

STRIVE

Alaska Edition

JANUARY - 2017

Conscious Capitalism

Dr. Rashmi Prasad
and Nathan Havey

Social Entrepreneurship

Leah Boltz

Celebrating a Challenge

Mary Ellen Slayter

The Art of Education

Mike Wagner

Job Shadowing

Broc Edwards

2017 and the New Reality of Digital Marketing

Lee Leschper

Dr. Deena Paramo
Superintendent
Anchorage School District



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Cover Story:

The Twenty-First Century is Now

Dr. Deena Paramo



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It's Just an Idea

"I have an idea!" These four words tend to send members of my team, associates and especially my wife and business partner, Denise, running for cover. Not because all my ideas are bad, mind you, but because, they often represent a heck of a lot of work for those crazy enough to get involved.

A little background...In May 2016 my company, The Chariot Group, received some excellent national press featuring it as one of the "10 Hottest Collaboration Solution Providers - 2016" by Education Technology Insights. We even made the cover! I, of course, wanted to maximize its exposure as it was great PR and valuable marketing material, but I had a challenge; re-printing just the article didn't seem sufficient, it needed more context to appeal to a larger audience.



I have an idea! I would reach out to a couple of business associates and ask them to help. Each would write a short article focused on business, innovation and positive outcomes. It would be a win-win situation; they would get visibility for their companies and I would wrap my company's positive press into a broader platform. The publication would be a one-time simple thing, or so I thought. Within a week, it had grown to six contributors and 16 pages with a mission of being an opposing force to the dark economic cloud that was descending upon Alaska.

This simple idea turned real in July of 2016; STRIVE magazine was published in just three weeks, from concept to print. But something bigger and more important happened along the way. We fell in love with the idea of sharing positive and innovative ideas that illuminate a path forward during challenging and disrupted times. In short, we all caught the positivity we were trying to share.

Since that time, the enthusiasm has continued to build. We realized that regardless of the economic climate, nationally and/or globally, people and organizations of all types are struggling to cope with the maddening pace of change that is impacting their careers, businesses and industries. Regardless of whether it is technical innovations, such as robotics and artificial intelligence, or changing markets and global competition, everything is changing.

The question becomes how does one provide decisive leadership in a future that has no resemblance to what we know? If everything is changing, then what we used to rely on, including our old models for problem solving and measuring success, must change as well.

I have an idea! Let's start a new company and provide resources and services to help illuminate the path forward. At that moment, The STRIVE Group was born. Our intent is to aggregate innovative and positive people and ideas with the goal of accelerating what we call "the Ah-Ha moment." Ah-Ha – when the light goes on and we have a clearer vision of the path forward.

As for this publication, it is our intent that the articles be primarily first person accounts of innovative success and/or a positive vision of things to come. We hope Strive provides a platform for emerging thought leaders of all types and from all disciplines.

I know, it all sounds a little audacious. It is just an idea.

A stylized, handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a large, flowing 'R' followed by a series of loops and a final flourish.

Rick Thomas,
CEO & President
The STRIVE Group

JANUARY - 2017

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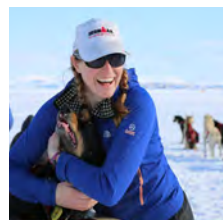
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Dr. Deena Paramo's focus on student achievement and success is backed by her experiences in teaching and educational leadership. As superintendent of the largest school district in the state, she is firmly committed to the ASD's vision to have every child prepared for the workforce or post-secondary education after high school. Paramo began her Alaska educational career in 1991 and has proudly served as a teacher, assistant principal, principal, assistant superintendent and superintendent of the Mat-Su Borough School District before being named ASD's superintendent in July 2016.

Dr. Rashmi Prasad is Dean of the College of Business and Public Policy at the University of Alaska Anchorage. In leading the largest college of professional studies in the state of Alaska, Dr. Prasad has helped to build a dynamic group of faculty and staff to deliver the highest quality teaching, research and service to further the well-being and prosperity of Alaska. Prior to becoming Dean, Dr. Prasad was a faculty member at the University of Alaska Anchorage for eleven years and currently holds the rank of Professor of Business Administration.



Nathan Havey is the Founder and CEO of Thrive Consulting Group. In addition to private consulting, his major project is the Conscious Company Magazine Workshop, where he leads the effort to help company leaders to implement conscious business practices:

Leah Boltz co-founded Parks for All, a grassroots initiative bringing inclusive play to all Alaskans of all ages and abilities through community engagement, partnering, fundraising and design. Leah is Anchorage Rotary Vice President and an AEDC Live.Work.Play. volunteer, and her business background is in integrated communications and business development. On Leah's bookshelf: Start with Why by Simon Sinek, Love is the Killer App by Tim Sanders, and Harold and the Purple Crayon by Crockett Johnson.



Mike Wagner is President of White Rabbit, a business consultancy he founded in 2004. He is a skilled communicator, facilitator, and business consultant. Mike serves leadership teams in the creation of competitive advantage and growth strategies. His approach is a unique combination of leadership development and organizational culture, informed by the tools and process of "design thinking". Mike has been speaking professionally for over 30 years. He engages audiences with fresh ideas and tells compelling stories to inspire them to keep creating!

Broc Edwards is a Director of Talent Management for Baylor University. Most of his early career was spent as a consultant or contractor developing recruitment and selection systems and creating and facilitating leadership development programs. He has worked with individuals, teams, and leaders in manufacturing, mining, banking, retail, not-for-profit, and government organizations in North America, Europe, and Australia. While he enjoys his job immensely, Broc's real passion is for exploring the world from his mountain bike.



Table of Contents

**2016 Was Terrible.
We're Celebrating Anyway.**
By Mary Ellen Slayerter
Page 7

Conscious Capitalism
By Dr. Rashmi Prasad
and Nathan Havey
Page 8

The Art of Education
By Mike Wagner
Page 12

**Making the Most of
Your Resources**
By Paula Bradison
Page 15

**The Twenty-First
Century is Now**
By Dr. Deena Paramo
Page 16

**The Case for Sole
Proprietorship**
By Heather Kinzie
Page 20

**2017 and the New Reality of
Digital Marketing**
By Lee Leschper
Page 22

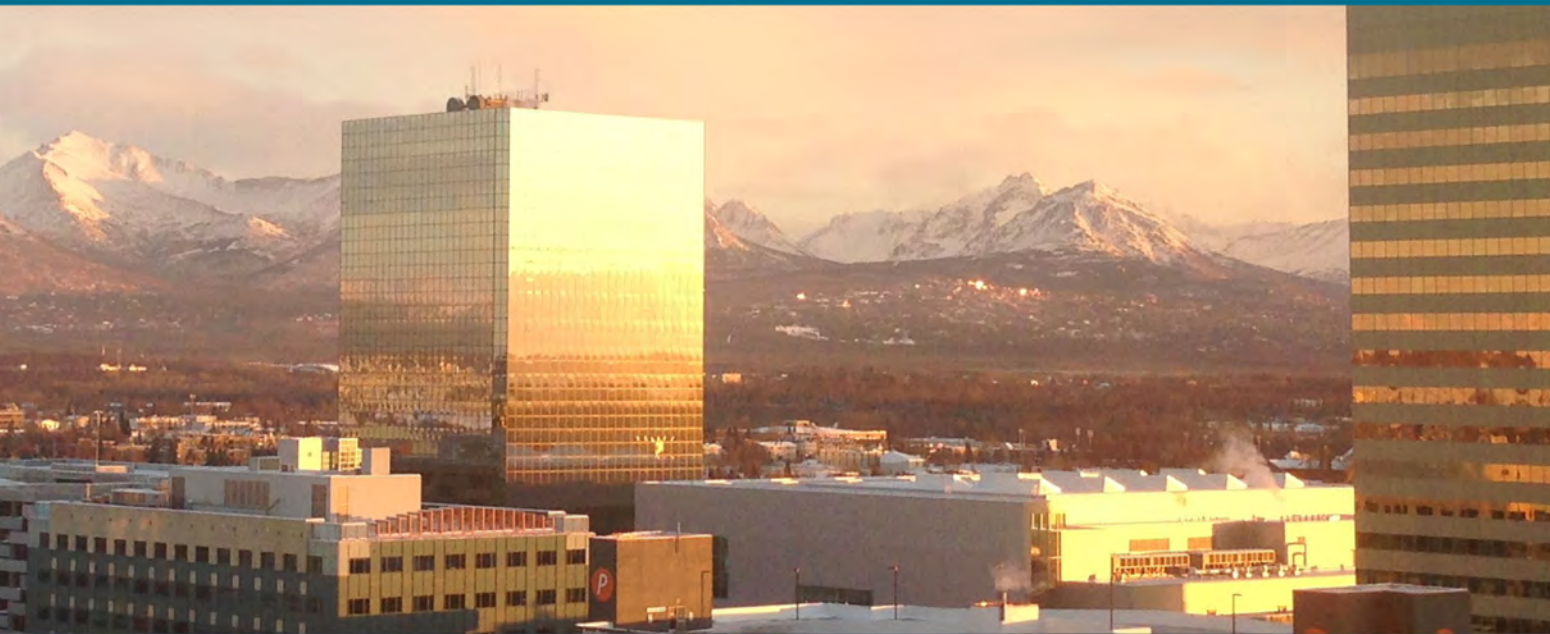
Social Entrepreneurship
By Leah Boltz
Page 24

Job Shadowing
By Broc Edwards
Page 28



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Celebrating a Challenge

By Mary Ellen Slayter

2016 was terrible. We're celebrating anyway.

I became an entrepreneur on December 9, 2011. I had little more than a severance check from my last employer and a strong feeling that content marketing could be much, much better. So I started a content marketing agency. For the first year, I did almost all of the work on my own — writing articles, blog posts and ebooks for my brand-new clients, managing all of the billing and accounting, and sourcing freelancers to help manage the growing workload.

...It's been a trying year. So at first I thought this might not be a year to throw a big party. Maybe this was the year to scale it back a little. I wondered if people would even be in the mood for bubbles and cake.

Five years later, Rep Cap (short for "Reputation Capital") has grown into a thriving agency. Our team of six employees and wide network of contractors deliver expert content marketing advice and support to a client roster that ranges from solopreneurs to the Fortune 500. From the beginning, I set up the agency as a distributed, remote workforce so that I could pull in the best talent from around the country and world. We are spread across the country, but every December we all gather in my hometown, Baton Rouge, to celebrate the year's accomplishments, talk about what's next in content marketing and eat a lot of cake. (Seriously — our accountant suggested it might be time to add a line item in the budget for cake.)

But 2016 has been tough. It's been an especially trying year for Baton Rouge. This summer we were still trying to figure out how to band together and respond after the death of Alton Sterling and the police shootings that happened in the wake of his death. Then the community was hit by major, unprecedented flooding. My home was spared, but in one parish outside Baton Rouge, 90 percent of homes were flooded, including that of our intern, Morgan. In the immediate aftermath our local team members spent weeks volunteering in emergency shelters, entertaining kids whose schools were indefinitely closed and racing to gut houses of friends, family and neighbors before mold set in.

There was no "business as usual" here. Everyone was focused on survival, community and sheltering each other. I was incredibly grateful for Rep Cap's decentralized staffing model, which helped insulate us from the worst of the economic disruption that struck many of my fellow entrepreneurs in South Louisiana. The tight-knit team I love to brag on came together to free up our local crew to put all of our energy into serving our community.

Life in Baton Rouge is not back to normal. People are still struggling. Many aren't yet back in their homes. As we reach the close of the year, business owners are looking at balance sheets that aren't anywhere close to their projections for the year. The nonprofits that usually fill so many needs in the community are facing depleted bank accounts and fatigued donors.

Like I said, it's been a trying year. So at first I thought this might not be a year to throw a big party. Maybe this was the year to scale it back a little. I wondered if people would even be in the mood for bubbles and cake. **I almost didn't have the party.** But you know what? We need some good news. We need a celebration, and we need to celebrate our survival as a team, a company and a community.

It's been five years. The company is still here, and we're finding ways to thrive despite the external setbacks. We still work with an amazing team of writers, editors and marketers around the world. We still have the privilege of doing interesting, creative, fulfilling work with people we respect. And Baton Rouge is still here too.

So we booked a beautiful spot, called up our go-to bakery, Gambino's, and our favorite local chefs at Gôûter, and bought up all the sparkling wine that TJ's would box up for us on the spot. We kicked up things a notch with an amazing band.

And I'm so glad I did.

If 2016 has you feeling down, or your bottom line looking a little gloomy, take heart. Let's move on to 2017 with renewed energy, bigger goals, and an eye on celebrating every little win.



Mary Ellen Slayter
CEO, Rep Cap

Conscious Capitalism

By Dr. Rashmi Prasad and Nathan Havey

Conscious Capitalism is a business framework and movement that is picking up steam outside and around the world. Chapters of business people promoting this idea are now alive and well in 18 U.S. cities and 8 more abroad. A magazine called *Conscious Company* is now on shelves in 49 of the 50 states (including AK). There are **Conscious Capitalism** chapters in bastions of liberalism such as the San Francisco Bay Area, but the movement has also been embraced by six Chambers of Commerce in Michigan, some of them in beet red parts of the state.

So what is **Conscious Capitalism** and why should Alaskan businesses care as they cope with an increasingly challenging environment? **Conscious Capitalism** starts with the belief that business is the most powerful organized force for human benefit in the world. It identifies the purpose that capitalism serves in society as the advancement of human thriving. Business is the single greatest organizer of human effort on the planet – by far. For business to promote human thriving, it must be built on the most positive and idealistic factors motivating human beings: the need for purpose and meaning, the capacity for cooperation, concern for others and the drive for personal growth.

According to **Conscious Capitalism** businesses perform best when they focus on four mutually reinforcing disciplines:

1) **Higher Purpose** – “What are the two most important days of your life?” This is a question for reflection presented by Whole Foods founder John Mackey and Raj Sisodia in

their book on **Conscious Capitalism**. “The day I was born” is a universal answer for one of the two days. Responses vary for the second important day, but for Mackey and Sisodia it is the day you discover your higher purpose. This is the answer to the “why?” question that many of us manage to evade for long periods of our life.

What does an organization driven by higher purpose look like? It could look like Apple Corporation, driven to enhance the capabilities of intelligent people with intelligent tools. It could look like Whole Foods, who describe themselves as not having a retail mission, but as “missionaries who retail”.

For business to promote human thriving, it must be built on the most positive and idealistic factors motivating human beings: the need for purpose and meaning, the capacity for cooperation, concern for others and the drive for personal growth.

Gallup surveys report that about one-third of employees feel “engaged” in their work. Focusing on and demonstrating a profound commitment to a specific purpose beyond profit is a powerful way to recruit, retain and engage employees, customers, and other stakeholders critical to the success of the company.

Alaska has also given birth to purpose-driven organizations such as the Alaska Housing Finance Corporation, whose mission is no less than “safe, affordable housing for all Alaskans.” Alaska’s more challenging conditions encourage the assumption of greater responsibility and, perhaps, the pursuit of higher purpose. Difficult times also force us to focus on the “why?” question that we may be able to evade at other times. The University of Alaska Anchorage is in the midst of focusing its purposes. Over 1500 staff, students and faculty at UAA recently responded to a Core Values survey by indicating a strong preference for a focus on “student success” and “open access” to higher education.

2) **Stakeholder Integration** – In the film, “It’s a Wonderful Life” the character Clarence reflects to George Bailey: “Strange, isn’t it? Each man’s life touches so many other lives. When he isn’t around he leaves an awful hole, doesn’t he?” For John Mackey, a moment of “awakening” about the meaning





and value of stakeholders came early in the history of Whole Foods, when the small and thriving company was nearly bankrupted by the consequences of a flood. Only the commitment of employees (working temporarily without wages) and business partners (deferring payments for deliveries) enabled the business to survive. For Mackey, this was no less than a demonstration of the “power of love”: the love of employees and business partners for the values and purpose of a business they felt committed to, and did not want to see perish.

The *Conscious Capitalism* approach goes far beyond lip-service to the importance of the customer, with leaders taking every opportunity to teach employees concretely to realize that without the customer, the organization cannot exist.

This pillar of *Conscious Capitalism* rests on a simple question: are there more “win-win” or “win-lose” relationships in our business lives? If most of your business relationships are zero-sum, integration of stakeholders can’t be a sound practice. Research on negotiation, however, indicates that positive-sum “games” far outnumber zero-sum ones, and that some negotiators persist with a “win-lose” approach regardless of the situation due to “fixed-pie” beliefs.

A significantly large number of firms practicing stakeholder integration raises the overall level of social capital in a community, expanding opportunity structures for new ventures. A key question for Alaska is, how richly connected to each other are businesses in our community and to key public institutions such as the University of Alaska? Is our

level of social capital sufficiently high to support a culture of new venture formation?

3) **Conscious Culture and Management** – This goes way beyond adding a Ping-Pong table in the break room. Mackey and Sisodia ask, “is it possible to build a business on love and trust instead of fear and stress?” Logically, a company impelled by a higher purpose should hire for cultural fit and rely less on extrinsic motivators such as pay to get high performance. At Whole Foods, the employees are the gatekeepers; new hires must endure a probationary period and are retained only through a two-thirds vote of members of their team. The credo is one of hiring selectively and training extensively, which is afforded by low turnover. The core organizational structure of Conscious firms is the team. Managers recognize the profound duty to care for their employees like family, to send people home at the end of the day happy and fulfilled, to earn the discretionary effort of their people and, subsequently, to multiply the capacity of their teams.

In the area of culture and management, the *Conscious Capitalism* framework reiterates the normative thinking that has periodically ebbed and flowed for over a century in the United States. A few years ago, the Economist magazine published an article entitled “When to Terrorize the Talent.” The article summarized research indicating that normative (or employee-centric) and instrumental (or productivity-centric, where employees are a means to an end) practices in manage-

ment tend to correlate with the business cycle. When employees are scarce and harder to get, they are treated differently. While this cyclical behavior does not bear logical scrutiny, it is especially out of place in Alaska, which has always been a sparsely populated place, regardless of the business cycle.

4) **Conscious Leadership** –The *Conscious Capitalism* framework provides no single template for effective leadership, but does lay great store by a leaders' personal development which sets a cap for an organization. Unless leaders proactively seek out opportunities to grow personally, and continually raise that cap, their best people will also fail to grow and either exit, or worse, settle and stay. Either way, the organization will stagnate or in some cases, suffer serious ethical breaches.

The Conscious Capitalist framework is explicitly critical of the shareholder-centric leadership and management that has prevailed in the long period from the 1980s until the present, regarding it as inherently flawed due to a short-term focus and for placing profit before purpose.

The Conscious Capitalist framework must answer for the question of performance. Is it merely another normative

approach waiting to be displaced by the remorseless, instrumental logic of market capitalism? Empirical research on "conscious companies" indicates superior financial performance (www.firmsofendearment.com). However, in order for business to reach its full potential as a force supporting human thriving, the measures of performance must be reconsidered with less tyranny of short-term performance.

Of what value is the *Conscious Capitalism* framework for Alaskans during this critical transition period following the decline of the oil-economy? While we encourage readers to consider this question for themselves, we humbly offer the following observations:

- Purpose driven organizations attract, develop and retain talent. As the Alaska economy experiences a down period, engaging and retaining capable people is an imperative.
- Alaska Native corporations are constantly confronted with the "why?" question, and may benefit from the *Conscious Capitalism* framework as they evolve and become a driving force of the Alaska economy.
- Alaska must assess and build its stock of social capital. The old truism that Alaska's enormous geography contains a small and highly-networked business community must be challenged. Public institutions such as the University of Alaska have a considerable role to play in building the state's stock of social capital.
- Leadership growth and development is critical. Small, remote populations tend to rely on a smaller pool of leaders. With many leaders transitioning to retirement, mentoring of a new generation of leaders is imperative. We encourage Alaskan leaders to participate in programs such as the College of Business and Public Policy's Leadership Fellows in order to invest in the future of Alaska.



Dr. Rashmi Prasad
Dean,
College of Business
and Public Policy,
University of Alaska
Anchorage.



Nathan Havey
Founder & CEO,
Thrive Consulting
Group.

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Our Programs Focus on the Way Alaskans Do Business



More than ever before, we need business professionals educated in the culture and management practices of Alaska Native organizations.

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*source: Job Outlook 2015, National Association of Colleges and Employers | UAA is an EO/AA employer and educational institution.

The Art of Education

By Mike Wagner

“A little ditty ‘bout Jack & Diane...two American kids growing up in the heart land.”

—John Mellencamp

Actually, this story isn’t about “Jack and Diane.” It is about Derek and Jessica but they do live in the heartland—Osage, Iowa to be exact. Osage is a town of 3600 in northern Iowa near the Minnesota border. As one would expect, it is a community built on agri-business to support farming.

But as you’ll read about here, Derek and Jessica Balsley found there was more than one way to create a successful business in Osage.



Derek and Jessica are the founders of *The Art of Education*, a company dedicated to delivering “ridiculously relevant professional development” to art teachers around the world. They have grown this business from a simple blog site to a company of over 20 employees offering magazine content, “credited” online classes and a consistent array of conferences. Thousands of art teachers from around the world are their customers. And they do all of this from Osage.

How? I invite you to read on to learn more about their strategies.

Flip Your Script

Derek and Jessica made the move from a consumer mindset to a provider mindset. Jessica writes, “Several years ago, as an art teacher working towards my Master’s Degree, I began a search for a university with courses designed for art teachers, but I came up short.” That frustration moved her and she went from looking for a solution to providing a solution.

The lesson? You might find yourself with a customer mindset, looking for a service or product but not finding a

good solution. Instead, flip it and change the mindset; imagine yourself as the one supplying the answer or solution. That is a big switch if you’ve always been the consumer, but it is one you definitely can make.

Don’t Be the Lone Genius

Jessica realized every idea is a partial right answer, but she didn’t “settle” or otherwise commit to the partial answer. She realized it almost always takes others to fully form a solid business idea. Derek, who had a degree in marketing and tons of business expertise, was an obvious partner able to build on her amazing content for art teachers. In addition, his tenacious ability to learn social media platforms completed her vision. Together, their complimentary creativity formed a blog site with a growing reader base of art teachers. They also involved others in their idea. They enlisted the creativity of known and credible colleagues to generate lots of “ridiculously relevant” content, they moved the blog to a magazine format and they began offering online courses for college credit by partnering with an accredited institution.

The lesson? If you depend on your own innovative insights too much or for too long, you will slow yourself down and likely never get traction in the marketplace. Therefore, make your business adventure bigger than your original idea, or otherwise bigger than just a lone genius.

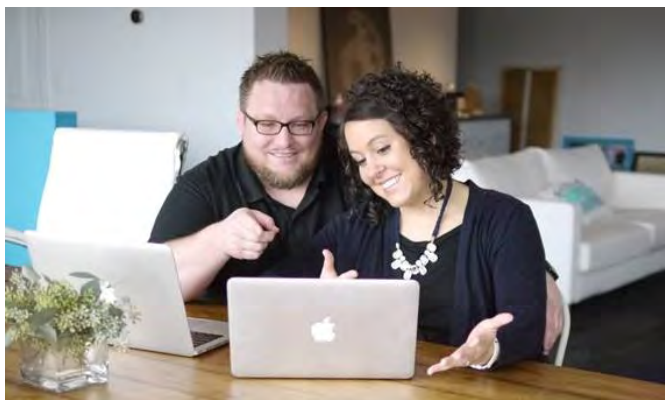
Focus, Focus, Focus

Derek and Jessica knew there would always be shiny objects to distract them but they committed to staying focused! They successfully fought the usual temptation of any emerging business to explore other products for other customers. They continue to remain dedicated to the art teacher, and art teachers have rewarded them by being dedicated, raving and referring fans. When Derek and Jessica uses the phrase “ridiculously relevant” to describe *The Art of Education’s*



mission, they mean it. The team tests their content's relevancy constantly and pivot often making it better, more available and supportive. They have also built an organizational culture that insists that everyone reflect that same dedication. Their employees are recognized and rewarded for living the vision and concentrating on their customers.

The lesson? You get what you concentrate on. The sooner you and your team identify who your right customer is the sooner you know who to focus on. Don't let up! Insist that everyone maintain focus on the "who" your company exists to serve!



Small Markets Are Big Opportunities

Derek and Jessica realized that art teachers were an underserved market. Derek explains that, as an art teacher, Jessica couldn't find quality professional development because of the way colleges and universities had developed their offerings. Most colleges serve their immediate region and courses are determined by potential students. It doesn't make business sense to a college to go after the niche, art teacher market. Furthermore, apart from major population centers, there aren't many art teachers in any given region. The result is that most art teachers are underserved.

Derek and Jessica realized that, in the intersection between the underserved market and the varied financial ability of a potential customer, there was an opportunity! *The Art*

of Education responded to this and offered/offers no cost, low cost, medium cost and high cost content offerings to the world of art teachers. This took time to develop, of course, and Derek and Jessica began with the "no cost" content. But this "loss leader" focus paid off with the growing opportunity built on customers who trusted them and appreciated their motives for serving them.

The lesson? There exists underserved or poorly served markets made up of customers with available dollars to spend. They are waiting to be your customers if you can find a way to deliver authentic value to their real needs.

Connectivity Results in Lots of Neighbors

Derek and Jessica knew from the beginning it wasn't likely that they'd find employees from or willing to live in Osage. Instead of using this as an excuse NOT to think big, they embraced the idea that it didn't matter where someone lived. What mattered more was their willingness to commit to the mission of *The Art of Education*.

The lesson? Even today, in a global market, we often think of location as a limiting or prohibitive factor to business opportunity. But it isn't! In a global market, we can be most anywhere, and so can our employees. We can start a successful business in a place like Osage, and our customers can be anywhere in the world.

There is a lot more to *The Art of Education* story, and I encourage you to explore it. But I hope these lessons are a good start for you to creatively find a new mission in the marketplace. If you feel that where you live is limiting, or that your resources are limiting, you are likely wrong. Today, we live and operate in an economy that isn't as much about resources as it is about resourcefulness. Resourcefulness is at our fingertips; we just have to choose to awaken it.



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education

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Podcast Interview
with Jessica Balsley



Podcast Interview
with Derek Balsley

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Making the Most of Your Resources

Stop Working Staff Harder and Start Inspiring

By Paula Bradison

While it can be easy to feel a trickle of fear in challenging economic times, it can instead serve to be a defining moment for a business on the verge of boldly pushing forward into the future. By turning that moment of anxiety and distress into an opportunity to empower your existing staff and infuse your business' workflows with innovation, you can guide your company through an economic rough patch and emerge on the other side miles ahead of the pack.

Efficient, more productive workflows are critical in times of financial crunch and will ultimately result in saving your company time and money.

Often, business leaders have a knee-jerk response to uncertain economic tides and attempt to "do more with less." However, simply decreasing the quantity of staff and increasing their work load burden is a recipe for burned out, unhappy employees.

A recent study reported in Forbes found that chronically burned out and overloaded employees, however much they may want to help in these tough times, are 31 percent more likely to quit. This causes a domino effect that negatively impacts their organization's bottom line.

In 2016, the Society of Human Resource Management (SHRM) analyzed data collected from their annual Human Capital Benchmarking Survey and determined that the average cost-per-hire is \$4,129, in addition to an average of 42 days to fill an opening. In addition to the direct cost of replacing a solid employee, many employers may not be ready to face the subsequent indirect costs resulting from a position vacant for more than a month.

The question then becomes, rather than doing more with less, how do we inspire our key collaborators and reliable workers to do their most effective and productive work?

Revisit the skills of your existing team and empower their advancement. Hidden talents could be right under your nose.

We can become comfortable with our current roster of stars who consistently knock it out of the park in their respective departments. However, these proven professionals may have additional talents they are simply waiting for an opportu-

nity to grow into something more. If you are unsure of where these undiscovered talents or aspirations to grow may lie, it is as simple as starting a conversation.

Ask your team what they enjoy the most about their work, what they would enjoy doing in the future, and what insights they have on improving existing processes. Perhaps there is an Administrative Assistant on your team going to school for English or marketing that would jump at the chance to prove his or her worth by taking over the social media accounts and blog for your organization. Examine existing processes and inspect backlogs to identify inefficiencies.

If you are currently putting off the evaluation of current processes until you have added more staff or until you have conquered the looming backlog of work, it is time to re-adjust your approach. Efficient, more productive workflows are critical in times of financial crunch and will ultimately result in saving your company time and money. Consider calling up temporary resources to assist with backlogs and "busy work." This frees up the time of key staff to work together in identifying deficiencies. Often, this approach will yield a quick boost to office morale too.

Continually strive to support and bolster morale.

As discussed above in the cost of hiring new employees, it is more critical than ever to retain your top talent. They are proven, loyal, and likely more dedicated than ever to the success of your business. In times of lean staff, it can be difficult to juggle requests for time off or absences due to illness. This struggle with staffing levels heightens during peak times. Ensuring your staff can take hard-earned and well-deserved time to recuperate and revitalize is imperative to keeping them motivated and engaged. Temporary staffing again can help. Temps can help cover summer vacations, power through busy seasons, and mitigate backlogged work which makes a world of difference in the morale of your own staff. Bringing in additional talent and resources demonstrates your investment in the satisfaction, health and well-being of your staff, in turn earning their dedication and loyalty to you.



Paula Bradison
Owner & CEO,
BMG

Cover Story

The Twenty-First Century is Now

By Dr. Deena Paramo
Superintendent,
Anchorage School District



Photo by Glenn Aronwits

The 21st century is here. It is in our world, our state, our community, and our schools. All around us, innovations abound; we have numerous devices in our homes and workplaces, there is “an app” for everything, and robotics are no longer something we see in “sci-fi” movies. All of these innovations provide us with renewed experiences. Yet each day, as the lights illuminate the halls of our schools, tradition and the past dominate our education experience. The fact is our students may not be experiencing the best this century has to offer. We, the educators and administrators, are working to improve but the improvement process is slow compared to the pace of change and may not be fast enough for our students who desire and need 21st century learning experiences.

The term “innovation” ushers in thoughts of being creative, transformative, or inventive; **our schools should epitomize innovation!** Such innovations in our schools are required, not simply for efficiency, but because they are imperative to meet the demands of the world in which our children will be living. Classrooms should have an equipped teacher and sufficient technology to prepare students for enhanced thinking and learning.

Eric Hoffer stated in his book, *Blended*, “In a time of drastic change, it is the learners who inherit the future. The learned usually find themselves beautifully equipped to live in a world that no longer exists.” (2015). To that end, I believe our schools should innovate our practices and our mindset to ensure we effectively equip our students!

“Equip them for what?” you might ask, and for that I answer, “for being a healthy, productive, and value-added member of their community.” Whether it be for continuing education, work and careers, or community service, I believe the school system should strive to prepare the student.

The future demands our students to have knowledge in the basics, of course. However, it also dictates more advanced problem solving skills, creativity, adaptation, and resilience. Regardless of the path our students choose after they leave the school system, they will experience a world that is technologically advanced and dependent upon their individual ability to comprehend, conclude, and collaborate. That being said, it is my hope that our teachers can effectively teach and model the 21st century technology, collaboration, and sharing paramount to their students’ future success.

“In a time of drastic change, it is the learners who inherit the future. The learned usually find themselves beautifully equipped to live in a world that no longer exists.”

—Eric Hoffer



There is a saying about traditional education and educators; we have been the “sage on the stage.” In this model, the teacher is the vessel of knowledge and “gives” that knowledge to the student. This transmission assumes a fairly passive student simply awaiting to be fed information to regurgitate it on an exam, homework, or other assessment. I refer to this as “pushing in” content.

However, the 21st century is filled with students who want to be active, participative learners; therefore, **the “sage on the stage” model is not aligned.**

There exists another approach. The “guide on the side” refers to a concept in which the educator, whether it be a teacher, advisor, mentor or administrator, has the knowledge and/or information and helps facilitate the acquisition of such by the student(s). I am inspired by this concept because it more closely reflects the Latin roots of the word “education.” “Educare” means to “draw out.” This model also resonates with me because it reflects the collaborative and sharing of competencies this century demands of our students. In addition, it encourages the educator to “pull out” the learning and comprehension; it motivates students to take responsibility for their own learning and development, which is paramount to their success as adults.

My vision for the Anchorage School District is to develop both our educators and our students using the “guide on the side” model. I trust in the knowledge, expertise, and commitment from our staff. I believe in and commit to the willingness and abilities of our students as well as their support systems.

The “3Rs” (Reading, ‘Riting, and ‘Rithmetic) will remain as mainstays in our learning. Nevertheless, they must expand to meet the critical thinking and creative design required for 21st century learning. As 21st century work involves technology, we must change the manner in which we educate

students. That being said, I believe we educators have our own “Rs” to model and teach so we can better prepare our students for increased learning, optimized employment, amplified community involvement, and/or other inspired endeavors.

It is time for the education system to better equip and empower our teachers and students so that we may collaboratively create new experiences to develop a future generation of strong thinkers and doers.

Rigor

Rigor and tenacity are required with the evolution of our educational system. The “escalation of learning” at any time, any place, any pace, and with any path is a concept promoting educational equity. Regardless of socioeconomic status, race, gender, disability, English proficiency, and/or geographic location, students should be able to pursue challenging courses of study. Both teachers and students need to demonstrate rigor as we adapt and evolve into these mindset and protocols. Thankfully, we can depend on technological advances to help us escalate our students’ learning. Innovative hardware and software solutions allow our teachers to better facilitate the targeted sharing of knowledge and information, gain student assessment data, and offer timely feedback. Moreover, these technological advances allow all types of students and their subsequent networks to orchestrate their own learning and development whether it be in the traditional classroom, remotely, or virtually.

Relevance

Relevant content which targets and/or peaks students’ interests creates an energetic and wide path to personalized learning. Relevant content expedites engagement and enthusiasm in one’s learning. This builds success and confidence not only in academic measures but in preparation for a successful and meaningful future. Often, educators have been overwhelmed with providing relevant content as the diversity of students’ interests, experiences, etc. have increased. Individualizing content relevance has been difficult for the “sage on the stage.” However, if we are to adopt the “guide on the side” model and begin to better utilize technology, our educators can ensure the content and curriculum is relevant to students. Innovative software solutions provide educators an incredible expansion of content and curriculum; they also provide a platform for effective facilitation. Enabling the gathering, sharing, and analyzing of curriculum content will go a long way in increasing our students’ learning.

Resourcefulness

Resourcefulness is required to create student choice and opportunity. No longer do the walls of classrooms and schools define what educational opportunities are available. Districts and states must work towards a systematic and collaborative organization that allows improved sharing of resources. For example, we must break down our traditional boundaries and provide collaborative platforms for teachers to learn and share best practices. I believe this approach is the only way to meet the demands of our nation’s standards and our communities’ expected outcomes. Furthermore, it is the best way to meet the learning needs unique to each student. Once again, advances in technology can enable us! In our great state, there are geographic distances to overcome and for too long we have used this as an excuse not to collaborate and share. I am inspired by the 21st century technological solutions which help us reduce the distance, break out of our traditional paradigms, and model resourcefulness, collaboration, and sharing for our students.

Re-iteration

Failure has, for a very long time, been something educators have tried to avoid. But avoidance has come at a cost. Our students often lack the resiliency to overcome failure and disappointment. Re-iteration, with understanding that failure always brings a chance to strengthen learning, is required to ensure a student’s success. Working towards a goal, failing, learning from it, and making improvements for future success aggregate to build an incredible life skill. As educators, we must model this type of mindset and perseverance as well as encourage it with our students. The “guide on the side” model, as it goes beyond lecture and testing, can help facilitate analysis and improvement cycles of re-iteration to instill the grit needed for students to persevere in the 21st century.





Responsiveness

Responsiveness to all of our stakeholders' needs is required to build student success. In our new world, we can no longer afford to take our time to be responsive to student learning needs. In today's world, instant gratification comes into play in that everyone has immediate access to information; our school system cannot lag behind these everyday expectations. As stated earlier, technology enables immediate access to content and curriculum. In addition, it provides an avenue for streamlined and real time information about a student's plans and progress. Technology helps organize national student data, personalized student data, improvement plans, etc. in an easily understood or adaptable dashboard format. Easy access to this information enables the teacher, the student, the administrator, or other key stakeholders to better target the learning and development of each student.

Relationships

Relationships, quality relationships, round out the last "R" as they serve as the necessary foundation for optimal learning and growth. Theodore Roosevelt was known to have said, "people do not care what you know until they know that you care." When teachers commit to building positive relationships with their students, learning happens at its highest

levels. Building relationships takes time. Time is wasted when we hold firm to our traditional paradigms about education and the classroom in general. Effective use of classroom technology can free up the needed time and space to enable us to build and sustain quality relationships. When teachers meet their students "where they are" and adapt their own communication and engagement styles to that of their students, they are better prepared to build and sustain healthy and encouraging relationships. In 21st century learning, this incorporates changes to our communication methods. To that end, technological innovation is once again imperative. Our students have grown up with Facetime, online chat, and texting; we must continue to compromise our own desires regarding how we communicate and adapt to that of our students.

In summary, I believe the present imperative in education calls for a change in our practices and mindsets. It is time for the education system to better equip and empower our teachers and students so that we may collaboratively create new experiences to develop a future generation of strong thinkers and doers. I trust rigor, relevance, resourcefulness, re-iteration, responsiveness and a commitment to relationships will result in 21st century learning and success for our students and our communities.

The Case for Sole Proprietorship

By Heather Kinzie

I learned a long time ago that in order to move forward in a positive manner, we must take responsibility for our own shortcomings.

Nowhere in my entire career is this belief accentuated than in my years as a Sole Proprietor. The following narrative offers some insight into my work as an entrepreneur and hopefully, will serve to encourage you or otherwise give you some ideas about moving towards success and improvement.

Focus isn't always a good thing

When I hung out my shingle, I had ten years of experience in my field and I had specialized in a few key areas. Therefore, I offered concentrated services reflective of my expertise as to “stick to my niche.” However, within a few years, I found my work didn’t take too much extra mental energy or thought. In reality, my “focus” had become an excuse for complacency. This posed a significant quandary as my clients were maturing and needed me to help them identify and solve systematic problems affecting the success of their growing business. I needed to accept the responsibility for my shortcoming and develop a broader knowledge of business in general. I found a few mentors in different fields, I joined professional organizations in industries other than my own, and I read. I read a lot – blogs, business journals, white papers – I read, read and read!

Sole proprietors find it difficult to expand

Scalability or “physical capacity” quickly became an issue as I could not serve clients who needed “more than just me.”



This figurative and literal shortcoming required me to change my mindset and let go of what many sole proprietors hold so dear: *turf and territory*. Instead, I strived for affiliation and/or alignment with others. At the time, I was mentoring quite a few emerging professionals. In a leap of faith, I “trained” a few of them to be consultants themselves. Some would argue I trained my competition and while there is some truth to

This figurative and literal “shortcoming” required me to change my mindset and let go of what many sole proprietors hold so dear: *turf and territory*.

that, my investment resulted in a team of contractors “at the ready” to increase my physical capacity. As an added bonus, many of these new contractors developed expertise and found their passion in disciplines I had failed to sustain or develop. In addition, I collaborated with other consultants who chose expansion over turf. All of this enabled my small business to increase its services. As a bonus, I then had the headroom I needed to maneuver and develop a broader set of competencies for myself such as project management, organizational design and continuous improvement philosophies.

Freedom isn't free

Sole proprietorship gave me the freedom to “do what I love.” I will presume many individuals hang out their shingle for this very reason. However, this freedom has a cost of “doing what I hate.” In my case, it was the financial work and because I despised it, I failed to make good accounting and bookkeeping a priority. This resulted in inefficient billing processes, terrible record keeping habits and processes, and painful and costly tax preparation. To solve this, I assessed my deficiencies, committed to change my habits and internal processes, and I outsourced my bookkeeping and taxes. This was, initially, very embarrassing and uncomfortable, and it was a costly expense that needed to be managed well.

Similar to my distaste in finance was my aversion to marketing and sales. While many assume and often joke about consultants being egotistical or prideful, the truth is many of us struggle with knowing our value. Subsequently, we find it taxing to pro-actively solicit a client, sell ourselves and/or price our services fairly. I was terrible at it and I struggled



with making the call and/or approaching people at networking events. Often, I found myself doing what I referred to as “unplanned pro-bono” because I was not confident about my price and value. I knew I needed to take responsibility for this shortcoming but I didn’t think I could simply wish confidence and pride into the equation. Therefore, I took a different approach. I enjoy volunteering and was offering my services to many of my favorite non-profits each year. I began, as a trade, to ask for some exposure to their Board of Directors. This simple “ask” often resulted in future work. I also began using my professional and personal networks to solicit referrals and/or introductions. While I had been hesitant to ask for this type of help, I quickly discovered my network was happy to make the connection. Finally, I interviewed my current clients about my services, the results or outcomes of such, the investment and return, etc. This helped me realize the value of my services, which helped me adjust my fees.

It’s easy to become irrelevant

Many sole proprietors quickly realize how much they miss the benefits of working in an organization such as sufficient office space and equipment, IT support and team camaradery. However, not being a part of the business operations poses another problem that goes beyond missing our employees. I believe many lone rangers lose touch with how the work is, can be or should be conducted; we become ignorant about the emerging technological advances while we comfortably advise from our favorite coffee shops. Whether it be advances in data management, automated or robotic processes or virtual solutions, we often miss it and, as such, we diminish our advice and counsel. For me, it was the speedy advance of collaborative technology. I found my knowledge to be as obsolete as the land line in my home office. I was unable to help my clients imagine how to better communicate, how to work efficiently when people were remote, how to effectively train

a dispersed workforce or how to better engage a group during meetings and events. My ignorance of “how” collaborative technology better enables these things decreased my overall value to my client. To solve this problem, I went back to work part-time for a company who designed, sold, installed and serviced collaborative technology. While this was a significant investment of my time and resources, it was the only way I could take responsibility for my shortcoming. It was humbling to find myself in learning mode after all of these years but the return was worth the investment and I am now equipped to advise and offer appropriate and forward thinking technological solutions to my clients.

In summary,

- Focus isn’t always a good thing.
- Sole proprietors find it difficult to expand.
- Freedom isn’t free.
- It’s easy to become irrelevant.

Those don’t exactly make the case for sole proprietorship, do they? However, here’s the reality: **Sole proprietorship epitomizes accountability, adaptation, flexibility, growth and courage.**

If that is not taking responsibility for our shortcomings, I don’t know what it is.



Heather Kinzie
Director of Consulting Services,
The STRIVE Group

2017 and the New Reality of Digital Marketing

By Lee Leschper

This month, the United States swore in its first acknowledged Twitter President.

Whether you celebrate or commiserate, the election of Donald Trump continued to change the digital landscape and strategy, and communication in general. Barack Obama first ushered in digital to modern presidential politics, harnessing social media posts to attract and connect with millions of first-time voters. And it worked.

What President Obama first proved, and then institutionalized, was that new media makes it possible to reach and generate a call to action for vast numbers of Americans who may not rely on traditional media, but who do care and vote. In his 2012 victory over Mitt Romney, Obama had 20-fold the number of Twitter followers of the Republican challenger. In 2016, Trump flipped that equation, building a vastly larger Twitter following than Hillary Clinton.

It's a 140-character reality that new social media tools work with fragments of fact and imagery, not the long form text and depth and detail that we used to receive. To quote an old saying, we're living in a media landscape that is a mile wide and an inch deep. It's also revealing how little impact endorsements from most of the nation's daily newspapers had on the election.

What does this mean for your business or organization for 2017? First, it reinforces that more than ever, you can rely on tools other than the traditional media to target and talk directly to your customers, audience or stakeholders. This applies whether you are building market share for a new product, wooing customers away from your strongest competitor or advocating for social change.

Second, you need to take stock of the message you are using to tell your story. If it cannot or is not being told in simple, direct, compelling and engaging terms, the message is likely getting lost. It is not that your potential customers don't care; it's just that their attention is being grabbed away by others.

Third, you need a laser focus on your core audience (aka, customers). You neither need nor want every person to engage and join; rather, you just want and need the ones who will become customers. At least 80 percent of your business is coming from less than 20 percent of your customers, and those customers are a small fraction of the universe of the potential customers before you.

Fourth, you need to review if the platforms you choose are delivering to your targets most efficiently. Likely, you need a mix of social, digital display, email, retargeting and video. For most new digital/social practitioners, Facebook has been the entry point, because among other things, it is easy and habit-forming. For most of us, *easy* trumps (pardon the pun) *great* every time. If you have not checked your Facebook or Twitter feed at least once in the past hour, you are in the minority. But even the most casual Facebook user has noticed a very clear change: Facebook does not work like it used to. Why? Facebook has rewritten the book on how to build an audience and it is no longer free.

Facebook did not set out to be the number one source for news for most Americans, and yet that is exactly what happened, which has rewritten the definition of what is "news." A recent survey found that the clear majority of those who get their news from their Facebook feed takes most or all posts as gospel, regardless of the source. Few newspaper readers would expect that any random thought, rant or cat photo would or should automatically appear on the front page of their local newspaper. And yet that is what Facebook users think they are getting on their Facebook feed – "news."

The reality is that what you see, and what others see, is driven by what you pay for the audience. Make no mistake, to be seen on Facebook you will have to pay and at a price that



TWEET

might surprise you. Compared to other targeted digital media, a “reach” to a Facebook audience is not cheap, or even close to the market rate for similar audiences.

Let’s get back to your 2017 digital marketing plans.

Start with an old-fashioned review of your goals. In the words of Steven Covey, “Begin with the end in mind.” Be specific. For example, if one of your 2017 goals is to “generate more sales,” I suggest that is too broad. Instead, perhaps the real goal is “to increase the market share among young families purchasing your service in Anchorage.” This specified goal helps identify a range of platforms that can work together to help you reach and engage these potential customers. For instance, targeting young families starts with young mothers, and online video is becoming increasingly important in reaching women of all ages. Online video in general, and YouTube specifically, have become a leading search tool. You can turn video into another member of your sales force by creating YouTube and Instagram channels devoted to your company products. With video messaging, your options are limited only by your imagination and creativity.

...Your ability to target your audience is only limited by your knowledge of their interests and what moves them to action...

Keep in mind, it needs to be meaningful content to keep viewers engaged; you need to know what will move them to action. Hence the need to cast a critical eye at your message exists. In the same fashion, your ability to target your audience is only limited by your knowledge of their interests and what moves them to action, be it price or value or the need you can fulfill.

What does this have to do with Twitter?

As our past and future presidents have proven, Twitter

allows you to talk directly to and with your most loyal fans. Your tweets can, for example, begin with the goal of attracting these customers back to your website and ultimately your product. So, instead of tweeting (or posting) a blatant sales piece, think about ways you would demo that product in person—testimonials, success stories, benefits and how to access. Then, make these things “shareable” so your current fans and followers can pass them along to their friends and networks. That is the ultimate social testimonial.

Specify your goal, identify your target audience, clarify your message and then deliver it wisely.

Today’s digital tools also give you the opportunity to monitor results in real-time. You now have immediate access to information regarding who sees your message, where they saw it, what kind of device they used, how they responded to the message. You should be actively using real time data to learn what works best. At a minimum, this means running multiple campaigns or themes to confirm what gives you the best return on your investment, and then shifting budget to those which deliver the best outcomes.

Is this time consuming? Yes.

Is this complex? Yes.

But so is losing.

Circling back to the impact of social media in recent presidential elections, this is exactly what the successful candidates have done; they identified the “customers” they needed, targeted them with messages that brought them to action, adjusted messaging based on what moved those customers to action and then garnered the results. Time will tell how the results play out in Washington.

How about your 2017 campaign?



Lee Leschper
Owner,
Fireweed
Strategies LLC

Social Entrepreneurship

Parks for All Strives to Create More Inclusive Communities for All Children

By Leah Boltz

Since you're reading a magazine called STRIVE, you have a bit of an entrepreneurial, innovative spirit. You are an idea person and a leader. You strive to bring value to the world, a voice to the table and action to that voice. You are a pioneer. Whether you are an Alaskan or reside elsewhere, you share our pioneering gene, a "North to the Future" attitude and an adventurous mind.

As Alaskans, our desire to live in the world's biggest and most scenic playground leads us to create organizations with this same pioneering, resilient character. Alaskans also quickly grow impatient if we have to wait for others to do for us what we think is right and good for our state. In business and in play, we strike out into the wild, forge a path, conquer the next big peak, create change and take action.

Innovation here in Alaska is not only limited to technology and business. Social innovation is part of our community fabric, and we take care of our own. According to a report by University of Alaska Anchorage's Institute of Social and Economic Research and The Foraker Group, Alaska has more than 7,000 nonprofits. This sector is critical to our state, and organizations such as the Rasmuson Foundation are looked to as state leaders. This 60-year-old foundation was created by a family of banking-industry entrepreneurs and invests millions of dollars each year into causes and projects intended to build our communities for the future.

Alaskans like these are known as social entrepreneurs, and there is a glacier-sized need for more like them in every place (hint, hint).

Social entrepreneurship is not a new idea. Simply defined,

a social entrepreneur is someone who identifies a social problem, injustice or opportunity to improve a community's outcomes through social change, and employs their resources to create a better world.

"Entrepreneurs have in their heads the vision of how society will be different when their idea is at work, and they can't stop until that idea is not only at work in one place, but is at work across the whole society...entrepreneurs are not happy with the status quo..."

—Bill Drayton

It is with this same spirit that **Parks for All** was created.

In 2007, my daughter Anna was born with spina bifida, a birth defect that left her paralyzed below the waist. Using a walker, wheelchair or canes to get around, Anna has learned to thrive in her environment. But one day, she came home from summer camp with a story that changed our lives. She gloomily recounted that her teachers made her sit on the sidelines while her friends played on the playground. Thinking she had gotten into trouble and was being punished, I asked why. She said, "They said I couldn't play because I was in a wheelchair."

The Alaska pioneer and mother bear in me never wanted my child or anyone else's child to hear these words again. Furthermore, I knew if I wanted to change Anna's experience, I would have to act. In 2009, I joined with a group of fellow mom-trepreneurs who also had children with special needs and we formed **Parks for All**, so ALL Alaskans of all abilities and ages would have places to play, develop, build relationships and become the leaders of tomorrow.

For **Parks for All**, there have been five key elements to achieving our mission through social entrepreneurship:

1. **A prompt.** Humans don't innovate unless prompted. Biologically, we adapt when nature demands it. Most often that prompt comes in the form of a constant, nagging prob-



PARKS FOR ALL



Cuddy Family Midtown Park Play for All Playground ribbon cutting on Ted Stevens Day 2013. This playground was Alaska's first fully accessible Boundless Playground for Alaskans of all abilities.

lem, or an event or injustice so dramatic that we are forced to change our perspectives on the world and adapt accordingly. I never thought about inclusivity or access until I HAD TO, until my daughter's birth defect forced me to instantly change my viewpoint, my interaction with the world and my actions. I had to think about access every day. I saw this new challenge as an opportunity rather than a burden and used my new viewpoint to create more play for more people. **My daughter was my prompt. What will yours be?**

2. Initiative. When I left my last job, a co-worker gave me a silver cuff that says, "Decide your own Destiny." I wear it each time we cut the ribbon on a new inclusive playground and live by its mantra daily. I often hear writers and speakers tell their audiences they need passion to change the world. But passion without an urgent prompt and some action behind it is simply a strong feeling. Entrepreneurs of any kind only succeed when their passion becomes a decision coupled with an action. (We don't wait politely for permission very well either.)

3. Positivity. Positivity is more than believing in yourself (although Stuart Smalley-style pep talks sometimes help!). Truly positive people and successful entrepreneurs turn every challenge and every decision point into an opportunity to further their vision. **Parks for All** started because of three children with medical challenges. Today, those challenges are a platform for creating inclusive communities for all children.

4. Connection. As entrepreneurs, business or social, most of us start with very little. At the time, we were a grass-roots group of three mothers with toddlers and our resources were zero. **Parks for All** only exists, even now, by creatively

connecting the dots between people and their passions and putting the resources of each connection to work for the greater good. Since inception, this group has joined with the Municipality of Anchorage Parks & Recreation, Anchorage Park Foundation, the Alaska State Legislature, numerous local and national business partners and non-profits, media outlets, individual supporters, local governments and Anchorage voters to support inclusive play and development. Find this growing list of **Parks for All** champions at www.facebook.com/parksforall/about.

5. Tenacity. Seth Godin writes, "Tenacity is not the same as persistence. Persistence is doing something again and again until it works. It sounds like 'pestering' for a reason.





Tenacity is using new data to make new decisions to find new pathways to find new ways to achieve a goal when the old ways didn't work. Telemarketers are persistent. Nike is tenacious."

In business or in your community, if you want to see something new, you have to commit to your cause, be innovative and adaptive and see it through to the end. In 2013, there was a "ribbon cutting" at the Cuddy Family Midtown Park's "Play for All" playground. This was Anchorage's first fully inclusive Boundless Playground. Senator Lisa Murkowski addressed the crowd of supporters, referring to *Parks for All's* founders as "tenacious moms." Three years later, and after almost seven years of championing inclusive play, I take pride in that label. It has led us to the funding and construction of 12 inclusive playgrounds, national speaking engagements and partnerships, and a strategic plan for "inclusive play," a project Anchorage is pioneering ahead of cities nationwide.



Leah Boltz
Co-founder,
Parks for All

Parks for All's goal is to continue growing its influence locally and globally, working with sister organizations and empowering other organizations to change the playscape. By partnering to bring inclusive play to community facilities, private developments and learning environments, *Parks for All* strives to create a more inclusive world for children of all abilities.

Bill Drayton, of Ashoka, an organization he founded in 1978 to support social entrepreneurs, says, "Entrepreneurs have in their heads the vision of how society will be different when their idea is at work, and they can't stop until that idea is not only at work in one place, but is at work across the whole society...entrepreneurs are not happy with the status quo..."



Since inception, this group has joined with the Municipality of Anchorage Parks & Recreation, Anchorage Park Foundation, the Alaska State Legislature, numerous local and national business partners and non-profits, media outlets, individual supporters, local governments and Anchorage voters to support inclusive play and development. Find this growing list of Parks for All champions at www.facebook.com/parks-forall/about.

Join the movement:

- Follow and Share *Parks for All* on Facebook.
- Volunteer to bring play to more people of all ages and all abilities globally.
- Email Leah at akparksforall@gmail.com to sign up or get your own project started in your community.
- Donate to Anchorage's inclusive playgrounds at <http://anchorageparkfoundation.org/programs/parks-for-all-2/>
- Attend the 2nd annual Inclusive Play Symposium in Anchorage, May 5, 2017. Watch Facebook for details.

GO PLAY!



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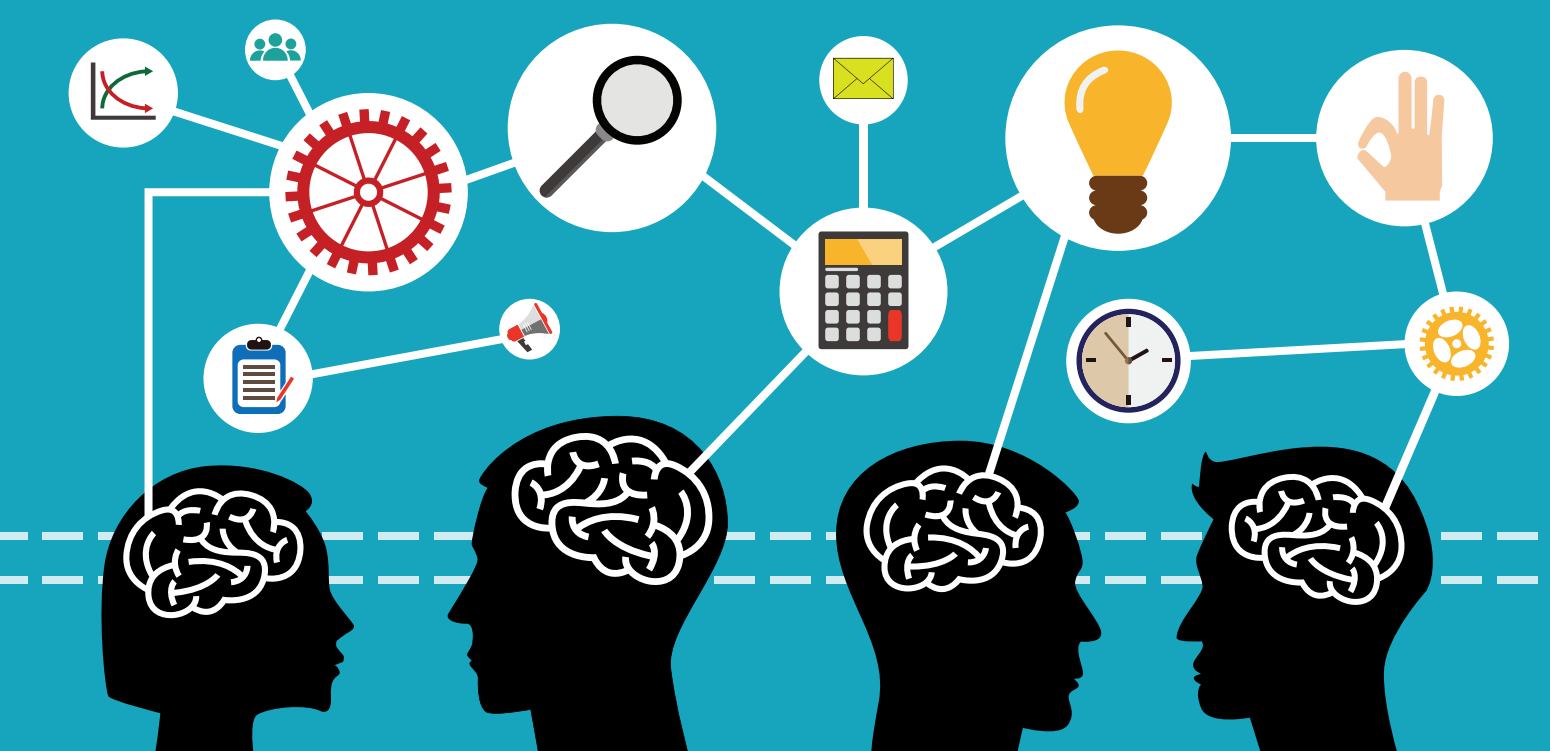
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Job Shadowing

By Broc Edwards

Business success relies upon people.

- *Who wants your employees to know more?*
- *Who wants your people to better use the knowledge they already have?*
- *Who wants those working for you to perform better?*

If I had 100 successful business leaders in a room and asked them the above questions, I bet their answers would all be a resounding, “I do!”

Moreover, how many of those same leaders would quickly agree that improving the performance of their people and, therefore, the organization, is one of their top priorities? How

many would say their success hinges largely on the ability of their employees to perform, innovate, and adapt?

Silly question, right? Of course they would all agree.

But I have another question for you: how many of those same leaders eagerly train and develop their employees?

The answer, unfortunately, is disconcerting. The same leaders who want higher performing employees often quickly declare they don’t have the time, money, or resources for professional development.

Abraham Lincoln is credited with saying if he had six hours to chop down a tree, he’d spend the first four hours sharpening his ax. To that end, when leaders don’t invest in employee development but expect higher performance, it is like expecting employees to chop down more trees with a dull ax.

Every business has more priorities than it has time, energy, or money and, because of this, training often gets set aside for other priorities. However, I know of an organization who got creative, who thought “out of the box” and, to their distinct pleasure, saw some incredible results.

As a regional bank with 400 employees in over 20 locations spread across a fairly significant distance, it needed to develop its workforce, reduce silos, and improve communications and processes. That is a lot to ask of any organization and would seem overwhelming to most. However, the bank’s solution was a simple job shadowing program.



The job shadow program was voluntary and consisted of the following assumptions and elements:

- Employees who committed were expected to visit three to six different departments or functional areas each year. The objectives for each visit were to learn how those employees went about doing their work, how the work added value to the company or customers, what challenges needed to be overcome, etc.
- Each department was expected to host up to six job shadowers per year.
- Job shadowing sessions lasted for one to three hours, depending on scope and complexity of the department or functional area.
- This was not about learning HOW to do the work; it wasn't supposed to be "cross-training." Instead, it was about understanding the work, understanding how their own roles fit in the process, and understanding the people and behaviors that either added value or distracted from it.
- Each job shadower was expected to return to his/her own departments/programs and share what he/she learned.
- Each job shadower completed a questionnaire at the end of each session.

This questionnaire asked what the shadower learned, how he/she could use it in his/her own area, and if he/she had suggestions for improvements.

Now, you may think that shadowing just a few other areas over the course of a year is not significant, but there was a reason for this! The small number, combined with the short amount of time spent in each area was important; It kept things focused, didn't distract from daily work in the department, and didn't overwhelm the shadowers. At the end of one year, employees participating in this program spent less than 15 hours for the year but learned an incredible amount!

The same leaders who want higher performing employees often quickly declare they don't have the time, money, or resources for professional development.

The questionnaire referenced above was incredibly valuable. It forced the individuals to be active participants in organizational improvement. The questionnaire encouraged them to think about how to apply what they had learned, and to speak up about things they thought could be improved. Not every opinion was considered "golden" but with enough



people shadowing different departments and offering their opinions, several improvement opportunities surfaced. Redundant work was eliminated, equipment was upgraded, technology and automation was identified, and processes were streamlined.

All participating individuals benefited from developing business relationships, gaining appreciation and understanding about different departments, and seeing the "big picture view" of how the organization worked. This also improved communication across departments, opened career paths, and helped employees understand processes better, especially those up and down-stream from their own work. Finally, the organization benefited from fresh ideas and improved processes.

Human Resources set up the framework for the job shadow program but the content, length of a session, and the number of shadowers hosted each year was completely up to the participating departments. To reduce anyone being overwhelmed, different departments were highlighted each year.

As we all know, business success relies upon the people doing the work. Professional development can be expensive and time consuming but sometimes, a little bit of creativity and innovation produce benefits that greatly warrant the costs.

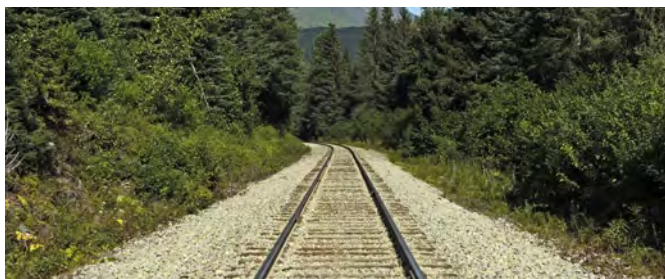


Broc Edwards
*Director of
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New Frontiers

Alaska Innovators are making a difference and inventing a new world

Throughout Alaska creative leaders, organizations and inventors are finding new and innovative ways to solve new and old problems. This is a quick look at some of the ideas and projects that are making a difference now, and for the future, in Alaska. This is not a complete or comprehensive list, but reflects the ingenuity and resourcefulness of Alaskans.



Alaska Railroad Testing New Option for Shipping Alaska LNG

This fall, the Alaska Railroad is the first U.S. railway to test shipping liquefied natural gas by train. The Alaska Railroad will be running a pair of liquefied natural gas containers this month as part of a demonstration project to determine whether rail could be a low-cost way of getting natural gas from Southcentral Alaska to Fairbanks.

It'll be the first time in the United States that liquefied natural gas has been moved by rail. In October 2015, the Alaska Railroad won approval from the Federal Railroad Association to begin hauling LNG.

"We're really proud to be the first railroad in the country to be permitted to be able to do this," said Tim Sullivan, the spokesman for the railroad. "While it's done in other places of the world like Japan and Europe, moving LNG by rail is not done in the United States."

The 40-foot containers in the test, which are insulated and reinforced to carry more than 7,000 gallons of LNG at 260 degrees below zero, are on loan from manufacturer Hitachi. The test will determine if rail is a cheaper, safer alternative to trucking.

Currently, LNG is delivered to Fairbanks from a processing facility at Point MacKenzie by truck. The rail cars can be

carried via rail, flatbed truck or barge. "We want to feel out the efficiencies and logistics of what it is to move LNG specifically from Southcentral Alaska to Interior Alaska for the folks in Fairbanks," Sullivan said. "We hope that eventually leads into being part of the solution to natural gas growth in Fairbanks, so there is not a concern about supply."



Municipality Launches #ANCWorks! to Answer Citizen Questions

The Municipality of Anchorage launched #ANCWorks!, an online tool for residents to report neighborhood problems and issues. On the Municipality of Anchorage web site, #ANCWorks! provides an online, mobile-friendly platform for residents to report an issue, from potholes to a burnt-out streetlight, as well as track progress to a resolution.

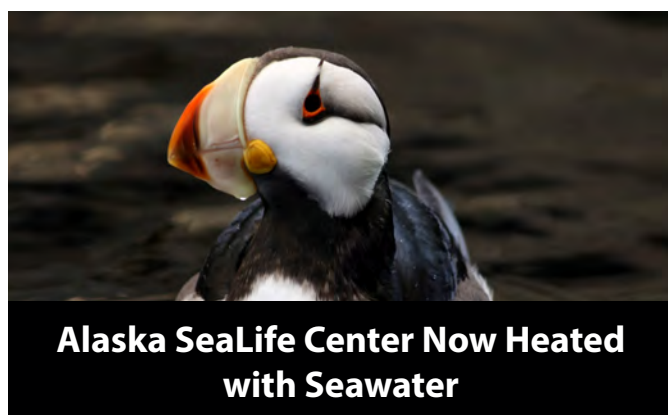
"Reporting a problem should be as easy as taking a picture and sending a text. #ANCWorks! gives residents an easier and better way to build our city," said Mayor Ethan Berkowitz.

Users can visit www.muni.org/ancworks from their desktop, tablet, or mobile phone to fill out a short form to report a problem, pass on a compliment, or express a concern to the Municipality. With one extra click, #ANCWorks! also allows users to attach files and photos to their request. Every request

receives a case number, allowing users to track the progress of their issue at any time online.

The tool is one product of the city's new tech czar, Brendan Babb, hired as MOA's new Chief Innovation Officer to expand Anchorage's open data initiative. "Mayor Berkowitz's administration is interested in being as transparent as possible and sharing the data that's created by taxpayer dollars and doing it in a way they can easily access it," Babb said.

One tool allows people to text "bus" to 312-2060 to check if their bus is on time. Another tool lets people find out if they qualify for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Woman, Infants and Children benefits. They can do that by texting "food" or "child" to 312-2300.



Since 2011, Seward's Alaska Sealife Center has been striving to heat their facility an innovative way.

Previously, the size of the center required several electric and oil-fired boilers to heat the buildings, so the center decided to take advantage of a resource right outside its doors. By building a heat pump system that uses energy from the sea water in Resurrection Bay, the Alaska Sealife Center (ASLC) has cut down on its reliance on fossil fuels and saved considerable money.

The heat pump system was initially effective enough to cover hot water heating and radiant floor heating, but the ASLC still relied on the boilers for baseboard heating. Since December 2015, the new systems meets 98 percent of the ASLC's heating needs through renewable energy, and has eliminated the use of most of the boilers.

Resurrection Bay is more than 900 feet deep. Through the summer, the water in the bay absorbs solar heat and below the surface remains warmer than the air temperature through winter.

With the new system, seawater from Resurrection Bay is pumped through a heat exchanger, which warms a water and glycol mix. When liquid refrigerant contacts the warmish wa-

ter, it evaporates, which pulls heat out of the water, changing from a liquid to a gas and then compressed to 2000 PSI, which raises its temperature to 194°. The hot, compressed gas then goes to a condenser, where it turns into a liquid, releasing all the heat that it had stored when it was turned into a vapor.

The SeaLife Center is saving \$15,000 a month in heating costs, a savings that can be redirected to its conservation and research programs. The new system will have a complete return on investment in only 13 years.



Despite the challenges, the Alaskan energy sector has excelled in establishing micro-grid: localized grids that can be disconnected from the traditional energy grid and that operate autonomously.

Alaska operates 12 percent of the world's microgrids. In the state, there are 200-250 permanently islanded microgrids ranging from 30 kW to over 100 MW in size. While most of them run on costly diesel fuel, more than seventy of these microgrids integrate some type of renewable energy. About half of that is wind energy, and the rest is comprised of small hydro projects, biomass, and solar. Communities that integrate renewable energy see increased cost savings.

Expensive, diesel-generated power currently constitutes 90 percent of rural communities' energy mix. Rural Alaskan utilities companies can pay up to four times more for fuel than those elsewhere in the state.

The University of Alaska Fairbanks Alaska Center for Energy & Power (ACEP) has established the Global Applications Program (GAP) to assess the global opportunities for trade surrounding the use of energy systems in islanded grids.

For more on Alaska microgrids, see the ACEP website at <http://acep.uaf.edu/>.



Continued on next page.



Energy Audit Aims to Cut Costs for Commercial Fishermen

A new energy audit among Sitka commercial fishermen may help them improve their energy efficiency and, ultimately their profits, by cutting energy costs. While many variables such as prices paid for their fish is beyond control, fishermen can find ways to spend less on fuel and electricity.

Engineer Mike Gaffney was brought from Virginia to Sitka to help with the Fishing Vessel Energy Efficiency Project, a joint effort by the Alaska Longline Fishermen's Association and the Alaska Fisheries Development Foundation, aimed at energy and cost savings.

The audit begins with measuring specific fuel and electricity usage on working commercial fishing boats. It looks, for example, at the return on investment of replacing older sodium lights with LEDs. It's the data, but also incredible insights that make the project unique.

Chandler Kemp is an engineer based in Sitka, compiling all of Gaffney's data and writing up reports for the 18 vessels that volunteered for the audit. Kemp says the end goal is an online tool for fishermen.

The tool, which Kemp expects will be released in 2017, will then generate ways to make the vessel more energy efficient, and for fishermen, that means more profitable.



UAF Innovation Competition Recognizes Alaska Ideas and Creators

The University of Alaska Fairbanks School of Management's annual Arctic Innovation Competition provides cash prizes and recognition for innovative ideas that can change

the world in Alaska and beyond. The competition was launched by Dr. Ping Lan in 2009.

The results are in for UAF's 8th annual Arctic Innovation Competition. Competitors pitched innovative and creative ideas to judges to win over \$28,000 in prizes.

Vincent Castro and Eric Solie won first place and \$10,000 with **Attently**, a cloud-based software service. **Attently** utilizes a video feed from a standard webcam or cellphone camera, calculating both the number of faces in view and the percentage of those faces which are actively paying attention in the direction of the camera.

Second place and \$5000 went to Shalane Frost for **The NoseHat**, a malleable nose and cheek cover for use during outdoor recreation in winter. It is ergonomically designed to fit any face shape or nose size, while allowing unobstructed breathing during vigorous activities like Nordic skiing. This idea also won the Main Division Fan Favorite Award.

Laura Oden, Celia Crossett & Ayla Rogers won Third place and \$2000 for **Footwear for Unique Feet**, shoes designed specifically for people with medical conditions that cause swollen feet. The shoes will expand on one foot, or on both feet, and the expansion is designed in unique areas to correspond with the true needs of this population. This idea also won the Alaska College Student Kicker award.

Fourth Place and \$1000 went to Justina Beagnyam for **RecycleMe Burial Wrap**. The burial wraps are a unique, ecologically beneficial product grown from microorganisms. This beautifully designed, 100% biodegradable material is capable of concealing odors and supporting accelerated decomposition.

Additional Kicker Prizes awarded include:

Arctic Kicker prize and \$2,000 went to David Brannan & Dawson Brannan for their Vertical Center Supports for Heavily Insulated Arctic Doors, which save businesses and organizations money on their heating bill by allowing thicker, more heavily insulated, and structurally sound doors to be installed in large buildings in Arctic regions.

Recycling Kicker prize and \$2,000 went to Harrison DeSanto, Andrew Ladd & Nathan Bauer for **Activate Alaska LLC**, which is a local project to manufacture activated carbon, derived from Alaska biomass for use in the growing markets of public, industrial, and consumer water filtration systems. To accomplish this, **Activate Alaska LLC** has developed processes and equipment that are patentable, and will produce activated carbon that can be competitively substituted for imported coconut-based activated carbon products.

For a complete list of winners, and information on entering future competitions, go to: <http://arcticinno.com/>.





Growing Food with Hydroponics Could Provide Lifeline in Arctic

A native corporation in Kotzebue and an innovative new Alaska company are using hydroponic farming to deliver fresh produce to communities above the Arctic Circle.

A subsidiary of Kikiktagruk Inupiat Corporation, **Arctic Greens**, is using hydroponics technology to grow produce inside an insulated, 40-foot shipping container equipped with glowing magenta LED lights. **Arctic Greens** is harvesting kale, various lettuces, basil and other greens weekly from the soil-free system and selling them at the supermarket in the community of nearly 3,300.

"We're learning," Will Anderson, president of the Native Kikiktagruk Inupiat Corp., said of the business launched last spring. "We're not a farming culture."

The venture is the first of its kind north of the Arctic Circle. The goal is to set up similar systems in partnerships with other rural communities far from Alaska's minimal road system, where vegetables are very expensive and seldom in good condition by the time they arrive at local stores. Indoor hydroponics, which uses water and nutrients to grow vertically stacked plants rooted in a binding material such as rock wool, can provide fresh produce year around.

Anchorage-based Vertical Harvest Hydroponics, which builds enclosed systems out of transformed shipping containers, partnered with Kikiktagruk. The 2-year-old company also sold the system to a farmer in the rural town of Dillingham.

Kotzebue, 26 miles north of the Arctic Circle, is the regional hub for northwest Alaska villages and is built on a 3-mile-long spit. Many there live a subsistence lifestyle. The biggest selling point of the hydroponics produce is freshness.

Alaska Commercial Co. (AC), which has stores in nearly three dozen remote communities, is carrying **Arctic Greens** in the Kotzebue store. This week, the Dillingham AC store is beginning to sell produce grown in the local farm's hydroponics system. The chain will bring the brand to more locations if expansion plans prove cost-effective, AC general manager Walter Pickett told The Associated Press.

Learn more at <http://verticalharvesthydroponics.com/>.



Juneau EDC Planning February Innovation Summit

The Juneau Economic Development Council (JEDC) is accepting speaker proposals for its 2017 Innovation Summit held Feb. 15-16, 2017 at Centennial Hall. This year's theme is the "capacity to innovate."

Two portions of the Innovation Summit are open for speakers from Juneau and beyond: Innovation Shorts and the Entrepreneur Pitch Contest. Interested industry experts, entrepreneurs, researchers, seasoned business owners and inventors can submit their proposal at www.JEDC.org/innovation.

The JEDC is looking for up to 30 presenters for its 10-minute Innovation Shorts.

The JEDC is also seeking five Alaska entrepreneurs/innovators for the Pitch Contest. Entrepreneurs will have five minutes to pitch their business concept in front of Summit attendees and seasoned business owners. Attendees will crowdfund a cash prize for the winner(s) to take home at the end of the session.

For more information contact Dana Herndon at dherndon@jedc.org.



If you have stories of Alaskans doing innovative things who deserve recognition, please share them with us at:
lee.leschper@fireweedstrategies.com
or info@thestrivegroup.com.

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