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# CAN AMERICA KEEP UP ?

NELSON DAVIS

A few weeks ago I noticed a weather report regarding tropical storm "Andrea" forming off our east coast weeks ahead of the official storm season. It struck me as a metaphor for many unwelcome and stormy issues facing our country and the business community. They too are dangerously lurking "just off the coast" of broad public consciousness. The title of this piece implies that our country is somehow falling behind and there is evidence to support that idea. Fact #1 in falling behind: We continue to import much more than we export while borrowing about \$2 billion per day from nations like China. Even kitchen table economics tells us that situation is unsustainable, but you probably won't hear that from politicians.

Fact #2: In 2005 a group of group of experts on science, medicine and engineering known as the National Academies issued a report titled "Rising Above the Gathering Storm." It warned that unless we move fast, India, China and others will quickly catch up to us competitively. They had four recommendations: 1) Increase America's talent pool by vastly improving K-12 mathematics and science education; 2) Sustain and strengthen the nation's commitment to long-term basic research; 3) Develop, recruit, and retain top students, scientists, and engineers from both the U.S. and abroad; and 4) Ensure that the United States is the premier place in the world for innovation. Notice that their solutions to maintaining a level of preeminence for our country are rooted in the worlds of business and education. I'd add to that encouraging a revival of the great American entrepreneurial spirit that elevated us to leadership in the first place.

Fact #3: Our public education system needs help. Back in 1983, a government commission on excellence in education issued a landmark report, *A Nation at Risk*, which warned of a "rising tide of mediocrity" and charged U.S. students with losing ground in every academic category. Their prediction has become a fact. Bill Gates says "When I compare our high schools to what I see when I'm traveling abroad, I am terrified for our workforce of tomorrow." I tend to listen carefully to people who give away billions of their own dollars!

All it takes to be alarmed is a visit to a store where the teenage clerk can't make change for a \$10 bill without using a calculator! For example, the tenured staff and principal of one central Los Angeles high school are battling with the school board to leave the system and be operated by a corporation (Green Dot) that specializes in charter high schools. For educators the storm came ashore a long time ago and they can't avoid knowing that a new spirit is needed.

The entrepreneurial spirit certainly isn't dead in our country, it simply isn't honored in the way it was in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries. Then the Horatio Alger books were part of our culture. They illustrated how down-and-out boys could achieve the American dream of wealth and success through hard work, courage, determination and concern for others. We know that true entrepreneurial thinking is the antithesis of mediocrity and institutional lethargy.

If the devastating Katrina was the result of converging circumstance or the "perfect" storm, think about these "weather" warnings. Poor schools mean that we become less competitive. Runaway medical costs and wars will keep the deficits coming. Foreign energy dependence is a big gun we are holding to our own heads. You get the picture.

Lagging behind isn't necessarily a permanent situation. Hundreds of colleges are bolstering their courses for aspiring entrepreneurs who won't be flocking to corporate jobs. If we look carefully in the garden of small and medium size businesses in America we can see signs of hope. There are men and women of all ethnicities pouring themselves into enterprises that will become the engines and models of our future. They are anchored by the entrepreneurial bedrock of dreams, resourcefulness, confidence, and hard work that has brought us back from the brink before.

## BITS N' BITES



From Left:

**Al Osborne**, Senior Associate Dean of UCLA Anderson School of Management

**Denise Coley**, Senior Manager of Supplier Diversity, Cisco Systems Inc.

**Peter Alexander**, Vice President, of Commercial Marketing, Cisco Systems Inc.

### MDE is a Good Thing

In the past two months, two versions of one of our favorite events have taken place in San Jose. The UCLA Management Development for Entrepreneurs 4-day certificate program is that event. One of the two classes was held just for NAWBO members. Business owners from across the country convene for some intensive instruction led by Professor Al Osborne of the Anderson School at UCLA. Nelson Davis Productions is delighted to produce special videos of the graduation ceremonies sponsored by Chevron Corporation, Cisco Systems and the SBA.

### Cruising

Nelson Davis is pretty excited about presenting a workshop on the entrepreneurial spirit titled "What I've Learned from 1000 Entrepreneurs." It is part of a "Mind & Body" 8 day cruise that leaves from Fort Lauderdale next January and stops in Panama, Belize and Costa Rica. If you'd enjoy some warm weather and cool ideas, you can check it out at [www.lifepurposeandprosperitycruise.com](http://www.lifepurposeandprosperitycruise.com).

### The Making It Institute

Over the past several years, a number of people have asked whether Making It! has a not-for-profit aspect and until now we could only give a "no" response. We are thrilled to announce that the paper work has begun for The Making It Institute for the Advancement of Business, a not-for-profit corporation. There are some exciting plans for the institute that we look forward to sharing with you.

## KNOW NETWORKING

Armine Martirosyan

You go through school geared toward your studies, meanwhile acquiring valuable experience through work and internships, hoping to rise up from it all, with a degree in hand and prospective employers opening their doors to you...upon knocking of course.

Through my most recent job-hunting experience, the past few months have surely been a wake-up call to me. I now know that this is definitely not how the business sphere works. In steps the adage; 'It's not what you know. It's *who* you know.'

I left my last job to find something that was more in tune with my interests. Something that was more along the lines of what I was actually studying--marketing. Confident that I had adequate amounts of experience for someone who is still in college, I gave myself an estimated three weeks 'tops' to find a new job.

I began applying to all the opportunities that I saw fit, given my experience and qualifications. I updated my resume, making sure it was thorough, concise and attractive. I prepared well composed cover letters, customizing them for each job I was applying for. Confident that I had done everything 'right', I kept wondering why I still hadn't received a response. Not even a "Thank you, but..." response.

What I learned, is that though a college degree, solid amount of experience, a well composed resume, dedication and 'follow-ups' are definitely important, they are simply not enough to get you through the door-- at least not most of the time. Someone passing on a recommendation, or putting in 'a good word', can push in the wagon of credentials we have compiled, faster than we may realize.

As the importance of networking gained greater presence within my realm of interests, I began to read books and articles on networking, browsed through websites of career coaches and business moguls, and began to discuss this 'concept' with people in various industries and organizations that I came across. I learned no

matter what industry or profession you are in, whether you are an artist, a musician, a lawyer, a doctor, a director, a writer, an actor or a producer, building a strong network of friends, colleagues, and professional acquaintances, is the single collective system to furthering one's success.

Networking, as I see it, is a skill requiring continuous initiative, exercise and mastering that provides an abundance of experiential and end rewards. You learn about people, organizations and opportunities. You get recommendations, you get interviews, and you get jobs. You connect and get connected. You feel more positive, productive and motivated.

One important and seemingly universal message all networking experts underline is to go into any type of relationship without expectations and self-seeking motives. Jeffrey Gitomer, author of *Little Black Book of Connections* points out that the key to any effective relationship is to go into the relationship, thinking about how you can enrich the other person through their interaction with you.

Similarly, in *Never Eat Alone*, Keith Ferrazzi recalls that when he was asked what the real secret of 'Making it big' was, he replied, "I'll sum up the key to success in one word: generosity....But...Here's the hard part: You've got to be more than willing to accept generosity. Often, you've got to go and ask for it." Ferrazzi explains, "It's a constant process of giving and receiving-- of asking for and offering help. By putting people in contact with one another, by giving your time and expertise and sharing them freely, the pie gets bigger for everyone."

Through both Gitomer's and Ferrazzi's philosophies on networking, I discovered that in order to succeed in any field, you must steer ahead while building strong relationships and compiling an ever-expanding circle of contacts. With networking on my mind, I realized that this skill becomes second nature, as I found myself making 'mental notes' of networking opportunities-- unconsciously building webs of prospective positive connections, not only for myself, but for others as well.

## Use Online Marketing to Create Your Niche

Neha Kashyap

It's no secret that the internet has evolved to become a pertinent tool for businesses promotion and expansion. Although the scope of the World Wide Web can be overwhelming, small businesses can hold their own to create niches that promote their products and services.

Here are some tips to promoting your small business on the internet:

**Community Building:** One way to generate enthusiasm for your product or service is to go beyond professional networking to client networking by creating connections between your current and potential clients. For instance, internet clubhouses on Yahoo! Groups cater to everyone from fashion enthusiasts to amateur chefs. If your company provides home repair services, for instance, you can start a group for those who have questions on home improvement and link to your business on bulletin boards that you use to provide advice.

This technique can also be expanded onto your own website. Since creating an intricate bulletin board system can be costly and time consuming, you can link your domain to a group on Yahoo! or other bulletin board sites such as Google or MSN groups that you contribute to or have created.

**Blogging:** Blogging can be a great way to personalize your business image. Many blog sites such as blogger.com are free of charge and they can be a great promotion and linking tool. In lieu of blogging about running the business, you can generate blogs that pique interest in your industry. For instance, if your business provides event planning services, you can write a fun party blog with pictures. If you have a make up company, your blog can discuss natural healthcare or provide make up tips, and the blog can eventually generate buzz for your own name and business.

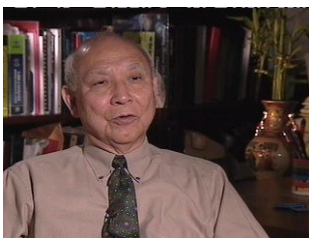
**Article Marketing:** In addition to blogging, writing or hiring writers to write articles relating to your industry for distribution is another way to generate traffic to your own site. Writing about your industry can be a great way to educate yourself and your clients on changes in your field and in your specific business. Ezinearticles.com and selfgrowth.com are two of the many sites that provide article distribution services that help assure that your article is spread throughout relevant websites.

**Using Other Sites to Sell Your Product:** A simple way to expand your client base is to sell your product on sites besides your own like eBay or Amazon.com. Sites like these can be especially useful for those who are looking to start an online business without the expertise or resources to create a new site. They provide simple, easy-to-use templates for selling your product and keeping track of clients.

**Create a Mailing List/Newsletter:** An e-mailing list is a great way to remind your clients of your product or service on a regular basis. A monthly newsletter sent through email can provide information on developments in your business and perks for online customers such as coupons and online-only "hidden" deals. The newsletter can also provide visuals that capture interest such as pictures of new products and star employees. Constantcontact.com and mynewsletterbuilder.com are just two of many resources that can help you reach out to customers through newsletters.

**Simplify:** When taking the step into online marketing, the most important thing to remember is to create a user-friendly website with simple graphics and designs that can emphasize your products instead of the look of the website itself. This makes marketing a bit easier for web novices, and sites such as myownbusiness.org and wilsonweb.com can be great places to start.

### UPCOMING SHOWS



Originally a toy maker, **Joseph Tung's** interest in design led to a career in aeronautical engineering. He began working for Boeing but decided to start his own company. In 1985, he founded the **LEDA CORPORATION** with the help of his wife. The company specializes in electromechanical package design and adheres to a high standard of perfection. The company grosses \$6-7 million a year, 90% of which is for Boeing. LEDA Corp. supplies aeronautical and electromechanical equipment mostly for Boeing's defense, not commercial, purposes. LEDA Corp. is part of Boeing's mentor/protégé program. Boeing offers resources that benefit LEDA Corp. by teaching them about new technology. The goal is to enhance LEDA's capabilities, enabling them to compete for more complex awards.

**Linda Stone** came to the United States from the Philippines with only \$350. She went to school and became a full-time computer programmer, only to realize that temporary employees working at the same company were making twice as much money. The company she worked for asked her to bring in other programmers into the company. Linda realized that her services could become a business and consequently founded **APR CONSULTING**, a temporary employment firm. Linda provides services for Southern California Edison. Upon the recommendation of Edison's supplier diversity manager, she joined Edison's supplier management program. Although she attended an entrepreneurial management program at the University of California, Los Angeles to help manage the firm, Lisa credits Edison's supplier management program for building her business sense.

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**SECRETS OF SUCCESS**

“Patience is a polite quality and often appropriate, but it rarely gets things done. Impatience, however, is the hunger for results and intolerance for excuses and delays. Impatience got me over countless mountain passes, across the finish line in New York City and through four rounds of ruthless chemotherapy 10 years ago.”

**Lance Armstrong-Cyclist**

“Go to the edge of the cliff and jump off. Build your wings on the way down.”

**Ray Bradbury**

“Drive thy business or it will drive thee.”

**Benjamin Franklin**

**HIP-HOP-HAPPENING**



*From Left: Russell Simmons & Nelson Davis*

One of America's best known "urban culture" entrepreneurs recently visited the Making It! offices. Russell Simmons has built and sold several businesses while still presiding over a diverse portfolio of enterprises. One piece of advice he shared with Nelson Davis is "Always focus on your effort instead of the results of that effort. Don't get hung up on the size of your paycheck." Russell will be appearing on an upcoming episode of Making It!