

STRIVE

JULY - 2017

Inspiration for
Innovation

Investing in Engagement

Erica Kemp

First Impressions Matter

Justin Mass

A Happenstance Innovator

Michael "Buzz" Buzinski

When Moving Forward is Risky

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Jeff Lowe

The Trouble with ERM

Erin Sedor

Kenny's Great Pies

Michael D. Haberman

Erica Kemp
Employee Education Manager
Credit Union 1



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**Do you think of yourself as a pioneer?
If you don't, you probably should.**

Traditionally, we have reserved the respected and revered "Pioneer" title for individuals who have demonstrated the initiative and courage necessary to overcome distance and personal hardship to brave unfamiliar lands. It is only recently we have begun to think of pioneers as exploring the boundaries of imagination, and even still, typically this honor is reserved for those working in technology and science. But is this limited view of what defines a pioneer accurate?

We can easily argue that Bill Gates and Steve Jobs were pioneers. They, and their like, opened new intellectual and social frontiers forever changing how we work and interact, laying before us infinite possibilities for the path forward. However, it will be you and I who help to define how those possibilities are realized. It was not the first individuals who moved to the West Coast who imagined California, it was those who followed that validated the vision of the new frontier and ultimately defined what would become California. So, while the major pioneering innovators made headlines, it was our collective imaginations that made the difference. We are the ones who implement and evaluate and, therefore, validate the idea. It is you and I, with our value judgments and our tenacity, who ultimately define how future generations will live, work and play.

In our cover story, "Investing in Engagement," Erica Kemp shares how a growing company, Credit Union 1, imagined, embraced and ultimately validated a new vision for employee engagement. The challenge that Credit Union 1's leadership faced is one common to many of today's businesses. How does a company embrace and engage a remote workforce? How can it reduce the perceived distance remote workers feel from their coworkers and company?

In 2005, Credit Union 1 implemented a new vision in conjunction with the construction of its new corporate headquarters. Through their endorsement and financial commitment, Credit Union 1's leadership imagined a new path forward further validating recent innovations in collaborative technologies.

With the goal set, it was now up to Erica and her team. Regardless of the innovative potential of the technology or the level of investment and support on the part of leadership, success would ultimately be defined by Erica and her team. Their approach to change management, process improvement and their innovative and creative mindset would serve to implement the company's vision; she and her team would not only define success but would define how they get there.

As Erica and her team discovered, an innovative and pioneering idea is no more than a virtual baton. It may start with an individual's imagination, but it must ultimately be passed forward and incorporated into the collective imagination of future pioneers. Any progress associated with the idea will ultimately be the result of the aggregated imagination, courage and tenacity of those who chose to actively endorse the idea and move beyond the status quo.

So, the next time you are faced with a challenge, stop for a moment and realize that it is imagination that overcomes obstacles and courage that embraces change. These are the traits that define a pioneer.

"Imagination is more important than knowledge. For knowledge is limited to all we now know and understand, while imagination embraces the entire world, and all there ever will be to know and understand."

—Albert Einstein

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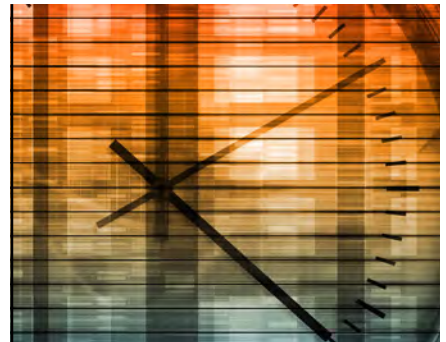
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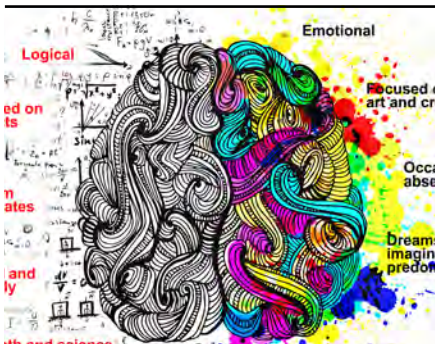


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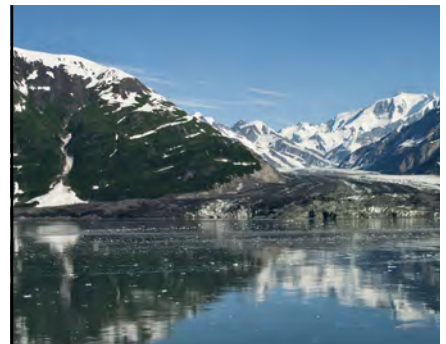


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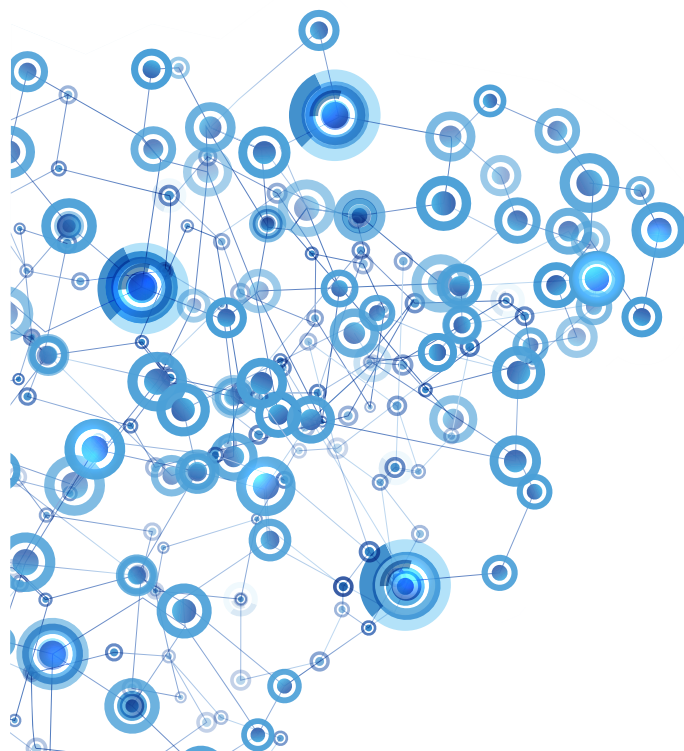
By Justin Mass

First impressions matter. But what follows a first impression, the repeating pattern that emerges, is where expectations are formed. Individuals, teams or organizations will, through their behaviors and actions, have an opportunity to show what they are made of, what they are committed to, or what they are capable of. First impressions, therefore, are either validated or disproved by what follows them.

One can assume an individual who has just accepted employment with an organization has formed a positive first impression of that organization. The company is then challenged with validating and sustaining that first impression. At Adobe, we know that the orientation experience can help define our standard of excellence and, ultimately, demonstrate how much we value the employee experience. As such, we sought to design an innovative and exceptional orientation experience – we call it **Adobe Life Orientation**.

Context

Adobe succeeds only if our workforce is intelligent, creative, digitally savvy and engaged. Naturally, we commit to hiring people with these talents, competencies and characteristics. These individuals have an appetite for rich experiences and often want to be engaged in ways that evoke their senses and emotions. Joining a global organization such as Adobe, they want to feel connected to other employees across the globe.



They also want to engage with their senior leaders to further validate that they've made the best career decision by joining us.

We believe it is important that new employee experiences are consistent across our global footprint to ensure a shared understanding of our core values, processes and guidelines. We want employees to assimilate the company's core values into their day-to-day work life, vocabulary, and interactions in a way that is meaningful to them within the context of their local office.

Adobe Life Orientation, our signature new employee experience, was created to combine the expectations of our new employees with the company's desire to deliver a consistent message and engage efficiently and effectively.

Digital solution for a digital enterprise

When thinking through the design constraints of an immersive, digital orientation experience, one of the most fundamental pieces was determining the right platform. We wanted a platform that could accommodate a multichannel approach to learning, interactivity and engagement, while also bridging personal connections all in a digital environment that reflected the innovative edge of the Adobe company and brand.

It was natural to leverage our own technology as a platform for **Adobe Life Orientation**. The decision to use Adobe Connect, our web conferencing, digital/virtual classroom, and collaboration platform, tells a powerful story. It provides firsthand experience for new employees on how we work together virtually across offices and time zones. It also is the same platform all employees use every day as they engage with their peers, partners, and customers, both internally and externally.

A digital-first design

For most of our new employees, their first impression and introduction to Adobe was through solutions they've used in the past. For example, collaborating on a PDF using Acrobat or developing rich digital media using Creative Cloud. In taking a digital approach to orient new employees to the company, we are introducing, or reintroducing, our new employees to the breadth of our solutions, brand, and global reach.

Orientation is delivered every week in North America and is designed to be timely and relevant. Reusing the digital environment each week gives our program scale and enables us to deliver a highly-repeatable, consistent experience. We also make updates to **Adobe Life Orientation**, evolving the content and experience over time. There is only ever one version of the program because we're designing and delivering learning in the cloud via Adobe Connect.

ONBOARDING

Adobe Life Orientation

We chose a two-host model for facilitating each two-hour session; this keeps the energy high and broadens the style of delivery. In addition, the duration provides new hires with multiple opportunities to engage with hosts. The conversations and multiple perspectives between our hosts and new hires bring this virtual experience to life.

We also embraced the modern consumer influence of social media in our design. We wanted **Adobe Life Orientation** to feel familiar, to be “easy to do,” and to embrace the familiar digital elements we encounter every day in social channels like Facebook. Ultimately, our program brings all these elements into the experience in a powerful, integrated way.

Building memorable experiences at scale

Each week, the **Adobe Life Orientation** hosts move through a sequenced presentation, complete with preloaded digital media including streaming videos to keep the experience engaging. This reusability translates into scale. The virtual classroom offers an ideal format to present core materials, such as an introduction to the company’s “check-in” performance framework, Adobe core values, and introductions to important processes and systems.

Reusing the same digital environment each week also means we can upload new or refreshed media quickly and easily, helping us ensure the orientation experience remains fresh over time.

Using an intuitive digital platform for **Adobe Life Orientation** also gives Adobe leaders an opportunity to prerecord videos to welcome and connect with new employees in a direct, meaningful way. This affords great reach vertically and horizontally throughout the company to further enrich the new employee experience with leadership perspectives that

reinforce our culture and values.

The design of **Adobe Life Orientation** digital environment is anchored to a multi-layout framework with a balance of dynamic pods; each layout serves as a “chapter” in the digital experience. On every layout, we have pods such as the host web-cam, a discussion pod for open questions, content sharing, attendance, and an “insights” pod, which is a unique space for new employees to synthesize and share their learning in real time throughout the experience.

Far from traditional

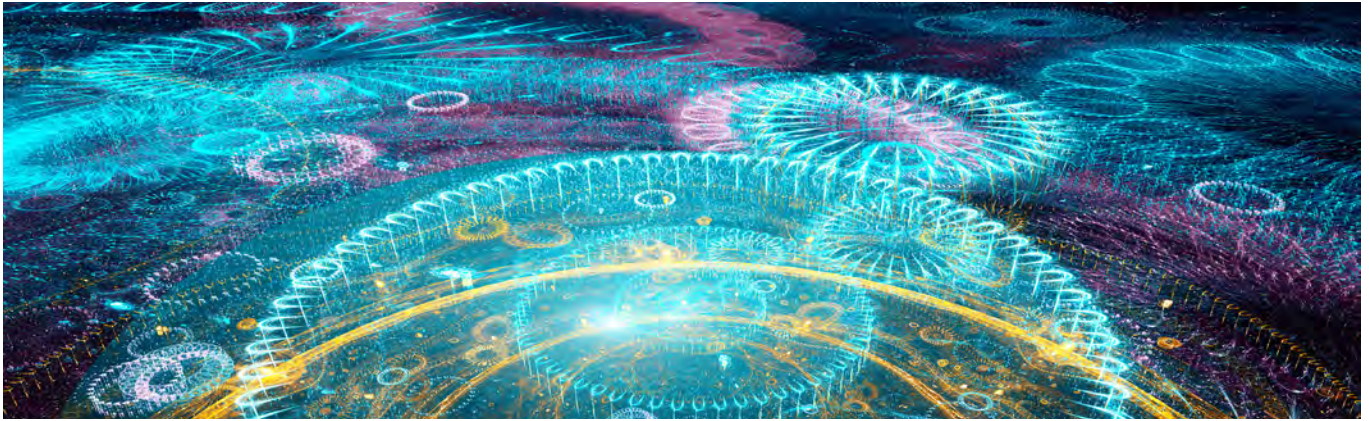
By adopting a flexible digital platform, **Adobe Life Orientation** takes advantage of every opportunity for interactivity, including dynamic word clouds, screen sharing, videos, discussion pods, and polls with real time results. This “elasticity” of the digital platform helps add visual appeal and keeps new employees engaged. It also enables hosts to improvise throughout sessions, tailoring the experience to the unique conversations that emerge each week.

We also can extend the design through application programming interfaces, which provides flexibility to develop new, innovative engagement tools and activities. For example, we developed a word cloud “app” for Adobe Connect that lets us ask new hires, “What word comes to mind when you think of

Adobe?” As they respond, repeated words grow within the word cloud in different sizes based on total number of shared responses. Colorful trends emerge, which results in a powerful visual memento for new employees.

Another feature that was developed is an anonymous chat app, where new employees can provide feedback to presenters or participate in discussions without attribution. We believe





this creates a safer environment for asking and responding to challenging or provocative questions.

With offices worldwide, our new employees require flexibility to work collaboratively from any location and on any device. It's important that we scaffold this flexibility with a platform that works on their preferred device without sacrificing the quality of the new employee experience. The Adobe Connect mobile app enables us to engage any employee with the same rich experience in a consistent, scalable way without compromise.

New employees respond

Another advantage of leveraging Adobe Connect as the digital platform to support **Adobe Life Orientation** is the resulting data, analytics and insights. We track engagement and measure employee sentiment both during the experience itself and with a follow-up survey to check in with new employees after they've settled in.

Throughout the experience, we see nearly all new hires actively participate by taking polls, responding to questions via the various chat pods, or engaging with the hosts or other new hires directly. When compared with even smaller face-to-face classroom sessions, participation in our digital experience is considerably higher through the multichannel options for communication and engagement.

And it's not just a spike in the quantity of interactions we observe, but also quality. According to 2017 **Adobe Life Orientation** surveys:

- 96% connected with the company's core values of being genuine, exceptional, innovative, and involved.
- 87% had a better understanding of the overall company strategy
- 83% cited the virtual onboarding experience as highly engaging
- 83% understood how our check-in performance framework will enable their success

Additionally, we're getting resoundingly positive qualitative feedback from new employees. Their perspective and insights validates our direction as we reimagine learning and talent development in richer, more immersive digital experiences.

Adopting a digital model for delivering **Adobe Life Orientation** has provided significant breakthroughs in creating meaningful, personal, development experiences for employees in a way that's uniquely Adobe. From their earliest days, we can validate first impressions and generate a level of excitement about Adobe and the tools we use every day, giving our new employees greater confidence to pursue collaborative, global success. Moreover, we're not just telling new employees what makes Adobe special, we are allowing them to experience it firsthand, having them co-author the employee experience itself.

[For more information, download the Adobe case study: media.thestrivegroup.com/adobe.pdf]



Justin is the head of digital learning at Adobe. His team is responsible for delivering a diverse and scalable ecosystem of digital learning experiences for Adobe employees worldwide including on-demand learning content, virtual classroom experiences and learning management platform technologies.

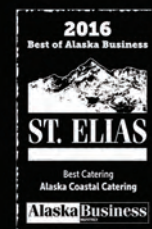
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Kenny's Great Pies—A Sweet Success

By Michael D. Haberman

Being an entrepreneur is all about passion and Kenny Burts is passionate about his company and his products!

Being an entrepreneur is also about being able to overcome adversity and Kenny has had plenty of that. Finally, being an entrepreneur is about being an optimist and Kenny has always been that.

Fascinating story

I first met Kenny Burts, the founder and CEO of Kenny's Great Pies (originally Key Lime, Inc.), in 1992, three years after the company was founded. Kenny and his father, Ransom Burts, the CFO, were making a presentation to a group of potential advisors at the local chamber of commerce. I liked him and I liked his product. The assistance that I thought I could provide him was something that all small business owners could use, typically much earlier than they realize. I could help him deal with human resources issues. He thought so too, and 25 years later I still provide him guidance on how to best manage and retain his workforce.

Kenny's story

Kenny was the manager of a bar in suburban Atlanta, but he had bigger aspirations than that. He was making key lime pies in his apartment from his grandmother's recipe. She had key lime trees on her property in south Florida and Kenny thought the taste was magical. He started taking the pies to the bar to let customers get a taste and one of the customers worked for growing restaurant chain. The customer told Kenny that the pie was so good the restaurant would buy what he made. Voilà, a business was born. Initially packing pies into his car to deliver to the chain, the word got out about how good they were and demand picked up.

The first big step was moving out of the apartment and into a 3000-square-foot commercial kitchen in a small industrial building in Smyrna, Georgia. Some of the challenges I worked on dealt with making sure they were compliant with all the necessary employment laws. Kenny was dedicated to

providing his employees a good living and, in return, they were dedicated to him. Discovering that some of his employees did not have the proper documentation to be working in the US, Kenny went through the effort to sponsor these workers. His efforts paid off in spades and earned him a loyal workforce.

As Kenny's Key Lime pies kept winning award after award for their quality and taste, the company kept growing. They needed more space, eventually taking over all 18,000 square feet of the building they were in. With the growth they were experiencing, 18,000 square feet was not enough, so they bought and renovated a 33,000-square-foot building, making it a state of the art food production facility. Kenny is very detail-oriented and he took painstaking steps to ensure that



the building was going to meet his needs, all the while making sure the company ran efficiently.

Challenges presented themselves along the way, as happens with all companies. Trying to hire a management team that had the same vision and same passion was, at times, difficult. Not every employee got excited about pies. To some it was just a job, but eventually a team was put together. Then, the economy took a tumble.

Recession

A recession and a high-end dessert product don't mix well. When money is in short supply, diners often forego dessert, or share, both of which reduce sales. Kenny and his team worked hard at trying to be creative so they could keep the doors open. They found other things they could do to keep sales up. They even made macaroni and cheese for a pizza chain to put on the children's menu. Thankfully, they were successful enough to keep the doors open and the workers employed. Then, personal adversity hit.

Personal challenges

Just as things looked like they would stabilize, Kenny found out he had a life-threatening disease. It required major surgery and down time for him, though Kenny doesn't really



Kenny Burts and a key lime tree, 1989, Miami-Coral Gables, FL.



know down time. After all this company was his creation. He had done a good enough job selecting his team, however, that they were able to fill in during his absence. Unfortunately during this time his father, the CFO of the company, passed away, leaving another void. During this time, the indomitable entrepreneurial spirit that Kenny had from the beginning kept burning strongly. The result: the company and Kenny overcame these setbacks.

Today

Today the company is the strongest it has ever been. In addition to the flagship products of key lime (which includes 9-inch pies, 10-inch pies, mini pies, and key lime filling) they now offer another five types of pies and a cake product. As an advisor to the company, I have tasted them all and they live up to the company catch phrase "A Slice of Paradise." Kenny's Great Pies continue to get recognized for excellence. State and city proclamations, as well as industry awards, bolster the pride the employees feel. Everybody loves to tell the story of Kenny Burts, but no one loves to tell his story more than Kenny himself.

Are there still challenges? Absolutely!

The day-to-day issues of employees, suppliers, finding new customers, discovering and creating new products drive this entrepreneur to excel. Through the adversity of illness and

economic downturn Kenny had one abiding mission, to keep the company successful. His attention to detail was important. That was applied to both the product and the employees. Kenny is careful in selecting employees and, in doing so, his employees have made it possible to weather the storms.



Five millionth pie presented to Kenny's father, Ransom Burts, on his 75th birthday.

Kenny has taught me several lessons that I think we can all learn from. These include:

- Believe in your product
- Believe in your employees (not always easy to do)
- Be caring and concerned about your employees and show it! Kenny has helped many employees through tough times.
- Believe in yourself. This is necessary to not only have the company survive but to survive life.

Kenny is rightfully proud of what he and his team have done. I am proud to call him friend and client.

If you are interested in learning more, visit Kenny's Great Pies website at <http://www.kennysusa.com/>.



With over 30 years of experience in dealing with the challenges of HR, Michael is co-founder of Omega HR Solutions. He speaks, writes and teaches on a number of HR issues, including laws and regulations. He also writes about "futurist" topics in order to prepare HR professionals for the next 5 to 10 years.

Michael D. Haberman
Founder
Omega HR Solutions, Inc.



Small Things, Big Results

By Heather Kinzie

We often think of business success as a result of something big, something significant or something widely innovative. While that may be true for many organizations, significant business success is often a result of well executed little things.

This paradox is highlighted in two different ways with small business: little things are often the biggest challenges. Likewise, little things, when executed well and consistently, lead to big rewards.



Cash Flow

Money issues are often at the top of the list of small business challenges. Whether it be too many bills, unexpected expenses or clients who are sluggish in paying, available cash is limited. Small business owners are typically reluctant to borrow so they end up going month-to-month, hoping that the tides will turn while increasing incremental debt. That monkey becomes a very large burden quickly. The following are some suggestions on how to better keep finances in check:

- Create a budget – it doesn't have to be complicated but it does need to be realistic. Then stick to it.
- Begin asking yourself, "do I really need this to get the work done or am I satisfying another, non-essential need?" For instance, is your desire to look good driving your decision to buy top of the line equipment?
- Align your business development or marketing expenses with an actual job or return. Just because the expense is a write-off doesn't mean it is a good expense.

- Have clear terms regarding payment for your products or services. Don't be afraid to assign late payment fees if necessary.
- Invest in software that allows for online invoices and has work flow processes to remind clients who are late in payment.
- Stay keenly aware of overhead and don't shy away from offsetting reasonable costs with reasonable fees.

Burnout

Even those of us who adore what we do get tired of doing it. Small business owners tend to "do it all" and do it "all the time." While we like to think ourselves perfectly capable, we are often wrong. Burnout causes disorganization, forgetfulness and frustration for all parties involved. Small business owners who aren't capable of seeing fatigue or burnout in themselves can often do more harm than good to their business.

Try the following to keep your energy and commitment optimized:

- **Strategic planning**
You can't do it all but if you take the time to lay out the next 6-12 months of business objectives, you can more easily see who should handle or manage the activities needed to meet your objectives.
- **Delegation**
It's foolish to do everything yourself and egotistical to think you're the best at everything. Furthermore, if you're doing everything, you don't have time to do the most important things. Identify business tasks that are better performed by others and delegate accordingly.





And engage in contract work, part-time work or even shared service environments when reasonable to do so.

- **Automate what can be automated**

Many small business owners fail to invest in critical infrastructure such as a client management system, project management software or financial platforms. Their life is consumed with doing things manually and maintaining countless spreadsheets. There's always an app for that so perhaps you could invest in hardware or software solutions early on to ensure your business is built on an efficient foundation.

- **Manage your energy, not your time**

It is imperative to be aware of your own body, bio-rhythms and alarms when it comes to your health and wellbeing. Organizing work around when your mind is best to do that work, allowing yourself a mental holiday or break during a long and arduous project and knowing when you've reached your limit will help you sustain the long hours.

- **Be realistic about time**

When you're doing it all, it takes more time. There is nothing to be gained by fooling yourself or those you care about and saying you'll be there in an hour when the reality is you're looking at three hours of work. Either obey the clock and walk away or schedule and prioritize the necessary time.

- **Network with others**

Burnout comes fast when you're isolated. Build upon your professional network and utilize their resources to alleviate some of the needs of your business.

- **Call uncle**

Small business owners have a hard time asking for help. We need to get over it. We are often the first to assist others and we need to learn that being on the receiving end is just as beneficial.

Having the Right Customers

When I first started my business years ago, I accepted all work I was capable of performing. The thought of turning

away a client didn't cross my mind.

Looking back, I can assure you it made my first few years a lot harder than they needed to be. I spent countless hours, many of them unpaid, performing billable work I should not have been doing. I was four years into my sole proprietorship when I fired my first client due to non-payment and a continued lack of trust. It was about six months later when I declined a project and referred it to a colleague because he was better at it than I would have been. Soon after that, I told a client I didn't want to do the work because I couldn't support the intent of why it needed to be done.

It took me nearly five years of lessons before I felt empowered to ensure my services were matched with the right customers. Learn from my mistakes and try the below suggestions:

- Analyze your current client base and segregate them into buckets:
 1. those you want to continue working with;
 2. those you will continue to work with but with stipulations; and
 3. those with which you don't mind if the relationship ends.
- Next, identify the reasons why clients are in the first bucket; these characteristics should describe your ideal customers.
- Then, brainstorm what businesses and organizations share those characteristics.
- Go after these ideal clients! Make a phone call, have coffee with them, connect via LinkedIn, or track them down at a community event. Tell them why they are the ideal client for you and, likewise, tell them why you may be the ideal vendor for them.
- Leave money on the table. The moment I realized the relationship wasn't ideal, I needed to walk away from it. I was walking away from revenue but strategically, it was a better move.
- Ask for referrals from your ideal clients. If they know what you're looking for and what value you can add, they will be the greatest ambassadors for your small business.





Staying Current and Relevant

Small business owners often forget to invest in their own expertise and leadership competencies. Whether they believe it's a burden, selfish or otherwise, they don't take the time to keep up on things. I believe if you engage in the following, you will have a better probability of staying relevant in your field and will be more capable of leading your team effectively:

- Schedule "meetings with myself." Use this time to research competitors, build your professional network and read industry publications, blogs or books.
- Volunteer or serve on Boards for both community and professional organizations.
- Position yourself as a speaker for industry events or write for publications or blogs. Journals and consortiums are always looking for content and I think you'll find that writing keeps your money where your mouth is.
- Attend professional development events. You're not perfect and trust me, there is always something to learn.

In conclusion, businesses large and small have the same core challenges but small businesses have less resources to address them. Therefore, the little things can quickly turn into daunting problems. But small businesses are nimble enough to tackle the big challenges with a series of small activities that can be executed immediately. Therefore, small business owners might just have a bigger chance for success.

Heather is a partner in The Strive Group and serves as COO. She not only manages collaborative project teams through Strive affiliates but serves on these teams as well. Her expertise in Human Resources, Organizational Development, Strategic Planning and Process Improvement lend themselves nicely to both large and small businesses. Heather develops and presents training courses, speaks nationally on topics regarding leadership and workforce and is an active contributor on a variety of business improvement blogs.



Heather Kinzie
Chief Operating Officer
The STRIVE Group





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A Happenstance Innovator

By Michael "Buzz" Buzinski

I have never considered myself an innovator. In fact, as a young musician, I frequently found myself one step behind the curve when it came to creating the next cool sound. During the formative years of my professional career, I was constantly told there are very few new ideas and more regurgitation and repackaging of old ones. So, my creative motif became one of making what already existed better. That was until what I wanted to make better didn't exist.

I began my journey to innovation in 2005 when I opened Buzzbizz Studios. It was a recording studio and marketing firm for working musicians. As a veteran musician, I wanted to make sure no new recording artist had to go through the terrors of what I experienced during my 15-year part-time career. Of course, it only took about one year to realize that making a living off starving musicians was a bad business proposition. So, I pivoted to what paid the bills throughout my musical career and focused the marketing of my media production services on small, locally owned businesses. The company is now 21 employees strong and known as Buzzbizz Creative.

In 2010 I decided to add Search Engine Optimization (SEO) to the list of services Buzzbizz Creative offered. SEO is the practice of optimizing websites in a manner that is favorable to search engines like Google in an effort to be listed on the first page for search terms profitable to one's particular product line or service. I adopted the service because there were no reliable and local options to refer my website development clients at the time. In 2010, SEO was still what many called Voodoo Magic and not necessarily understood by small companies. The basics philosophy was simple – the higher you rank the more traffic to your site sees from the search engine – but the execution at the time was spotty and expensive. My goal was to create a system that would create substantial results without an exorbitant cost to the business owner.

For the first four years, our process and outcomes were fine tuned to a point that we were actually performing ourselves out of a job once we obtained the target rankings for our clients. This was because that even with top listings in the most profitable keyword terms, clients were not getting more business. Basically, the clients didn't care that they were

number one in their target terms if they didn't see an increase in sales.

In 2014, I started to research what other SEO professionals were doing about this issue. Come to find out, many of those I interviewed said their job was to get rankings for clients' websites and to make sure their Google AdWords campaigns were getting clicks. It seemed to be common place to expect high client attrition because the clients couldn't see the value of their SEO efforts. They chalked it up to the ignorance of the entrepreneur and there wasn't enough time to educate each one on the value of SEO. I chalked it up to internet geeks not understanding the marketing aspect of what they did for clients.

On the flipside, I interviewed social media experts to see how they worked with SEO professionals to create synergy in the digital marketing realm. To my surprise, not one company or freelancer I spoke to had collaborated with an SEO firm to further the digital marketing efforts of their mutual clients. It seemed that the techy and creative elements in digital marketing were siloed.

During the same timeframe, Google started to incrementally unveil what I now recognize as the "engagement initiative." Google's focus became more and more about how visitors interacted with websites after they clicked through than merely just getting the click through from the search en-

gine. At the same time, social media platforms like Facebook and YouTube were starting to become recognized as search engines themselves. Google, Yahoo, and Bing were starting to give weight to this and I started to believe that the success of social media campaigns was becoming intertwined with the strength of SEO initiatives. This realization drove me to create

my innovation, Digital Engagement Optimization.

Digital Engagement Optimization (DEO) symbolizes the refocusing of digital marketing efforts to not only integrate social media marketing with SEO efforts, but to also take SEO one step further by focusing specifically on visitor interaction with each

website. I knew people already did this, but mostly with very large websites that had significantly more traffic than the local business websites we dealt with on a regular basis and usually not specifically tied to their search engine ranking. I created a four-pronged approach that allowed the digital marketers and SEO specialists flexibility to focus on what would be most profitable for the client at any given time.

The challenge of this innovation was to orchestrate a scalable process that allowed both techies and creatives to successfully work together on the same campaigns. After several iterations of team composition and systematic strategies in both execution and measuring success, we created a brand new digital marketing platform that predictably outperformed

any other product on the market. Comparing 40 case studies in 2016, we garnered 100% success in three key performance metrics and increased client retention past one year from 50% to 85%. With a 92% of our clients confirming that they saw sales growth from our DEO efforts, I knew my innovation had come to fruition.

One case study was a commercial laundry equipment company. It is a locally owned firm who did business the old-fashioned way, face to face. The founders were starting to get pressure from competitors from in the northwest. They realized that their core clientele was starting to research more on their own via the internet rather than coming to

I used to think innovative ideas needed to be world changing, and I mean global. But with the creation of DEO, I have found that innovation can be local, changing the way one person sees the world around them. I also used to think that the process was linear. With my continued quest to take my process national, I have come to understand that innovation is a never-ending journey.



them for advice. It was time for them to fully embrace the 21st century and get on board with digital marketing.

We started to work with this company in the early stages of implementing the DEO platform. As early adopters, their management was very helpful in letting us know what was important to them—sales. Growth was slow, but steady, and within a few years we were able to outperform their largest national competition in AdWords campaigns and search engine rankings.

With the increased traffic, we were able to also increase how many people were contacting them after visiting the site (conversion rate). In the last half of 2016, they reported that \$500,000 of their sales could be directly contributed to our DEO efforts. This equated to roughly a 2,700% return on investment. Needless to say, they are raving fans.

The success of DEO came from many years of tenacious dedication and reluctance to accept the status quo. Even after winning the Visionary Marketer of the Year Award from the American Marketing Association for my innovation, I wasn't satisfied. I felt to be truly successful, DEO needed to prove itself both at a national level and at scale. These two goals started the second phase of the innovation process – being more innovative.

Phase two of DEO, or DEO 2.0, would need to answer two questions. First, how do we make the websites of small businesses with limited resources competitive on a national or even global scale? Secondly, how do I scale this

human resource heavy process to a point where it will be competitive with national digital marketing programs? The first question has since been answered and has proven itself multiple times over. The latter is a continuing challenge, one that pushes more innovation to the product and makes it even better for current clients.

I used to think innovative ideas needed to be world changing, and I mean global. But with the creation of DEO, I have found that innovation can be local, changing the way one person sees

the world around them. I also used to think that the process was linear. With my continued quest to take my process national, I have come to understand that innovation is a never-ending journey.

Today, I see the world around me differently. I have confidence that I can impart change in my industry even though I own a small creative agency in the fifth least populated state in the union. It comes down to perspective and commitment to never accepting the status quo. I don't know what the next 15 to 20 years will bring to my career as an entrepreneur. I do know it will be much more significant as a happenstance innovator than it would have been if I had simply followed the lead of others. Therefore, my challenge to you is this: use your intuition, use your expertise and don't be afraid to create something new.



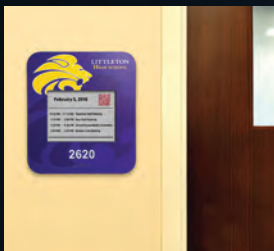
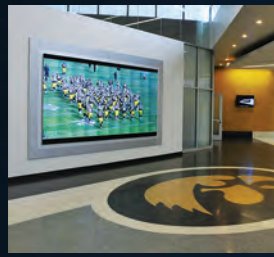
Bringing a “never say die” attitude to everything he does, Buzz founded Buzzbizz Creative in 2005 after serving in the United States Air Force for 10 years. He blends over 25 years of marketing experience with decades of world travel to create a unique knack for seeing unexplored perspectives when it comes to marketing.

Mr. Buzinski is an Alaskan Journal of Commerce ‘Top Forty Under Forty’ alumni. He has been recognized by the Anchorage Chamber of Commerce as a Gold Pan Award recipient for entrepreneurial excellence. In 2015 Michael was named the American Marketing Association’s Marketer of the Year and 2016 Innovative Marketer of the Year for the Alaska Chapter.

Michael “Buzz” Buzinski
CEO
Buzzbizz Creative



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Investing in Engagement

By Erica Kemp

Do you ever wonder what you'd do without your cell phone? I know a few people who claim they would, quite literally, die without this little tool. I think dying is a bit extreme but their point is well taken. It's amazing how we have become quite dependent upon our little devices.

I feel the same way about some tools we have at work. I certainly remember the time before my colleagues and I had access to these tools and I think I can speak on behalf of all of us when I say we would shudder at the thought of returning to those days.

I head up the employee training and development program for Credit Union 1. Credit Union 1 has been in business since the mid-1990s and today we have 15 locations throughout the state. We have almost 400 employees throughout Alaska as well as in several other states throughout the country. My team and I are charged with educating the workforce, whether it be onboarding new employees, executing long distance "mock teller" sessions, or presenting leadership development sessions.

With the growth of our organization around the thriving city of Anchorage and all around our great state, and with the addition of employees in the lower 48, Credit Union 1 needed to invest in some tools to keep us all informed, connected, and engaged with each other. In 2005, when we built our corporate headquarters, we made the initial investment into Audio and Video (AV) technology for our training and conference rooms.

My team and I, who had not previously had these tools, immediately experienced a change in how we performed our work. But that change had a significant reward in the form of reduced travel expenses, heightened employee engagement, and increased "fun factor" of various types of professional development events. Outside the training environment, Credit Union 1 employees benefited from an immediate increase in collaborative problem solving and brainstorming as the "perceived distance" was shortened.

You may wonder what I mean by "perceived distance." I understand this is an industry term and speaks to how far away we perceive the individual, and subsequently the conver-

sation is from us. Imagine using a speaker phone to meet with someone in another location, who is also on speaker phone. While this is better than not talking with them all, we still perceive we are quite far apart. The use of speaker phones doesn't necessarily give either party a good "connection" as verbal communication is the only cue they give/receive. However, once video is added to the equation, we perceive the distance between us has shortened. As video allows non-verbal communication cues to be shared, we feel better connected and understood.

In my opinion, most of the Credit Union 1 workforce received an immediate positive impact on their work from these initial investments into technology.



But alas, all good things must come to an end. The equipment in our training and conference rooms began to enter what the Information Technology (IT) folks called "end of life." What this meant was the equipment started to have inconsistent and unpredictable performance. The downtime for these rooms became more and more frequent. This was such a problem that we built in specific extended

timeframes for our training and meeting agendas to account for quick fixes and band-aids to our aging system.

The cost of this wasted time was significant to Credit Union 1. Imagine the collective wage of a bunch of new tellers, a few tenured employees and the trainer. Or how about the collective wage of our leadership team during their meetings? Or the value of the time offered by our Board of Directors?

Now, take the dollar amount of those collective expenses and throw it out the window. That's what we were figuratively doing each and every time the equipment failed. The direct cost was, of course, significant. Moreover, it was frustrating and embarrassing for the individuals involved. The cost of repairs and service were notable expenses to our IT budget too.

Allow me to digress a bit to cell phones again. When the screens crack, when they become dated and start to give us trouble or worse, when we misplace or lose them, we panic! I think this is because we don't think our little phones are luxury items and, instead, we consider them staples.



I thought of our training room and meeting room tools the same way. They weren't icing on the cake - they were the cake! My colleagues and I had grown dependent upon them as these tools had become integral to the way we performed our work. This dependency helped paved the way for an upgrade in 2016.

As the primary users of the training rooms, my team and I were heavily involved in discussions with IT and facilities about the 2016 upgrade. We discussed how we performed our work, our current pain points, our ideas for future work and opportunities, and our ideas for better efficiency and effectiveness. These rooms were also heavily used for meetings with employees, vendors and other stakeholders so we incorporated ideas from some of those key users as well.

My employees, and virtually every employee who participated in training, discussions, problem solving or information sharing within these rooms, knew that easy and high quality video and audio was a must. We had experienced firsthand the positive difference in engagement and learning when both verbal and nonverbal communication cues are available to everyone. We had grown to depend upon it and we weren't about to give that up when upgrading the rooms! Instead, we asked that this type of communication be enabled in all rooms.

Some of our previous rooms were equipped with interactive boards. While they were daunting at first, we quickly

realized that we simply needed to treat them like huge computer screens. We could then share documents, files, websites, etc. during our training sessions and meetings. It seems silly now but at the time, we were so amused by how these simple things made our work and our discussions occur more easily. We advocated for interactive panels and collaborative/sharing software capabilities in the upgraded rooms as well.

We worked collaboratively with both IT and Facilities to discuss and identify what the upgrade would entail. We were lucky. We had in-house staff who had expertise and shouldered much of the burden regarding telecom, network support, etc. Therefore, Credit Union 1 worked seamlessly with our AV consultant to design and install the new tools.

We worked closely with our consultant to test and train on the new system. Through "train the trainer" sessions, we received hands-on application and development so we could use the equipment to its full capabilities. My team became the power users and began modeling the use of the technology numerous times a week. Because the entire workforce was an audience for my team's services, they all got to see how everything worked. Employees started to show interest in using the equipment, and momentum grew throughout the workforce.

One example of how the excitement built around the organization was on the simplest of features: the ability to email hand written notes from the interactive display as a PDF.

Who would have guessed how excited people could be

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about a PDF? But, as you can imagine, saving meeting notes is a huge time-saver! No one needs to be “the note-taker,” there is no need to re-type, edit and approve anything, and there is no argument about what was discussed and/or agreed upon during the meeting because the notes say it all! The word got out about this simple feature and before I knew it, everyone was doing it! Now, we no longer waste time doing data entry and editing.

We have many employees who work remotely from home or in geographically dispersed locations. Previously, our only option for training or meetings had been for them to call into an expensive conference line for audio. The meeting organizer would have to arrange for the conference bridge and send content or documents out individually ahead of time so remote employees could see what their colleagues were looking at.

While this was a decent solution, it was costly and did not encourage engagement or connectivity. Now our remote employees utilize their webcams, join the event from the cloud, and access content or documents virtually. These enhancements have eliminated the need for conference expenses, bring us that much closer to being together visually, and allows the remote attendees to easily see content in real time as opposed to guessing what everyone is looking at.

Another example is when our teams needed to discuss or work on specific documents or content such as a teller policy, a new software or work flow issues. Previously, we either had to ensure everyone was in the same room so they could be

looking at the same thing or we had to print off and/or email print screens, documents and flow charts. This was certainly not ideal.

Now, meeting attendees or training participants can share content with each other from their own devices. Someone from a laptop can share their screen with the interactive display so everyone can see it. Someone in Colorado can share what she is working on with her colleagues in Kodiak. Multiple people can toggle back and forth between each other's

devices. This collaborative feature has come in handy during training and development sessions but also in troubleshooting, brainstorming, and meetings requiring group think and editing. There is no longer a need for sending things electronically, there is a decrease in the confusion

We are enjoying the benefits of increased collaboration, increased engagement, increased connectivity and relationship building. Moreover, I believe Credit Union 1's investment has communicated to our employees that we care about them. We care about keeping them close, albeit virtually. We care about keeping them informed, formally and informally. We care about their time and energy.

on who is looking at what, and once we all got used to the sharing capabilities, we no longer wasted time or paper.

Simply put, we all work collaboratively in real time.

Finally, one of the key benefits of upgrading our rooms is the ability to share displays and audio in multiple rooms. Previously, we were limited to attendance in the same physical room as the host. For “all staff” meetings, this meant we either had to do multiple meetings or we had to record the meeting and people who didn't attend it live had to watch it later. This narrowed our ability to engage in discussion during these large events. Now we can have employees in any of our rooms because video and audio can be seamlessly shared into multiple rooms. Two-way communication can occur and we can easily record the whole event, including the Q & A, for those





employees who had to miss it.

We've been up and running nearly a year with our upgraded rooms. We dearly missed the benefits for which we previously grown accustomed and are thankful they are back!

Just as we did in the initial investment into technology, we have begun to change the way we work given the new tools we purchased this time around. For example, we have changed the way we teach and engage in meetings by making presentations a bit more dynamic and interactive. Because of the new software, we can insert resources such as files, weblinks, excerpts from documents and images directly into our course materials and agendas. The interactive displays, and the open acceptance of laptops and tablets during sessions, allow us to fully access these resources during the training course or meeting. We do not need nor do we bother with paper.

We rarely limit our engagement to only the phone. Teleconference capabilities were better than nothing but now we like to be better connected so we enable the video in all our rooms. This has become the norm and has proven itself so valuable that we are researching how we can effectively engage via video with our members and other stakeholders.

...I'm excited to explore with my colleagues how we can start to incorporate these tools into how we work with our members and other stakeholders. It's exciting to think about a virtual teller or on-demand loan officer. I know these things are possible and they don't have to be robotic.

My staff and I have quite a bit of fun with the new tools and are engaging in creative knowledge sharing activities with the entire workforce.

For example, each month, we create what we call "The Monthly 411." This is an event wherein my team acts as news anchors and field reporters. Using the interactive hardware and software, the team delivers quick bursts of information in video format. This is then available on demand for the entire workforce. The equipment allows the Anchor to highlight specific content, enlarge an image, circle something or otherwise call attention to it.

Phones or other devices are candidly used in the field and easily embedded in the Anchor's story. The result has been extremely positive for both the person delivering the message and for the audience, not to mention the fact that it has decreased the black

hole of information often affecting geographically dispersed workforces.

I will be the first to say that it hasn't all been peaches and cream. We have experienced some problems we hadn't anticipated. For instance, we thought it was a good idea to recycle some shared space in our branch locations. Branches didn't have meeting rooms but they did have break rooms. There

were tables and chairs in these spaces so we added cameras and microphones.

We thought we were being clever and our branch employees would now have, without the expense of travel, full access to training and meetings! Alas, it was a good idea but failed in execution. Trying to have a meeting or training in a public space with employees walking in and out did not play out well. In hindsight, it would have been better to repurpose other spaces, albeit smaller, or to invest in better desktop tools for our branch employees.

Another lesson learned was that we didn't fully utilize our AV consultants. They have the knowledge and expertise about what is possible, what is on the forefront or in the future, and what is available in the market to augment what we purchased. Had we utilized them fully, we may have broadened our thinking and explored what our work may look like or what our workforce and clients may expect in the future. While we have adapted and improved the way we work and the way we interact and engage with our new tools, I know that slight changes and/or additional investments could have amplified our work even more.

Regardless of these little hiccups, I know we are lucky.

Credit Union 1 made a significant investment in employee interaction and engagement years ago. The initial installation of AV and collaborative technology in the training rooms set the stage for efficient, consistent and quality training statewide. The recent upgrade to our rooms and equipment was simply a continuation of my organization's commitment to effectiveness. As power users of these tools, my team reaps the benefits nearly every day. Because the entire workforce are my team's students, they are learning how to use the technology and taking that knowledge back to their own teams, who then adapt the tools for their own work.

The ripple effect is that our teams communicate and collaborative differently and our leadership interacts with each other and with us differently. We problem-solve, we create, we save resources and we have fun just like anyone else, but we do it regardless of where we sit.

Now that we are becoming more and more comfortable

with audio and video interaction and desktop sharing across distance, I'm excited to explore with my colleagues how we can start to incorporate these tools into how we work with our members and other stakeholders. It's exciting to think about a virtual teller or on-demand loan officer. I know these things are possible and they don't have to be robotic. If we can continue to think about how technology simply complements what we do or enables us to do our jobs better, I think we can develop some pretty nifty protocols and activities that will set us apart and add significant value to our employees as well as our members.

In summary, we made a significant investment when we upgraded our training and meeting rooms. Our returns have been decreased travel costs, a decrease in non-value added time, and decreased frustration due to linear problem-solving and work.

We are enjoying the benefits of increased collaboration, increased engagement, increased connectivity and relationship building. Moreover, I believe Credit Union 1's investment has communicated to our employees that we care about them. We care about keeping them close, albeit virtually. We care about keeping them informed, formally and informally. We care about their time and energy.

I speak from experience when I say my team responds in kind to me and the organization. They are better engaged, they are more invested, and they are increasingly more curious about how they can better and more effectively serve their members and customers.

Looking forward, I am inspired by how collaborative tools work. They are mostly intuitive, often conserve time, and are always fun. I think newer staff expect this type of technology and I believe tenured staff are delightfully surprised by it. I anticipate we'll see more and more innovation as my career progresses and I look forward to diving in and ensuring it helps my organization's objectives.



Erica is the Employee Education Manager at Credit Union 1 where she oversees a staff of five trainers. She has over 15 years of experience within the Credit Union, holding every position within the branch before moving into Training. She serves as the Chair for the Young Professionals group at Credit Union 1 as well as oversees the Leader Track group for aspiring employees. She resides with her family on the Kenai Peninsula.

Erica Kemp
Employee Education Manager
Credit Union 1





The Trouble with ERM

By Erin Sedor

Enterprise Risk Management.

It is a not-so-sexy phrase too often bandied-about the upper echelons of management with little appreciation for the true meaning of the term, and quite frankly, little desire to pursue any comprehension beyond the ability to say “Yes! We do ERM!”

While I’ve enjoyed many a Dilbert© cartoon on the subject, the fact of the matter is that ERM is as much about strategy as it is risk management, and can be a game-changer easily within the grasp of the even the most modest operations.

The secret is understanding that ERM is a discipline, not a function, that requires integration across strategy, risk and resilience programs traditionally built and operated in silos. Unfortunately, while most best-practice models, standards and frameworks point to this interoperability, none of them spell out how to make it happen.

And that, my friend, is the trouble with ERM.

When I first entered the world of risk management, I was incredibly frustrated at the lack of clarity in the voluminous materials that existed on the subject. Being a typical corporate manager pressed with too much work and not enough resources, I was looking for step-by-step manuals. I was naïve, and I came to learn that along with the science, there is an art

...Stable organizations are proactive and nimble. They seize upon growth or quality opportunities because they have the time to look for them, they have the resources to pursue them, and they know how to execute their plans successfully.

to designing, implementing and sustaining broad organizational programs such as risk management, strategic planning and business continuity.

Integrating said programs is yet another basket of worms, primarily because different departments are comfortable in their own silos. However, if you look at the entity as a whole and consider the type and timeliness of information its leaders need to create success, you will see clearly the foundation for building integrated programs that cross functional silos and allow a vertical flow of information. If you aggregate this data in a meaningful way and add C-Suite expertise and experience, you will have an environment for strategy development, balanced risk-taking, and leveraged opportunities.

This scenario, which would give the organization an incredible advantage over their competitors, cannot be accomplished with a traditional risk management program. It requires an ERM discipline.

Organizations seeking to establish and mature into a true ERM capability can find the process daunting. There is a myriad of frameworks, theories and best practice standards based on industry, business model and public/private/non-profit sector. The risk management process itself is straightforward. Identify, evaluate, assess and treat risk. What is not so clear is how to successfully operationalize such a program in a way that creates synergy across the organization.

I know what you’re thinking:

“We need to be selling, building, designing for and serving customers! That’s where the value is! That’s what keeps us in business!”

You are right, until your controller unwittingly sends a half-million dollars to a cyber thief posing as your CFO with valid email credentials and various other identification sources because the pesky security upgrade project was just not a

capital priority. Or consider the unflattering news story which caused massive reputation and civil damages because leadership failed to consider the full spectrum of adverse impact in their initial public response. Certainly, we realize the impacts of such actions with the latest occurrence this spring with United Airlines.

In the scenarios above, there were people discussing risk and strategies. However, when the elements of risk are evaluated in isolation, the results can be devastating. Effective and timely risk management is a necessary management capability at all levels. Therefore, why not create a critical information pathway to the C-Suite to improve decision-making and strategy? Why not make it streamlined and efficient, focusing on what really matters? Why not let it be a competitive differentiator?

Why not ERM?

Traditional risk management typically deals with safety, insurance, contracts and claims. ERM, by contrast, is a business discipline. It is a set of practices put into place to help an entity succeed and is specific to the identification and management of broad organizational risk. Thus, ERM allows an organization to broadly manage risks and seize opportunities related to the achievement of its strategic business objectives. This enables leaders to create strategically aligned processes supporting appropriate levels of risk assessment and communication.

Seems better, doesn't it? It certainly is better, but it isn't easy.

The hurdles faced in achieving effective ERM are similar to those encountered during the implementation of any kind of broad program requiring systemic change. Budget, timelines, competing projects and finite resources are the typical challenges, but others are more elusive. Let me break it down with some lessons from the trenches:

Lesson One: Organizations = People.

If you want to make real change, you must anticipate the impact that any modification of process, practice, or methodology will have on your people. Recognize that people must be motivated to change, and that change for no reason will simply be rejected.

Lesson Two: The program must functionally fit the organization.

If a system, method or process cannot be accomplished with available resources, it will, at best, be ignored and, at

worst, be sabotaged. You must design the program with consideration of the day-to-day work that occurs and the culture that it occurs within.

Lesson Three: Value drives sustainability.

This may be a bit obvious, but it is important enough to call out. Tangible value must be articulated for every process. People are more easily persuaded to adopt change when they perceive a personal value to following a new routine. The value does not have to be substantial. It simply needs to be something that drives or motivates increased participation and acceptance.

Lesson Four: Sustainability requires persistence.

ERM program designers must recognize and plan for staff turnover, complacency and change in business practice. While implementation of an ERM program is a large hurdle, regular maintenance of the program is required. New employees must be trained, key performance indicators must be tracked and reported, and failsafe measures must be built-in for those occasional ornery employees who simply refuse to follow the rules.

In summary, designing and implementing ERM may seem like a hassle, but it is worth it.

The intrinsic value of an ERM discipline is the enablement of an organization to spend less time dealing with crises and more time managing the business. Putting out daily micro fires with a bit of calamity thrown in every now and then may seem like a worthwhile investment at the time, but it eats away at the time available for strategic thinking and planning.

On the other hand, stable organizations are proactive and nimble. They seize upon growth or quality opportunities because they have the time to look for them, they have the resources to pursue them, and they know how to execute their plans successfully. Evolving to this stability requires an understanding that risk/opportunity management applies to every facet of the organization, and the outputs of the process are intended to feed critical decision-making and strategic planning endeavors.

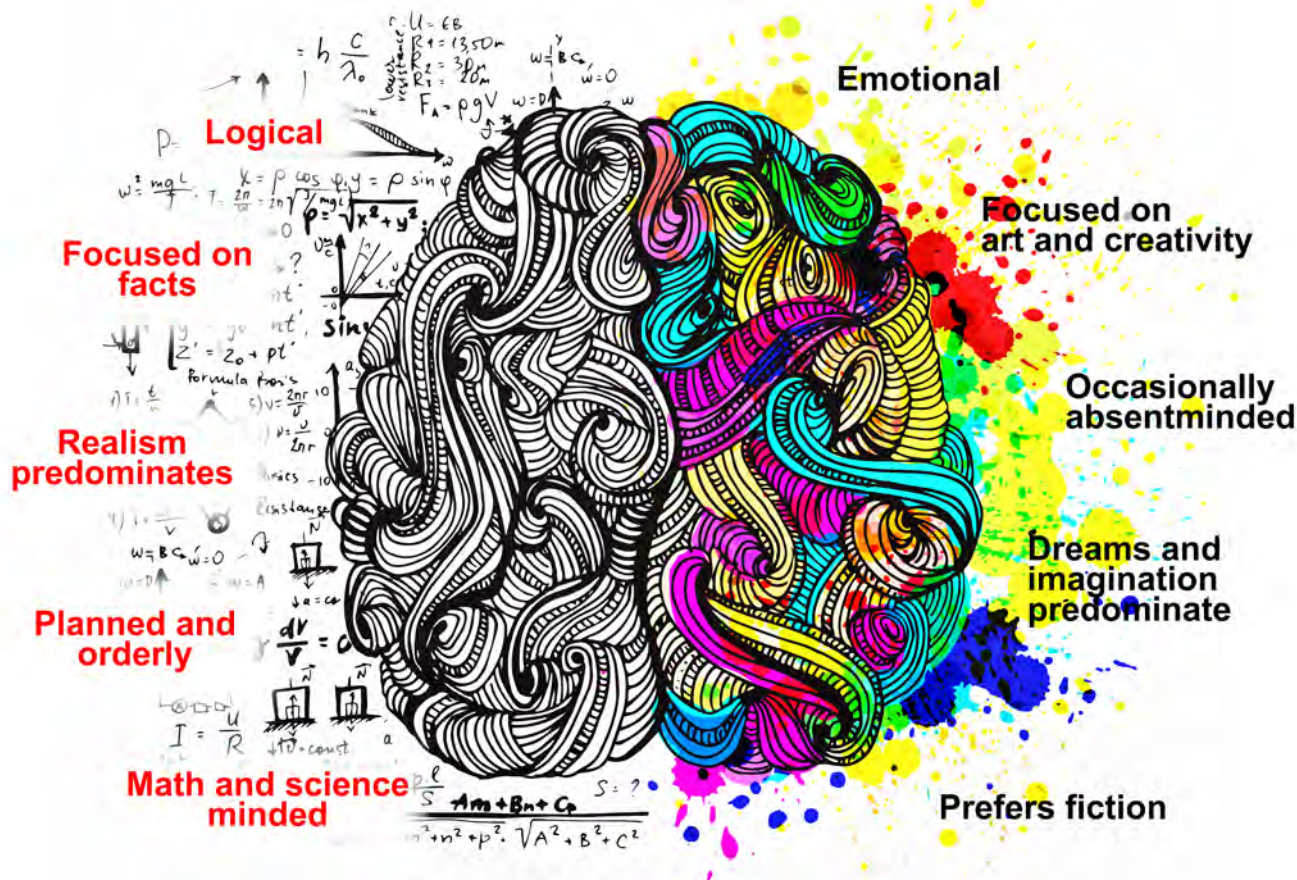
A thoughtful and holistic approach to the design of an ERM program will eliminate silos, inefficiencies and communication gaps. Done right, an ERM program can enhance your organization and result in tangible, bottom-line improvement and success.



Erin is the talent behind Black Fox Strategy, a highly specialized executive consulting practice based on the philosophy that organizational success and sustainability are best achieved through integrated strategy, risk and resilience capabilities. Erin supports private, public and non-profit clients, and holds a MBA in Operational Risk, Bachelor degrees in both Finance and Organizational Management, a Professional Certification in Paralegal Studies, and a RIMS Fellow Professional designation.

Erin Sedor
Founder
Black Fox Strategy





Marketing: Art or Science?

By Jeff Lowe

As pioneers in emotion and creativity, marketing executives have utilized predominantly right-brain strategies with artful storytelling to enlighten and engage audiences. Throughout my 25 years in marketing, there has never been a question in my mind on the importance of this approach.

Proof positive that emotional marketing is still a driving force are this year's Super Bowl ads, where Airbnb launched "We accept," promoting diversity and inclusivity, while P&G's Mr. Clean emerged as somewhat of a sex symbol in a cheeky "Cleaner of your dreams" advertisement.

But with the recent onset of buyer journey complexity, Big Data, and "the Internet of Things," left-brained strategic thinking is taking prominence. Marketing has become more

rational, analytic and data-driven.

Knowing how to strike to the right balance between rational and emotional marketing is a core challenge faced by all marketers today. Marketing is the juxtaposition of right and left-brain thinking, of bridging emotional, artistic storytelling with data, insights and strategy.

To better understand the contrast, let's explore two different perspectives:

"Good creative people are junkies - art heads, addicted to creative expression. They take jobs in agencies to feed their habit. They're smart, they can act, you'll believe they're fascinated by your revenue and margins and sales results. You can't rehabilitate creative people. There's no cure. Get over it. You need them, they need you."

The quote above is from a highly talented creative director that believes storytelling and beautiful pictures above all else will win a customer. Now compare this quote from a strategic marketer with a great reputation:

"Marketing is about delivering qualified leads that are ultimately converted to revenue. It is about delivering business results, and as such must be planned and measured rigorously. To connect customers to business re-



ults, we must study their behavior so that we can predict it. We must understand what will make them buy more of the product and what will make them switch to a competitor's product instead. We must use these insights to qualify every dollar we spend, then measure the results of our efforts to make them better and more efficient."

It might appear at first blush that these two perspectives are impossible to reconcile. However, great marketing is actually created by the friction between these two perspectives.

Let's explore each in more detail:

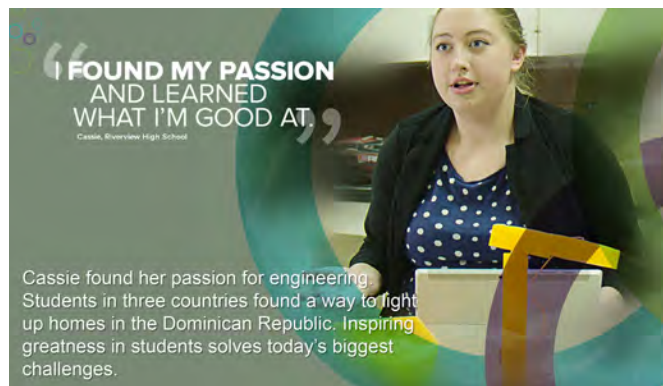
Art: The case for Right-Brain marketing

People don't buy WHAT you do, they buy WHY you do it." This is the popular refrain from "Start with Why," one of the most popular books and influential Ted Talks by Simon Sinek (www.startwithwhy.com). Every company in the world knows WHAT they do, what products or services they offer. Few, however, grasp WHY they do what they do—what is their purpose, cause or belief? It is the organizations that Start with Why that enjoy the strongest brand following and the price premiums that accompany it.

To get to your "Why" requires a great deal of introspection and then complete buy-in from not just the marketing team but the sales team and the entire leadership team. Only then will the marketing message truly take hold and live past being simply the "campaign du jour."

Recently, I took our marketing team through a workshop to identify our Why and What based on Simon Sinek's approach. At SMART Technologies, we believe that there's greatness in every child, and that it's our responsibility to help them find it through enabling technologies that help them to discover, develop, and share what they're great at.

Our "WHAT" is software, interactive panels and professional services that enable students and teachers to actively contribute in class, across schools, and around the world. But our "WHY" revolves around the theme of "Inspiring Greatness," which we communicate through a series of stories and case studies of students and teachers from all over the world who have reached breakthroughs and helped to fully realize



their potential.

We take a highly right-brained approach by telling stories through photographs and videos of real students and teachers, not actors, in our advertisements, events and social media. We focus on students who have experienced true breakthroughs with exceptional teachers deploying technology in the right way. We show technology that is used as an enabler to the teaching and learning versus a "build it and they will come" approach of placing technology in the classroom and hoping it will be used.

As the examples here illustrate, we are leading with stories that evoke emotion based on results and student impact with little or no mention of the products and services that we are selling. This approach resonates extremely well with our customers who face an onslaught of technology pitches from a very crowded vendor landscape, few that provide their "why" or tangible outcomes for students and teachers.

Science: The case for Left-Brain marketing

Despite the powerful case for "Starting with Why" and leading with emotion and creativity, there is a healthy skepticism that this approach alone is sufficient to win in an increasingly complex buying environment. The left-brained pundits argue for an analytical breakdown of the buying and selling process, with a need for marketers to understand the various roles involved in the decision cycle, and the precise steps that customers take as they migrate through the minefields of B2B purchasing. Moreover, Big Data has given marketers an amazing opportunity to learn a wealth of information about their customers and, in the utopian state, to prescribe the right piece of marketing content to the right person at the right time. This marketing mix is measured on a sophisticated marketing dashboard with metrics on brand health, qualified leads and sales conversion.

In a fascinating report on the state of sales and marketing published by Gartner/CEB in 2015¹, a daunting set of data emerged that points out just how complex B2B buying has become. As a result, what significant challenges have emerged for marketing. This global study, spanning several years and



¹*Taming Sales Complexity: Making It Easier for Customers to Buy*, CEB (now Gartner), 2015.

thousands of customer examples, produced a number of unnerving stats:

- **57 percent.** At least 57 percent of customers are through their buyer journey before they engage a vendor due to being so empowered and connected. As a result, conversations typically go very quickly to price, with the opportunity for vendors to differentiate their products or services (or even to re-frame their customer's needs) long vanished.
- **6.8.** On average, there are 6.8 people involved in the B2B decision making process. Each of these individuals have different needs, cares about different things, and requires different content and messaging from marketing and sales representatives.
- **39 percent.** 39 percent of customers in the study described the purchasing experience as “overwhelming.” With a myriad of vendor choices, large diverse buying groups, and multi-month buying cycles, it seems that buying has become much tougher in today's environment. Which in turn makes marketing and selling more difficult.

There have been significant advances in online data analytics to help marketers understand their own versions of the 57 percent, 6.8, and 39 percent mentioned above. At SMART Technologies, we've embraced left-brain thinking and leveraged analytics to crawl inside the search engines, social media, forums, news feeds and discussion groups, and received amazing insights into our customers. This data mining allows us to answer critical questions:

1. Where do our customers learn? (so we can be there when they learn)
2. What solutions are our customers looking for and talking about the most? (so we can prioritize which solutions we should focus on)
3. How do they speak and search? What language do they use? (so we can ensure we are speaking in the same language)
4. Where, geographically, are they located? (so we can geo-target our advertising)
5. Which online properties are the most popular? Which social media channels? Which search engines? (so we can direct our advertising spend)
6. Who are the most influential people? (so we can reach out and forge relationships with them)

Another left-brain endeavor we've undertaken is a very structured look at the buyer journey and how to deliver targeted content at the right place and time. In almost all education technology purchases, there are approximately six steps a customer follows (see *The Buyer Journey* graphic). This approach is different from the typical “Awareness/Interest/Conversion/Repurchase” steps that many marketers use. When was the last time a customer said something like “I'm looking for some software for my organization. I'm in the consideration phase, but I think I'm about to convert to close.”

Next, we mapped these six steps against our buyer groups or audiences. We looked closely at our “6.8” people involved in the purchase process and, finding our number to be significantly larger, landed on four aggregated buyer roles. Through this process, SMART outlined key questions for each of our audiences throughout the buyer journey and are arming our sales teams with relevant content (video, infographic, brochure, etc) that can be served up at the right place and right time for the right

Challenges Facing B2B Marketers



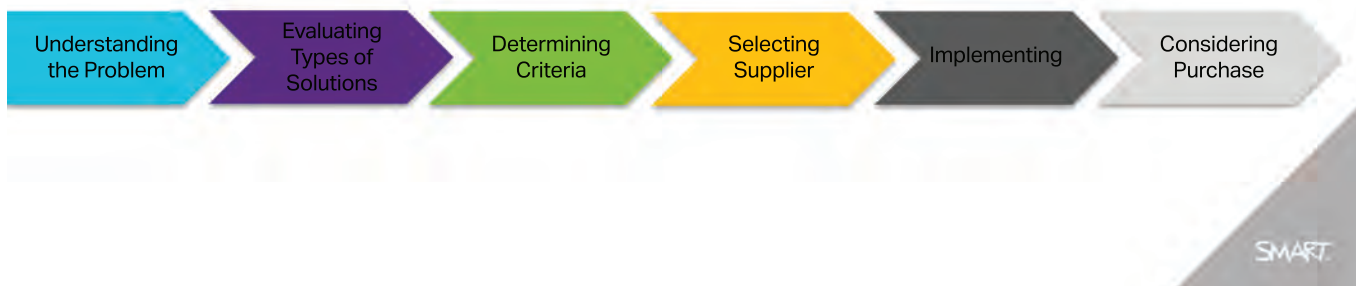
*2015 Buyer Journey Study published by Gartner/CEB

The Buyer Journey

Traditional Buyer Journey—from the vendor's perspective



Buyer Journey—from the customer's perspective



audience. It's certainly a left-brain endeavor, steeped in logic, discipline and data.

So what is the new marketing? Art or Science?

The answer is “yes.” It's both.

Today's fast, digital, full-sensory experience world makes the purchasing journey more complex. Marketers need to understand who their “6.8” within their buying journey is. And how to get inside the 57 percent of the audience already on to the consideration stage. And more importantly, how to help customers feel less overwhelmed about the buying process in general.

The best marketing and sales organizations embrace both the left and the right brain philosophies—resulting in a mash-up of emotive stories served to a targeted audience at the right

time.

My best advice for beginning the process? Start with the heart and lead to the mind. Have a clear “Why,” but be able to tailor and tweak your message depending on the intricacies of the buyer journey. Be able to measure against a dashboard that's aligned with your overall business strategy, and tweak your investments based on what's delivering the best results. Use an advanced analytics partner that can help you gain insights from the millions of digital buyer signals that are taking place every day.

B2B Marketing is anything but easy these days. Those that harness both the rational and the emotional sides have the best chances for true breakthroughs. In marketing, magic happens when art and science collide.

Jeff is responsible for global marketing activities for SMART Technologies. In this executive role Jeff oversees the overall marketing strategy for the company, including its education and enterprise business units.

Jeff joined SMART in 2012. His experience in marketing spans 25 years across global technology firms such as IBM and TELUS, along with agency-side experience where he consulted on marketing strategy and planning across many industries.

Jeff sits on the Board of Youth Central, and was recently appointed to the Business-to-Business “Senior Advisors Group” by the Marketing Leadership Council. He holds an honors degree in marketing from the University of Calgary, Canada.

Jeff Lowe
Vice-President, Marketing
SMART Technologies





When Moving Forward is Risky

By Mary Faulkner

I work for a 100-year-old water utility in Colorado. We are a public sector entity, meaning our employees are afforded additional constitutional protections. Our average employee tenure is more than 14 years, an average driven down by the number of retirements in recent years.

For much of our history, we have operated like many other government entities with a very generous pension, good benefits, guaranteed pay increases and changes in wages based on changes in the marketplace. This was predictable and stable, and it created a very high long-term liability for our pension plan.

The previous CEO left after over 25 years at the helm. In his place, the Board selected a person to help bring the organization into the 21st century and run it more like a business than a government agency.

We knew change was needed to support and sustain our organization both financially and in our efforts to attract the right talent. We knew if we didn't do something significant, our future would be at risk.

Our organization was healthy, well-functioning and one of the more respected in the industry, but it had been doing things the same way for a very long time. Technically a monopoly, we still compete in Colorado and beyond for top talent. For every engineer and water treatment tech wanting to work for us, there are plenty of IT, Finance and Marketing professionals who are looking for a more modern, agile employer.

With an aging workforce and plenty of employees eligible for retirement in the next five years, it was time to adapt.

The Problem

Our utility must provide ratepayers with high quality water while being mindful of finances. Because we accept no tax funding, we have to be acutely aware of spending. The liability to our pension was becoming onerous and to keep it funded, it was necessary to review our pay practices to ensure wages did not increase too quickly or for the wrong reasons. This meant some significant changes to something near and dear to employees: their earning potential.

Traditional, public sector pay structures are built to ensure every employee receives a pay increase, regardless of overall performance. Time in grade, re-assignment of duties or market changes can result in increases to wages regardless of an employee's performance.

As you can imagine, many employees found comfort in this. They could reasonably anticipate wage increases and enjoyed the stability of such. The problem was, wages often increased for purposes other than performance or demand.

Our Solution

The first step to reduce ineffective inflating salaries was to move away from automatic pay increases. Moving forward, an employee's performance rating impacted his or her merit increase. Furthermore, it was tied to a very specific budget which executives could not exceed. As one could imagine, this disrupted the employees' satisfaction.

The next step was to ensure jobs were effectively and realistically defined. This was a very large undertaking as it required the entire organization to update, organize, compare and contrast job descriptions for every position in the organization. Employees and managers alike were disrupted as the figurative magnifying glass was pointed towards their everyday activities. We worked with a consultant and used job questionnaires to better identify and distinguish one job from

another as well as assess a job's value or rank in the organization. This created tension as many found it impossible to accept it was their job that was being compared, not them personally.

Finally, we finalized job descriptions and identified applicable and reasonable wages for each level accordingly. This highlighted that many of our employees were receiving wages that were higher than what was reasonable as well as identified those employees who were receiving wages that were below the external market or below what was considered internally aligned. This resulted, of course, in some employees being delighted with the change and others being significantly disturbed by it.

Solutions are Painful and Risky

The decision to totally disrupt our wage practices had an impact on several levels: organizational, financial, and emotional.

Organizationally, every single employee was involved in this process as no job description was left untouched. It took a massive mental and time commitment.

Financially, there were several scenarios that had to be examined.

- What was our acceptable risk for liability?
- What were salary ranges that made the most sense now and in the future?
- How would it impact future promotion opportunities?
- Would people be able to earn pay adjustments, and how could we support them?

There were a lot of moving pieces and not everyone agreed on proposed solutions and, therefore, ambiguity was rampant.

Perhaps the greatest impact was emotional. Many job titles changed and while this may seem insignificant, it was not. Many employees felt demoted or demoralized with their new titles and many others were confused by career progression because certain titles no longer existed. Wage changes had a huge effect on emotions. Employees who received increases to their wages later questioned if they had been "under-paid" or "under-appreciated" before. Employees who had, for all intents and purposes, been overpaid, were not pleased when they learned their wages would be "frozen" until they caught up to the market. They felt offended, de-motivated and demoralized.

Why Invite the Risk?

We risked increased turnover, increased retirements, lower morale, and increased workers comp claims when we decided to disrupt our pay structure. We also risked overburdening the Human Resources program that would handle the bulk of the work and nearly all of the outrage. This risked our reputation and strongly impacted how employees view leadership.

So why did we do it?

We knew change was needed to support and sustain our organization both financially and in our efforts to attract the right talent. We knew if we didn't do something significant, our future would be at risk.

We are now confident our pension is effectively funded. While there may be fewer job titles in our new structure, there are now more opportunities for skill development and contributing to the business. We have ceased arbitrary title changes and wage increases, which gives a much better sense of fairness and equity in the workplace, and ultimately will have positive impacts on our employee value proposition.

The process continues to evolve. We work with our leaders to ensure job descriptions are accurate. We work to ensure our total compensation is competitive without putting the future financial health of our organization at risk. But even more importantly, we have used this process as a stepping stone to even more valuable processes such as the development of competency models, professional development plans and succession plans.

Lessons Learned

Leaning into an unpopular process was necessary to lay the foundation for more strategic work. This is difficult and can generate anger and frustration. Leadership must be diligent in building trust and relationships with the workforce so when change occurs, everyone trusts in the process.

Could we have avoided the disruption and stuck with status quo? Possibly, but we wouldn't have been business leaders with an eye to our future had we stayed within our comfort zone.



Mary is a talent strategist and business leader with almost 15 years experience in helping organizations achieve their goals. After working on the Operations side of start-ups and small companies, Mary landed in HR by way of learning and development, with extensive experience in leadership and organizational development, coaching, key talent planning, talent acquisition, performance management, business partnering, HRIS, process and policy creation, and instructional design.

In addition to her work within companies, Mary authors a leadership development blog called Surviving Leadership (www.survivingleadership.blog) to continue the dialogue around the challenges of leadership – both being a leader AND being led.

Mary Faulkner, SHRM-SCP



New Frontiers

Alaska Innovators Making a Difference and Inventing a New World

Innovative Story Tellers Embrace the Past

The demise of television, specifically linear viewing, is coming. So say digital pundits promoting online media distribution. This appears logical. After all, the iPod and iTunes quickly disrupted the music industry, and certainly the iPhone has and continues to disrupt communications.

One wonders why Apple TV hasn't been as disruptive. This technology is over ten years old and while it has surely created a competitive industry, has it really disrupted television? Perhaps not.

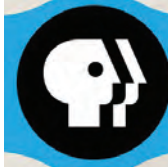
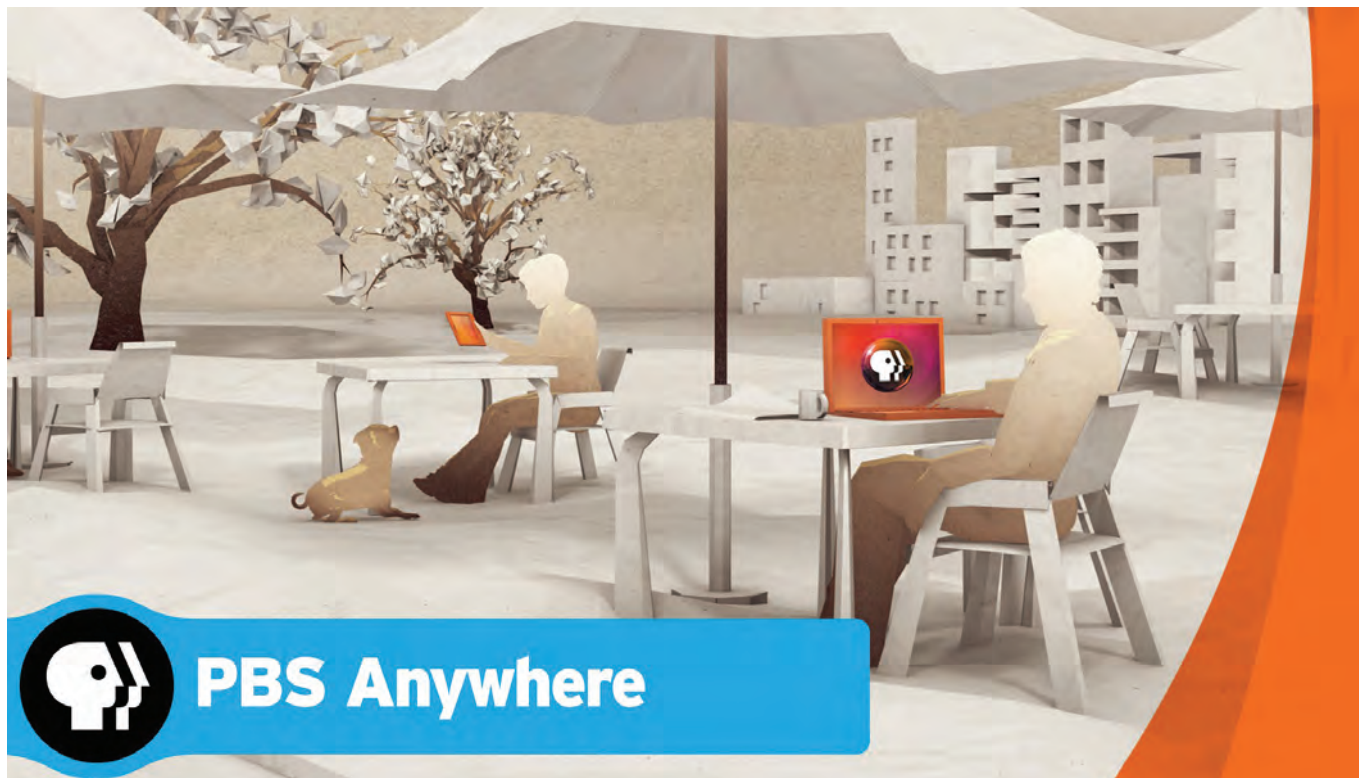
Perhaps the pundits got it wrong. Television is changing but it is not dead, and innovative and strategic business leaders need to strike a creative and purposeful balance between all types of media if they are to remain competitive.

Throughout history all forms of human communication have been additive and not subtractive. While new means of communicating have been introduced throughout the years, the oldest means for distributing a story still persist. Bold leaders know this and as a result, they identify their audience and choose the most effective communication

platforms, even if it is "old" or traditional. Moreover, if the message is important, they find a way to chisel it in stone, so to speak.

Alaska Public Media (AKPM) is boldly responding to the disruption in communications and media; the result just may be a disruption to how people think of public media in general. AKPM Leaders have adopted three concepts that serve to reframe idea sharing.

First, they are embracing platform agnosticism and utilizing new technology to ensure anyone can consume AKPM's information anytime, anywhere and from any device, including that good old fashioned television! Second, they are learning how their target audience consumes media and developing a cross-platform strategy for sharing a story, message or idea. Third, they are creating interactive media experiences through a variety of social media platforms to better connect their audience, their employees, their stakeholders and their community.



PBS Anywhere

ALASKAMOVEMENT



Alaska Movement

Do you remember when Elon Musk called California's High Speed Rail System obsolete before it was even constructed? He then proposed, and is actively testing, a hyperloop that will send floating transportation pods up to 760 mph through depressurized tubes between major cities. It goes without saying that Mr. Musk is an innovative thinker and, more often than not, he puts his money where his mouth is.

The founders of AlaskaMovement can relate to Mr. Musk's frustration of applying archaic or clunky solutions to modern problems and they too are applying energy and problem solving skills to make communities more vibrant and attractive for the future. AlaskaMovement creatively leverages the digital era and the commitment of community members to cost-effectively drive sustainable change in the areas of housing, food and services, transportation and recreation.

Stay tuned for their formal launch in November at www.alaskamovement.com.



Alaska Innovator Hall of Fame Alaska State Committee for Research

The Alaska Innovator Hall of Fame was created by the Alaska State Committee for Research (SCoR) in 2014. Inductees are individuals and teams whose endeavors have had a tangible impact on the quality of life for the people of Alaska and across the globe. Working in the fields of science, engi-

neering and technology, these inventors and innovators have been identified as contributors to Alaska's growing culture of innovation.

The following are excerpts from the profiles of a selection of those inducted into the Alaska Innovators Hall of Fame in 2016. For links to the full inductee list and profiles, visit thestrivegroup.com/hall-of-fame.

Brian Shumaker

"The best tool for building foundations on permafrost landscapes is detailed knowledge of changing ground temperatures. Brian Shumaker invented a system that gives engineers and scientists detailed temperature readings of arctic installations from anywhere in the world."

Jeff Rothman

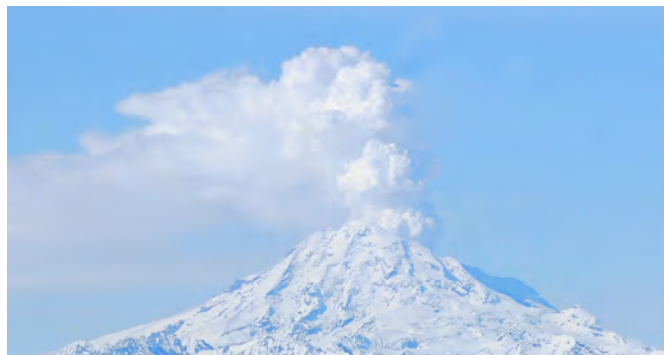
"Jeff Rothman improved a sensor that, when deployed in an Alaska forest, can detect a nuclear explosion on the far side of the planet or a volcanic eruption in an Aleutian storm. His patented infrasound sensor is smaller, more accurate and uses less power than its predecessor. While other sensors are the size of a blender, his is a hockey puck."

Rajive Ganguli

"Rajive Gangulie is a professor at the University of Alaska Fairbanks who has developed mill simulator software as part of the university's program for training mill operators for large-scale mines. Mill operators run machinery, read schematics and plans, monitor job progress and sometimes perform equipment maintenance. Along with UAF's Tathagata Ghosh, Ganguli's team created a software-based training tool to enhance UAF's 12-week program."

Peter Webley

"Peter Webley and his colleagues in the remote sensing group at the University of Alaska's Geophysical Institute developed novel tools to predict the drift of volcanic ash and assess its impact on daily transportation operations. Building on more than 20 years of research and experience and becoming one of the first companies to be spun off from the university, Webley's company offers 'decision support software' to the aviation community so they can better plan and schedule flights without putting their infrastructure and personnel at risk."



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-Taylor, 20, former Covenant House Alaska youth who is now fully employed and living on her own.

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