

Who's the Boss?

Alumni entrepreneurs make it their business

Part two

By Daniel Murphy '97

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Business must be built, it's often said, implying an almost architectural approach to entrepreneurialism that's technical and inanimate. But business is about people working together, and its greatest strength may be its genesis in the human mind and heart—the idea to make something new or better, the drive to work hard and take pleasure in a job well done. From catering and printer cartridges to marketing and graphic design, Rowan alumni have dared to take a business idea and make it work for them. This is part two of a story about enterprising alumni who work for themselves and have found success because—at least in part—they had the courage to create.

Marketing Maverick: DVC Communications

Peter Dugan '75 was doing integrated marketing long before it was a buzzword—which is only part of why *PROMO Magazine* named his firm Agency of the Decade.

The rest of his success has to do with hard work, innovation and strong values. Dugan and a business partner formed DVC Communications in 1985 not only with a great idea but also with the vision of a firm that they would enjoy working for. “We built DVC on human values,” said Dugan. “The three core values of the company are viability, goodness and excellence—they drive everything that we do here.”

The firm quickly built a reputation for innovative promotional marketing campaigns using behavioral arts and sciences strategies. Behavioral marketing differs from traditional methods because it uses value-added rewards and incentives to change consumer behavior. These marketing techniques have earned DVC some powerhouse corporate clients including Nabisco, Lucent



Technologies, Warner Lambert, CBS Television, AT&T and Coca-Cola.

Today DVC has 300 employees with offices in New Jersey, New York and Minnesota and has two subsidiary companies, DVC ActiveCare and DVCi Technologies. DVC ActiveCare serves marketing needs for healthcare industry clients and DVCi Technologies provides Internet-specific e-solutions and marketing services.

Dugan believes his company is successful because it has been able to identify and capitalize on emerging trends in the promotional marketing field. DVC was one of the first marketing communication companies to invest in new technologies to use the Internet as a channel for shaping human behavior. “We recognized there were marketing strategies we could employ within the context of the Web to get people to purchase our client's products,” said Dugan.

The company acquired several high-end web development firms that enabled it to merge interactive content with its more conventional marketing and promotion methods. “Our clients told us they

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want a partner who can do it all,” he said. “So we’ve moved from a traditional agency to a more integrated model. We can now apply behavioral marketing techniques across the entire marketing communications field—all focused on driving behavior.”

As vice president of business creation, Dugan’s daily responsibilities include developing new business opportunities for DVC as well as identifying additional industries where the firm can apply its brand of integrated marketing. He is exploring options that would allow the company to grow exponentially on a global scale. “We want to be the leading behavioral marketing firm in the world,” said Dugan. “Not necessarily the biggest—but definitely the best in class.”

Dugan, who was a voracious reader as a child, had an entrepreneurial spirit long before he started DVC. “I grew up in a family with extremely modest means,” he said. “From a young age I learned how to be an independent producer. I was always working two or three jobs to pay for my clothes and education. I learned my life is my own and I’m responsible for it.”

Dugan even exhibited his business acumen while he was a journalism student at Rowan in the early ’70s. During the Watergate scandal he had the selling privileges for the New York Times and the Washington Post on campus. To sell more, he convinced the Journalism Department to make the two newspapers required reading for its students.

The 1997 recipient of the University’s Distinguished Alumnus Award, Dugan lives with his wife Paula and their five children in Harding. He still loves to read, but finds it hard to find the time. “These days most of my reading is done on a plane,” said Dugan, “or reading a children’s book with my kids.”

Masters of Ceremonies: Anthony & Cleopatra Caterers

Just give him a microphone and a crowd, and Anthony (Tony) Langella ’70 literally becomes the life of the party.

His business, Anthony & Cleopatra’s, was named best caterer in South Jersey

six times by the Courier-Post and best place for weddings, brunches and Bar Mitzvahs. While he loves being in the spotlight as MC, his first career choice would have put him in front of a different audience.

After graduating from Rowan, Tony and his wife Arsena Hatgimisios Langella ’70 (both English majors) were looking forward to long teaching careers. Arsena landed a teaching position in Oaklyn, but Tony landed in Army Reserves when he was drafted.

Once out of the Reserves, Tony took a position as a buyer with Gimbels department stores until the day he and his wife were out house hunting for their growing family. Their real estate agent pointed out a catering business for sale—and something clicked. “It was just one of those chance things,” said Arsena. “We took a look at the place and we thought we could make a go of it,” added Tony.

What they lacked in formal business training they made up for in determination and practical experience. Both were familiar with the food service industry—Tony had been head waiter at his father’s restaurant and Arsena had worked as a waitress. Plus, Tony’s Army stint taught him how to cook for large groups.

The couple opened for business in 1973 on a shoestring budget. Arsena’s teaching salary helped the couple make



ends meet until the business took off. “We were also lucky to have the support of her parents who pitched in and did whatever they could to make it work,” Tony added.

And work it has. The business has grown to include two banquet halls: one in Williamstown and one at the Valleybrook Country Club in Blackwood. They’ve catered just about every kind of event imaginable from the Miss New Jersey Pageant and senior citizen banquets to the Inauguration lunch and dinner of Bishop DiMarzio of the Diocese of Camden.

The couple, who lives in Cherry Hill, relishes the role they play in transforming ordinary events into special occasions. Tony manages the day-to-day operations and coordinates details and arrangements for events as well as acting as the MC. Arsena handles personnel matters like interviewing and hiring new employees.

The Langellas’ expertise in helping others celebrate special events have made them a part of many families’ happiest memories, but it has its drawbacks—like cutting into family time with their two children. “This type of business can be hard on the family because you have to put in a lot of hours—especially on the weekends,” said Arsena. “Sometimes it’s hard to pull Tony away. But part of the reason the business is so successful is because Tony really loves what he’s doing—and it shows.”

In addition to serving their clients, the couple believes it’s important to serve the community as well. Tony is a member of numerous civic and business organizations including the Rotary Club of Washington Township, Cherry Hill Kiwanis Club and the Economic Development Board of Gloucester County. “You have to give back what the community gives to you,” said Tony. “So when I can, I’ll hold charity fundraisers, police functions and benefit dinners.”

The couple met before they transferred to Rowan to take advantage of its smaller classes. “At Rowan, everybody

knew you by your first name,” said Tony. “You actually got to know your professors.”

While Tony never had the chance to put his degree to work as a teacher, he is considering entering the profession when he retires. “Students can learn from me firsthand about the kinds of business, managerial and personnel skills they’ll need in the real world,” he said. “I think I would be a tremendous teacher.”

Re-Thinking Ink: Re-Ink Corporation

For William Gallagher ’79, making a buck isn’t the most important thing. “We’re not looking for a quick dollar,” explained Gallagher, “my company’s looking to build relationships. It’s a slower way to get to the end result, but it works for us.”

Gallagher’s company, ReInk, (formerly Wildan Services) produces and re-manufactures printer imaging supplies including printer ribbons and toner and ink-jet cartridges. The business began 14 years ago when his sister-in-law, who was working for a competitor at the time, suggested he help her firm with some overflow business. “I worked out of my garage, on a part-time basis, re-manufacturing printer ribbons for her company,” he said. “We’ve grown ever since.”

Before he started the company, Gallagher was a plant manager for a knitting mill in Camden. When the factory



fell on hard times, he was laid off and found himself contemplating his future. “I had to decide if I was willing to work hard for someone else for another eight years and take a chance at being laid off again or if I should take a shot at going into business for myself,” he said.

Today, the company produces about 500,000 printer ribbons a month for cash registers, ATMs and credit card machines. For many years, printer ribbon production provided the basis of the business and it continues to contribute approximately one third of the company’s revenues. “It’s a small niche product,” said Gallagher, “but we are the largest producer in the United States.”

ReInk, which employs about 150 people, has a diverse staff ranging from factory workers to sales associates and chemical engineers. The company is headquartered in a 32,000 square-foot facility in Pennsauken and has a 10,000 square-foot plant outside of Nashville, Tenn. and sales offices in Florida and California.

Gallagher’s business philosophy is to service the company’s existing accounts first, then acquire and develop new business. He believes that slowly building solid business relationships with his customers is good for managing the company’s growth and reputation. “Our customers know we’ll do whatever it takes to fill their order,” he said. “Overtime, extra shipping costs, whatever—even if I lose money. In the end, my customer is going to appreciate that and they’re going to continue to buy from me.”

Gallagher, who graduated from Rowan with a law/justice degree, lives in Cherry Hill with his wife Roe and their three children. He’s a strong advocate of families coming first—whether it’s his or his employees. He’s only missed one of his oldest daughter’s high school varsity soccer games in the four years she’s played. “During soccer season I’m out of the office two or three afternoons a week,” said Gallagher. “If you need time off—you take it.”

Gallagher is proud that his company is able to successfully compete with

heavy competition from China and Mexico and that he can produce products in the United States as efficiently and cost-effectively as what can be imported. “One of the main factors for our success is that we take care of our employees,” he said. “We have a lot of great employees depending on the company to provide a roof over their heads and I want to make sure the company continues to do that.”

Over the years, Gallagher’s role in the company has evolved from owner and manager to president and CEO. But he still values the importance of strong relationships with employees. “At some point you have to put your trust in your employees,” said Gallagher. “And as the business grows, matures and adds people, you become less of a significant factor. That’s what’s happened here over the last few years. The company is not just about me anymore—we’re past that.”

Pixel Perfect: AdamsGraphics, Inc.

David R. Adams ’82 is the quintessential fine artist—even though he hasn’t touched a paintbrush in years.

Although Adams earned his degree in fine arts, it was the University’s work-study program that gave him his first taste of typography and graphic design. “The work-study program was invaluable to me,” said Adams. “It gave me the marketable skills I needed to work in this field and eventually open my own business.”

In 1986, while working as a graphic designer for Continental Press in Philadelphia, Adams saw the future of publishing. “Apple’s Macintosh computer was just starting to be viewed as a viable platform for professional typesetting and graphic design by the graphic arts trade,” he said. “I knew the time was right and the technology was right.” Adams purchased a Macintosh, a laser printer and an imagesetter (for high-resolution output) and set up shop in a small office inside Continental’s plant. “AdamsGraphics was one of the first pre-press firms in Philadelphia,” said Adams.

“I had the technology required to output computer-designed publications, and many designers and corporate art departments began seeking me out for their desktop publishing needs.”

For most entrepreneurs, starting a business is a major decision but for Adams it was a natural choice. “It really wasn’t a big deal for me since I grew up in a family of entrepreneurs,” he recalled. “Both my father and grandfather owned their own businesses, so I knew I could use them as expert resources.”

Adams did face some resistance from the established printing and prepress community who initially ignored the emerging field. “They thought the com-



puter was a fad and dismissed it as a toy,” said Adams. “What they didn’t understand was that desktop publishing was still in its infancy.”

The desktop publishing revolution prevailed and AdamsGraphics was at the forefront. What started with one employee in a small office grew to 15 employees and a loft studio in Center City Philadelphia with clients from the insurance and pharmaceutical industries, ad agencies and non-profit organizations.

Its reputation for excellent customer service and its commitment to new technologies made AdamsGraphics a leader in the prepress industry in Philadelphia. But Adams realized that his success come at a cost—the graphic design portion of his

business was slowly dwindling from an onslaught of new digital designers.

Instead of conceding the market, Adams created Assemblage. The new company allowed him to keep AdamsGraphics’ identity as a prepress service while building a firm dedicated to producing sophisticated graphic design including annual reports, museum exhibits, corporate logos and marketing brochures. This summer, an estimated 38 million people will see Assemblage’s most high-profile creation so far: the Republican National Committee logo that Adams’ agency designed for the RNC convention in Philadelphia.

BeyondSound is Adams’ newest business venture, a combination of digital video editing and multimedia development linked to Adams’ passion for music. An avid guitar player, his new company’s first project was a CD-ROM-based guitar tutorial called Steve Howe Interactive. It features guitar lessons with the legendary lead guitarist of the band YES, as well as the band’s music, interviews and concert footage.

And while business keeps Adams busy, it’s not all that he’s about. A former leader of the Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship at Rowan, he attended seminary and earned a master’s degree in biblical studies just to expand his religious education.

Adams, who lives in Cinnaminson with his family, sees his artistic and technical interests blended perfectly in his creative businesses. “I may have traded in my paint brush and canvas for a computer screen,” he says, “but I’m still a fine artist.” ■