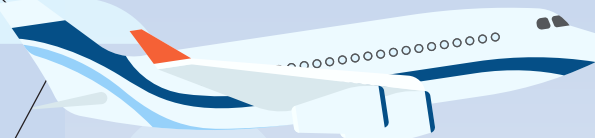


Instagram— it's the best visual experience in social media. The platform helps promote the brands we carry, and it is widely used in our region. The great thing about Instagram is that it converts our posts into sales. We're advertising on the platform and key influencers are starting to show our products, which is definitely a plus!"



*Rohini Gehani (EO U.A.E.)  
Founder of Rivaage*

# Taking Flight with Emirates



As an EO member, you are afforded numerous benefits designed to take your business and entrepreneurial journey to the next level. Among these benefits are a suite of offerings from EO partners that contribute to your membership value. In this spotlight, **Dharani Ranghanathan**, an EO Coimbatore member and managing partner of PARANAA Pumps & Motors and Perfect Group of Companies, shares the perks of a new regional partnership with Emirates for EO's South Asia and MEPA regions.

Businesses thrive by expanding and going global. And yet, for the typical entrepreneur, travel can lead to a hectic lifestyle if it isn't pleasant. My business allows me to travel to many different areas. Out of all of my destinations, I fly to Europe the most, and I've used Emirates more than any other airline. My first Emirates experience was in 2006, and I remember one of the staff suggesting I join "Skywards," their frequent-flyer program. With no hesitation, I signed up. That was the beginning of a decade-long relationship as a "Gold Member," and now I can take my experience to even greater heights, thanks to EO.

As a new regional partner for EO, Emirates gives me the power and flexibility to choose how I would like to travel, making every flight a memorable one. This is a laudable partnership because it affords these experiences to other members who deserve an enjoyable flight—from the entertainment selection and top-tier food, to the chauffeur services and all-star hospitality. Every time I board an Emirates flight, the cabin in-charge personally welcomes me. That's just one of the many benefits of being a loyal member. And I'm glad my EO peers now get to experience the same.

I don't think there are many airlines in the world that consistently upgrade their level of service by constantly advancing their aircraft. The first of my many A380 experiences stands tall among other exciting moments. Right from the start, the space, in-flight entertainment, amenity kit, and extensive food and bar menu were first-class. I have now traveled hundreds of thousands of miles with this airline, and I look forward to traveling many more by leveraging EO's new partnership. It doesn't matter which flight I am on. I know it is going to be the experience of a lifetime!

*Want to learn more about EO's partnership with Emirates? Contact Saakshi Tejavath, EO's Business Development Director for EO Asia and EO EMEA, at [stejavath@eonetwork.org](mailto:stejavath@eonetwork.org). For bookings in EO South Asia, visit [www.emirates.com](http://www.emirates.com) (pre-fed with discount code). For bookings in EO MEPA, visit [www.emirates.com/in/English](http://www.emirates.com/in/English) (the case-sensitive password is: Previousone).*






# GIVING BACK

## THROUGH SPOUSAL ENGAGEMENT

**Debbie Choa and Yvonne Lau**  
EO Malaysia Spouses

Looking back, 2015 was an incredible year for EO Malaysia, especially when it came to EO families. From the chapter newsletter being forwarded to spouses and introducing LALA (Lunch Around, Learn Around) events—through which spouses were integrated with members—to the launch of EO360° initiatives designed to support the growth of the chapter, it truly was an impactful year.

A large part of spousal engagement last year hinged on event and program participation, where we were given ample opportunity to learn alongside members. Most memorable was Engage, a three-month learning program designed to inspire local teenagers to become entrepreneurs through knowledge-sharing and valuable enterprise experiences. These teenagers—who hailed from three homes, one for the physically disabled—participated in the program with EO members' teenaged children. Mentors comprised of EO spouses, both in and out of Forum, all of whom united to give back to the community.

In all, Engage consisted of a Launch, a Learning Programme and a Business Challenge, followed by a Marketplace—four stages to inspire next-level engagement and learning. Several stories from the heart were shared at the Launch, including: an EO member highlighting his entrepreneurial journey; one of the home's administrators sharing how she believes entrepreneurship is a way out of her personal trials and tribulations; and a previous resident speaking about his journey from a life of crime that inspired hope. Everyone felt motivated and ready to work.

The Learning Programme consisted of a two-day entrepreneurial workshop, which was designed to be interactive, experiential and fun. We sought to awaken the entrepreneurial spirit in the participants. The underserved teenagers, when stripped of their money, mobile phones and watches, were tasked with figuring out

how to make money in a nearby mall. It was amazing to see what ideas they came up with! The teenagers also participated

in a financial board game, were taught about business models and had the chance to present their own to a panel of judges comprised of EO Accelerator members and two EO spouses, themselves experts in business.



All of the knowledge imparted during the Learning Programme was put to use during the Business Challenge, where the underserved teenagers, along with the EO teenagers, were placed in teams and assigned mentors to help them craft their business pitches for the Marketplace stage. During the Marketplace, retail booths were set up in the main foyer of a mall, which the teenagers used to execute their business plans. The team that achieved the highest profit was named the winner. Everyone was relentless in their pursuit of sales, and all profits were donated back to the three homes. What's more, members of the winning team received Samsung tablets and several in need were given internships at EO Malaysia businesses.

Ultimately, Engage was a memorable experience for all involved. The teenagers had fun, gained valuable business insights and discovered what it's like being an entrepreneur. Sui Vatanyuvong, an EO spouse and Business Challenge coach, summed it up best: "I was motivated by the opportunity to help those who are less fortunate and also to make a difference in the community. From witnessing the teams come together for a common goal, and seeing members and spouses share their personal experiences, to observing the positive changes in the kids, it made us all realize how anything is possible when people are given the right opportunity."

*Debbie Choa and Yvonne Lau are EO Malaysia spouses and members of Bond Forum and Venus Forum, respectively. Contact Debbie at [debbiechoa1@gmail.com](mailto:debbiechoa1@gmail.com) and Yvonne at [yv\\_lau@yahoo.com](mailto:yv_lau@yahoo.com).*



# REELING IN THE LESSONS LEARNED

**Edgar A. Rodríguez Ventura**

EO El Salvador

One morning, while sailing through social networks, I kept coming across a motivational image of a rabbit with a message that said, “One thing at a time. If you chase two rabbits, you will lose both.” At first glance, I agreed with the message. But then my entrepreneur neurons kicked in, and I immediately looked for an argument that could dispute the point. Why do you have to chase only one prey at a time? A recent fishing experience supported my case.

Last October, my good friend, a fishing expert and fellow EOer, Gian Innocenti, invited me to participate with his team during the Billfish International Tournament in El Salvador. Manning the boat were highly experienced fishermen ... and me, a rookie occupying the primary fishing chair for a few minutes. My initial instructions were clear: reel in quickly and without hesitation. You want to attract other fish, while opening up space for the experienced fishermen to jump in. Well, it happened. Sitting in the main chair, there was a

tug on my line. My training kicked in— wait for a proper hook-up. I was told to reel in, so I did. In a matter of seconds, three more lines were thrown from the boat. Before we knew it, we had three sailfish on our collective hooks. We had hit a fishing hat trick!

Only someone who has been there understands the complex skill needed to reel in three fish at the same time. Moving the boat in the right direction, while coordinating three fishermen who were facing in opposite directions, was a struggle, but we wound up catching the fish. And that brings me back to my earlier argument. Catching two prey—be it businesses, professional achievements or other passions—simultaneously *can* be done as long as certain aspects are clear: Plan your catch and rely on a team; surround yourself with experts; learn fast, listen and follow instructions, even if your instincts rebel; and above all, learn to enjoy the team’s achievements as your own.

*Edgar A. Rodríguez Ventura is the CEO of VALUOS.COM Appraisal Company. Contact Edgar at [erodriguez@valuos.com](mailto:erodriguez@valuos.com).*



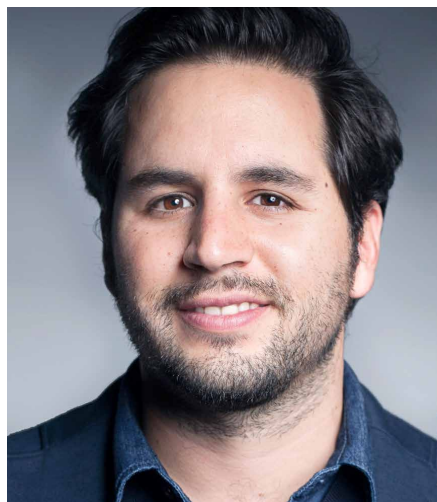
## Members Make it on Inc. Covers

Every day, members around the world are making a mark through their businesses. In the September and November issues of Inc. magazine, EO San Francisco’s Jessica Mah and EO Seattle’s Dan Price were featured on the covers, respectively. Jessica discussed her role as co-founder of InDinero.com, while Dan talked about how he made US\$70,000 the minimum wage at his company, Gravity Payments. In the spirit of Gestalt, Jessica and Dan interviewed each other to highlight the Inc. experience and further share their business innovations. Read the interview by scanning the QR code.





# NEW MEMBER SPOTLIGHT



**Gregorio Dersdepanian  
López Tolsa**

EO Mexico City  
Founder of Trender  
Joined EO in February 2016

## What inspired you to start your own business?

**GT/** "I wanted to create something great from scratch; something that I would be proud of and that I could really call my own."

## What are you hoping to get out of your EO experience?

**GT/** "I hope to share some of the experiences I've lived through my entrepreneurial journey, as well as listen and learn from other members. I'm looking forward to meeting new friends and having a great time!"

## What are the most rewarding and challenging aspects of your industry?

**GT/** "The most rewarding part is that the shoe industry can generate passion and true love from our customers, especially when it

comes to our products. The most challenging part is that there aren't many well-prepared executives in our industry, so scaling a company can be challenging. Also, there's not a lot of information regarding shoe businesses out there, so you have to figure out a lot of things on your own."

## Where do you want your business to be five years from now?

**GT/** "I see my company being one of the key players in Mexico's fashionable shoe industry, as well as a leader when it comes to the integration and use of technology in our industry."

## If you could share one piece of advice with your new EO peers, what would it be?

**GT/** "Things are never as good or as bad as you might think they are, so keep working."

Welcome Gregorio to EO— contact him at [gdl@trendershoes.com](mailto:gdl@trendershoes.com)!

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BACK  
THROUGH  
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Gunther (left), with his co-founder, Michael Ambros

## EO Germany - Berlin Member Welcomes New Shareholder

Gunther Schmidt, co-founder of eKomi The Feedback Company, recently welcomed Goldman Sachs Private Capital Group as a new shareholder. eKomi The Feedback Company is Europe's leading SaaS provider of transaction-based reviews and ratings, as well as customer experience management.



## EO San Antonio Members Recognized for Innovation

Darlène Kirk (pictured left) and Magaly Chocano (pictured right) have been selected as 2016 Enterprising Women Champions by *Enterprising Woman* magazine, an annual tribute that honors the world's top women entrepreneurs. Darlène is the founder and CEO of Kirk's Global Compass, and Magaly is the founder and CEO of Sweb Development and SwebApps.

## EO Reno Tahoe Member Featured in *Forbes*

Laura Zander and her husband, Doug, were recently featured in *Forbes*, where they talked about the benefits of selling their customers subscriptions for Jimmy Beans Wool, an online yarn retailer. The co-founders and former Silicon Valley software engineers elevated sales through their novel approach.



## EO U.A.E. Member Spotlighted in Local Magazine

Gaurav Aidasani, CEO of Cosmos Group, was recently featured in *The National*, the leading English-language publication in the Middle East. In an article titled, "Risk-Taker Lives in Moment," Gaurav described his financial journey as an entrepreneur and recounted his lessons learned along the way.

## EO Winnipeg Member Publishes First Book

Jonathan Strauss, founder of Strauss Event & Association Management, recently published his first book, "In Any Event: A Guide for Developing Successful Association Events." By applying a story-driven approach to the design of your association's events, Jonathan explains how you can achieve new levels of success and better serve your members.



## EO Argentina Member Participates in DAVOS

Rodrigo Teijeiro, founder of RecargaPay.com, recently participated in the DAVOS World Economic Forum, where he addressed the technological and financial challenges of today's youth. Rodrigo was on a panel that consisted of musical artist will.i.am, as well as the CEOs of Coca-Cola and Airbnb.



# GLOBAL LEARNING CALENDAR

2016

**EO@Wharton**

**13-17 APRIL | EO@WHARTON EXECUTIVE EDUCATION PROGRAM**  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA



**12-15 MAY  
EO GLOBAL LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE**  
Bangkok, Thailand  
\*By invitation only.

**EO Entrepreneurial Masters PROGRAM**

**1-5 JUNE | EO ENTREPRENEURIAL MASTERS PROGRAM, CLASS OF 2018, YEAR 1**  
Dedham, Massachusetts, USA



**29 JUNE – 2 JULY  
EO FAMILY RETREAT & EXPERIENCE**  
Orlando, Florida, USA  
Register now!



**7-11 SEPTEMBER  
EO LONDON GLOBAL UNIVERSITY**  
London, England  
Register now!

**EO Key Executive PROGRAM**

**26-29 OCTOBER  
EO KEY EXECUTIVE PROGRAM**  
Dedham, Massachusetts, USA

**Coming Soon!**

**2017 EO MEXICO GLOBAL UNIVERSITY**  
Mexico City, Mexico

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- » **EO Unlimited** – Rotterdam, Netherlands; 8-11 June
- » **LACademy** – Colombia; September
- » **EO Thrive** – Chicago, Illinois, USA; 19-21 September
- » **EO NERVE** – Boston, Massachusetts, USA; 28 September-1 October
- » **EO Alchemy** – Scottsdale, Arizona, USA; 5-8 October

For more information, scan the QR code at right.



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#### OUR MISSION

To engage leading entrepreneurs  
to learn and grow.



7-11 September, 2016  
London, England

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