



Guerrero Howe 2012-2013

This was a very enjoyable – and all too short – relationship. After about a year, they chose to dispense with free lancers and take all of the writing in-house. I had a couple of writing mates who also wrote stories for them. We all miss this gig.

A small sampling of most recently published stories can be viewed below this introductory page. Click on the [image](#) to view the online version of the story. Click on the [text link](#) below the image to view the story within this PDF.



[Comply Works](#)



[Leadership](#)



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Dallas, Texas & the World
Skype = [geauxbeau52](#)

<http://www.publicom-usa.com>

gnbowen@publicom-usa.com
214-272-7651

ComplyWorks
 Founded: 2004
 Industry: Management
 consulting

Playing it by Ear

Listening closely to customer needs has helped **ComplyWorks'** Cal Fairbanks solve problems in compliance management **By Gary N. Bowen**

"Dynamic entrepreneurs [are] more capable of developing and delivering customer-centric solutions simply because they ... listen more and respond faster."
 —Cal Fairbanks,
 President & Cofounder



The world of contractor and supplier compliance management is fraught with concerns over everything from legal liability to worker safety to insurance regulations, and many would likely find the complexities crippling. However, since Calgary-based ComplyWorks was established in 2004, cofounder and president Cal Fairbanks has guided the firm through the field with consistent and measured growth—far beyond the Canadian border. And, along the way, he has cultivated client loyalty through a unique blend of entrepreneurial thinking and a commitment to the sort of productive affiliations that outsourcing customers expect from their business partners.

As ComplyWorks approaches its 10th anniversary, the firm has matured into a global leader at delivering compliance-management solutions that help customers streamline contractor and supplier management and efficient supply-chain processes. The company now has offices in Toronto, Houston, and Pretoria, South Africa, and though it partners with a variety of businesses, it's known for its work in the real estate, mining, forestry, telecommunication, construction, and petroleum industries.

Fairbanks is proud that ComplyWorks' culture fosters innovation by encouraging new ideas. "Any well-thought-out idea is usually a good one," he says. "And anyone, on any level, can have one, internally or [as] a client. For several years, we've had a formula to develop good, embryonic ideas using a defined process: Project Works. Every Monday, our executive committee reviews all ideas in Project Works. Those worth considering are given a timeline and team-follow-up methodology, which investigates and recommends all ideas that are

Photo: Tracy Elliott



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Taking the Reins

WORDS OF WISDOM

“I have yet to see a successful entrepreneur who did not completely believe in his or her idea, trusted their instincts and their people, and set a high energy level by working very hard. That’s the stuff that dreams are made of. And entrepreneurs are dreamers.”

deemed viable. Many of our current solutions were born from someone’s “what-if” idea. And that’s a strength of our company.”

Like many other entrepreneurs, Fairbanks’s motivation to establish his own company early in his professional career dawned on him when he worked for a firm with a more traditional and, to him, less dynamic management structure. “In the late ’80s, I was working for a very large computing company that was a vendor of electronic data interchange [EDI] services,” he says. “We developed the first generation of online EDI, and this was groundbreaking stuff.”

However, “the organization didn’t really encourage dynamic problem solving,” he says. “I was never unhappy, but I knew I could be happier and more productive. I discovered that the traditional linear corporate environment was stifling my enthusiasm for the job itself. There was too much bureaucracy over which I had virtually no control.”

So, Fairbanks identified an opportunity to solve an industry problem. He and his partners figured out a way to streamline compliance-management administration in order to ultimately offer a full boutique of outsourced compliance-services partnerships—in lieu of the more traditional vendor-based relationships. “Customers seemed fascinated by the promise of this kind of service delivery, but at the time, we were dealing with ‘low-hanging fruit’ and not listening to what the customer actually needed,” Fairbanks says. “And it occurred to me that in the world of technology-related services, dynamic entrepreneurs were more capable of developing and delivering customer-centric solutions simply because

they had to listen more and respond faster.

From there, it didn’t take long for Fairbanks to decide where his future lay. “I surveyed my customers about their opinion of a more responsive relevant compliance-management service and, after fielding many enthusiastic responses, saw the opportunity and found others to partner with those who shared my vision and desire,” he says. “The rest is history.”

ComplyWorks has since experienced steady growth, largely because of the consistent market advantages of outsourcing in general (cost savings, greater process efficiencies, mitigated buyer risk) and the heightened administrative responsibilities that all businesses must meet because of greater worker-compliance legislation over the past 15 years.

“Customers see the advantage of focusing all of their internal resources on their core business and outsourcing noncore tasks to providers that specialize in administering them,” Fairbanks says. “Compliance management can be quite tedious and a serious drain on a company’s resources.” ComplyWorks ensures that its outsourcing customers have little cause for concern. **_a**

A MESSAGE FROM MACKAY

For nearly 10 years, ComplyWorks has provided compliance-management solutions to help customers streamline contractor and supplier management and supply-chain processes. All of us at MacKay want to thank you for selecting us as your accounting firm of choice. We look forward to many more years of service.

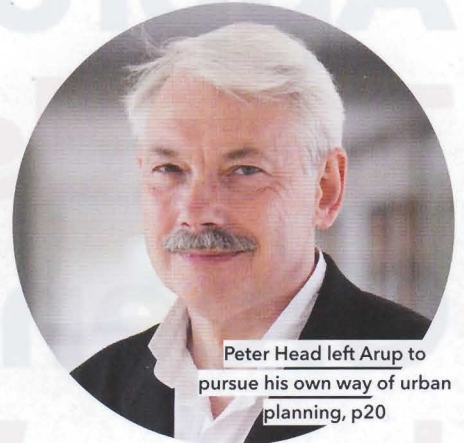
In This Issue

COVER STORY

Nasutsa Mabwa and McCaffery Interests have big plans for the last piece of lakefront property in Chicago, p86



Father Michael Garanzini brings Loyola University back from the brink, p78



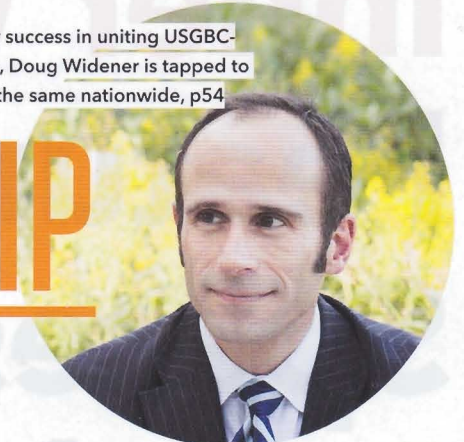
Peter Head left Arup to pursue his own way of urban planning, p20

THE LEADERSHIP ISSUE

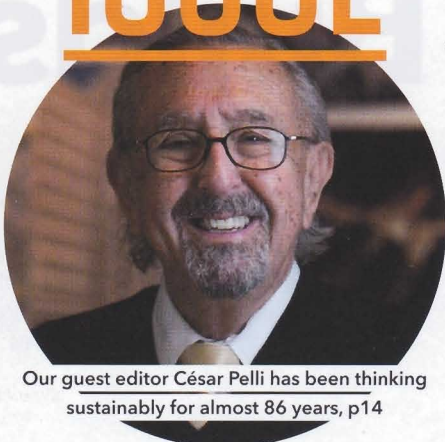
After success in uniting USGBC-Illinois, Doug Widener is tapped to do the same nationwide, p54



Dan Schimberg tracks trends in student housing, p123



David Kohler, Jr. continues four generations of leadership, p38



Our guest editor César Pelli has been thinking sustainably for almost 86 years, p14



Why Katherine Hogan is the architect to watch, p138

PHOTOS: ALLEN WEISS (HOGAN); PETER HURLEY (PELLI); SAMANTHA SIMMONS (GARANZINI, MABWA, WIDENER)

Dan Schimberg

on reinventing student housing for Cincinnati and beyond



Dan Schimberg is president of Uptown Rental Properties, which developed Views on Vine for University of Cincinnati students.

As told to Gary N. Bowen

When I began this business, it was virtually impossible for students to find a quality place to live after moving out of the dorms. Back then, the student housing industry was embryonic and fragmented because off-campus landlords around universities didn't really care about their reputations due to the natural churn in student renters from year-to-year. I felt like we could do better, so I renovated a home with quality fixtures and features. It rented quickly and for a very fair return. I replicated that formula, and in a few years **Uptown** had a reputation for quality housing around

the **University of Cincinnati**, offering nice, clean, and affordable places to live.

As today's off-campus student housing industry emerged, we were positioned to provide a larger number of quality multifamily units because we discovered the broad gulf between what the market was delivering and what students actually want. The days of Animal House are long gone. Today's service involves clean, safe and affordable residences. It's about location, but there's more. There's a large group of people who attend universities who are not ready to leave behind the features they grew up with. They want



Views on Vine is scheduled to open in fall 2013, and the student-housing complex is expected to receive LEED Silver.

ABOUT DAN SCHIMBERG

Title President
Company Uptown Rental Properties
Education University of Cincinnati
Age 50
First Job Stereo sales
Mantra "Operate with respect for all, and conduct yourself with integrity."
Hidden Talent Winter sports
Definition of Leadership "Hire the people you trust, and trust the people you hire to bring their brains to work."

a clean bathroom, windows that work, environmental comfort—in short, a place to live that's on-par with the homes they come from.

What we did in the days before LEED was understand that off-campus housing is a fixed budget issue. Years ago, landlords didn't grasp why the lack of energy-saving features forced students to pay more money to the electric company, leaving less available for the rent. We recognized that good windows, energy-saving appliances, and good insulation justifies fair rents and lowers utility costs. The fact that all of those are LEED features as well is a happy coincidence. But Uptown's decision to do that 20 years ago was more about our desire to help students keep their housing expenditures in the fixed-cost category, which makes our properties more attractive. We like to take LEED features that benefit our student residents as they help lower our own turnover costs before re-renting, features such as sustainable materials that cut down on replacement, high-efficiency appliances and HVAC, smaller designed spaces that heat and cool more efficiently, good insulation. It's a win-win for the resident and for us.

We're drawn to urban infill development because we're "reusing dirt" rather than breaking new ground; we're picking locations that are near public transportation and utilizing existing city infrastructure. At the end of the day, we strive for a win-win, for our students, for Uptown, and for a practical design and location that enhance the urban environment.

We partner with several LEED-centric

contractors. Our recently-completed Jefferson House complex was developed with **Turnbull-Wahlert**, which is a high-end general contracting firm that has developed a couple of projects for us, both of which are certified LEED Gold. Turnbull-Wahlert has established a specialized niche in LEED development, and we enjoy working with them.

Our Euclid Square, Views on Vine, 65 West, and Vine Street Flats projects are all LEED for Homes Silver. In all of them, extremely efficient design is critical. They feature open floor plans with no interior corridors and are slightly smaller than most apartments, but residents don't notice due to the abundance of windows, higher ceilings, more glass and balconies, which makes for greater energy efficiency, appealing aesthetics, and higher quality of living. Our units are primarily studios and single bedrooms, along with traditional two and four bedrooms. We try to design our apartments with high resident turnover in mind. And that means it has to be high-end, utilitarian, and practical in order to effectively manage.

Until recently, Uptown primarily served the Cincinnati community, but in the last few years, the firm has begun to carefully expand its footprint into other parts of the country. We're involved in a rather ambitious off-campus student housing development in a southern state. The project is not seeking LEED certification, but we are incorporating a lot of LEED design features into the development just because it makes the property more valuable and sustainable to us. **gb&d**

Setting the New Standard

InViVo Communications provides medical instruction through cutting-edge 3-D animation and interactive media like never before As told to Gary N. Bowen

Andrea Bielecki is president of InViVo Communications Inc., a 15-year-old award-winning digital agency focused on the health-care industry. Its growing roster of clients includes global pharmaceutical and medical-device organizations and their affiliated advertising and PR agencies. InViVo is leading the medical visual-media industry from the printed instruction of the 20th century into a world of cutting-edge 3-D animation and interactive media, including educational games, mobile apps, and interactive data visualization. Below, Bielecki explains to *Advantage* InViVo's vision and verve.

“ Our goal is to change the way people learn about medicine using leading-edge, interactive tools, coupled with compelling and unparalleled content. And it's not an easy task. If a picture's worth a thousand words, an interactive animation is worth a thousand pictures. We innovate for a large cross section of users: physicians, nurses, patients, and caregivers, mostly through the pharmaceutical and medical-device developers who deliver these interactive products to the end users. They're designed to inspire viewers to learn more about disease, drugs, devices, and procedures on their own, both online and offline.

To us, innovation is about connecting vision through educational health-care applications with striking speed. The most successful products developed for this industry are cross platform for the web, tablets, and mobile devices. So when they're being developed, the more they can be applied to an entire cross section of uses (training, sales, public relations, etc.), the better. This opens up a wide variety of uses that can involve the entire spectrum—ranging from large sales meetings and medical conferences, down to one-on-one doctor/patient interaction.

Pharmaceutical science and medical-device technology is rapidly evolving. Good medicine now includes preventative care and other innovations. The conventional “pill” still has a role, but digital health tools (and therapies) certainly enhance and compliment the benefits of a prescribed drug or device—and will continue to do so.

Besides, doctors love technology. They're bright and educated, want to use it, and recognize they can offer their patients more than just a pill. They also recognize that innovation and technology are poised to advance care in new directions, and drive new efficiencies of self-care and wellness. So why wouldn't they be interested in, for example, groundbreaking educational games? It's pretty clear that “gamification” is quickly moving into the medical mainstream. So using these tools to engage, inform, and teach is more generally accepted than it was just a couple of years ago.

InViVo was born as a digital agency. We never felt we had to follow the traditional agency path. And in the past 10 years, our journey has truly been through the looking glass. There is an old Chinese proverb that summarizes the value of interactive media



5 QUESTIONS
with Andrea Bielecki

1. How do you innovate on a day-to-day basis?

It's a complex process that blends a lot of research and anticipatory logic, and honours the basics of human-computer interaction.

2. How has the notion of innovation changed in the past decade?

In the past decade, the limit was technology; today, it's the ideas.

3. How do you cultivate innovation among your workforce?

I encourage my people to create in a team atmosphere and support their ability to take calculated risks designed to deliver

well-matched content to our intelligent consumers.

4. What defines an innovative company in the 21st century?

Agility—both from a technology and an operational standpoint.

5. How can a company encourage innovation without breaking the bank?

Just because you have a neat new idea doesn't necessarily make it practical or consumer-ready. You need usability research and testing to recognize what can work now and what might work later—if ever. Innovation without a logical, profitable endgame is a disaster few can afford.

“There’s truth in science. Understanding this truth—and respecting it—means we, as medical educators, must validate every aspect of the programs and applications we create.”

—Andrea Bielecki, President

perfectly: “Tell me and I’ll forget; show me and I may remember; involve me and I will understand.” This is a perfect illustration of why it takes innovation and an ability for a true digital agency such as ours to see where interactive tools are heading.

There’s truth in science. Understanding this truth—and respecting it—means we, as medical educators, must validate every aspect of the programs and applications we create. As a conscientious industry provider, we need to deliver unambiguous educational content that is not only true to the science but balanced and clearly communicated for our customers and their patients, as well as in the eyes of the agencies that regulate and govern health-care delivery in every country where our programs are available.

InViVo’s innovation is driven by collaboration. And I learned very quickly that innovative success comes from people who are much smarter than I am; not only in science and art, but also in technology and human-computer interaction. I challenge them and they in-turn challenge me through their vision, teamwork, and collective brilliance. **”**

A MESSAGE FROM GOWLINGS

One of Canada’s largest law firms, Gowlings has over 750 professionals in offices across the country and in Moscow, London, and Beijing. Offering industry expertise in energy, mining, infrastructure, life sciences, government, financial services, technology, and manufacturing, Gowlings provides services in areas such as IP, corporate finance and M&A, transfer pricing, and tax.

LUXE REDUX

Paul Savarino details the New York Palace Hotel's diverse energy savings plan

Interview by Gary N. Bowen

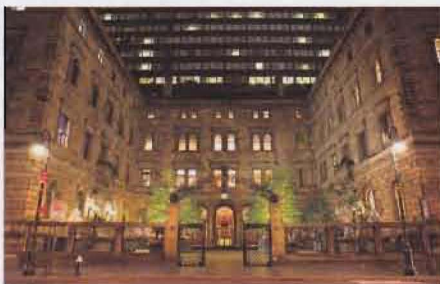
If you were to say that a commitment to renewable energy must be a Spartan endeavor, **Paul Savarino** would beg to differ. Savarino is the director of property operations at New York's luxury **New York Palace Hotel** in midtown Manhattan, and the hotel is in the midst of an ambitious plan to have the hotel operate on 100 percent renewable energy. The plan will reduce energy costs for the hotel and give it a greener footprint, which is important to the current owner, **Northwood Hospitality**. Savarino shares how these plans will transform the luxury hotel industry for the better.

gb&d: Luxury hotels aren't known for their green efforts, so what's involved when a high-end hotel decides to go green?

Paul Savarino: It's definitely more challenging for luxury hotels to implement green changes, as you never want them to impact the guests in a negative way. So most of our efforts take place behind the scenes, just so it will minimize guest impact. This includes running our building the past two years using 100 percent green power through purchasing Renewable Energy Certificates, recycling, composting, green purchasing practices, and, of course, our cogeneration system—it makes a huge impact in reducing our emissions. However, our guests are entirely unaware of its existence. But that doesn't stop guests from asking us, with greater frequency, how we help protect the planet. When we explain our programs to them, they're usually pleased.

gb&d: What other behind-the-scenes efforts do you do?

Savarino: Our 'Green Meetings' initiatives involve turning off unneeded lighting, use of all electronic sales materials, nonplastic water containers, and special paper recycling programs. As we began to renovate the towers area of the property,



we began replacing incandescent lighting wherever possible with LED units, first in the behind-the-scenes employee areas and the banquet and meeting area. We're now doing that as we renovate the hotel's 900 guest rooms and suites as well as replacing all the windows with thermal-pane, energy-efficient windows and implementing automated shades. The retrofits should save the hotel about \$150,000 in electric bills annually.

gb&d: Building retrofits definitely add to monetary savings, but what about energy savings at the hotel?

Savarino: There's also real opportunity there, primarily in the environmental air-handling mechanics. Building controls are being changed and upgraded that impact energy use. This involves tasks such as replacing and recalibrating the facility's automation controls, air-handling units, and pump mechanisms. We've also recently replaced the building's main cooling tower and utilized variable frequency drives on all motors and full automation. It may not

be all that sexy, but the savings and energy efficiencies are upgraded, not to mention the comfort of our guests.

gb&d: How does the cogeneration plant factor into your energy savings?

Savarino: It was a very ambitious, energy-saving project and quite exciting. With the assistance of our installation partner, **RSP Systems**, we finally finished installing our energy-efficient cogeneration plant. It's the largest of its kind installed in a New York hotel. The project took two years, and the plant provides heating, water, and power for the hotel. What this system does is direct the hotel's waste heat through sophisticated heat exchangers and supplements our normal heating load for the seven fall and winter months. [During] the other five months this same waste heat is directed through an absorption chiller to produce about 200 tons of chilled water.

The big impact comes in the winter months when this recycled heat significantly lowers our electric bills. We also anticipate moderate summer electrical savings in creating chilled water for less. The total cost was a little over \$6 million. But a \$2 million award from the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority, an anticipated \$650,000 federal tax credit, plus the recurring savings helps us quickly recover the entire cost of the project. **gb&d**

A MESSAGE FROM RSP SYSTEMS

RSP Systems designed the Capstone cogeneration solution at the New York Palace Hotel, comprising 12 Capstone C65 Dual Mode Microturbines for optimum environmental and economical benefits while also providing back-up power. The system saves the hotel 30 percent on its annual electrical and thermal energy expenses by providing cooling in the summer and heating in the winter from the recovered exhaust energy. The hotel's carbon footprint will also be reduced by 481 tons per year.



COMPANY
HEADQUARTERS
Savannah, GA

CONSTRUCTION
DEPARTMENT
EMPLOYEES
31

AVERAGE
PROJECT
DURATION
25 days

CURRENT
LOCATIONS
Approx. 1,100



Loan Offices on the Quick

A nimble assembly-line approach allows TMX Finance to construct new stores in only 25 days

By Gary N. Bowen

Since its founding in 1998, TMX Finance has become one of the fastest-growing financial institutions in the United States, building new locations rapidly to meet demand. Through the fiscal ups and downs of the past decade and a half, the company has offered loan services under the brand names TitleMax, TitleBucks, and InstaLoan, and these names now hang proudly from more than 1,100 storefronts in 12 states. About 800 of those wholly owned and operated locations have gone up—many of them built in less than a month—since 2006, when the company hired director of construction Joe Rudzinskas, and it's largely because of his efficient, team-oriented changes to the company's processes that it's now looking to continue expanding into new states while building roughly 200 more stores annually.

In addition to managing the construction department, Rudzinskas oversees TMX Finance's FF&E warehouse, and he sees the simple hierarchal structure of both as a major factor in the company's quick builds.

"We don't have a lot of bureaucratic levels here, so the work environment is more intimate and responsive, and it produces employees who are tenacious and unstoppable," he says. "Thanks in part to a three-day permitting process, we recently built out 40 stores in a market in Arizona in less than 90 days. Our monthly goal is to build out 20 new stores, most of which start out as older, preexisting, stand-alone locations."

Thanks to director of construction Joe Rudzinskas's efficiency measures, TMX Finance aims to build about 200 stores annually.

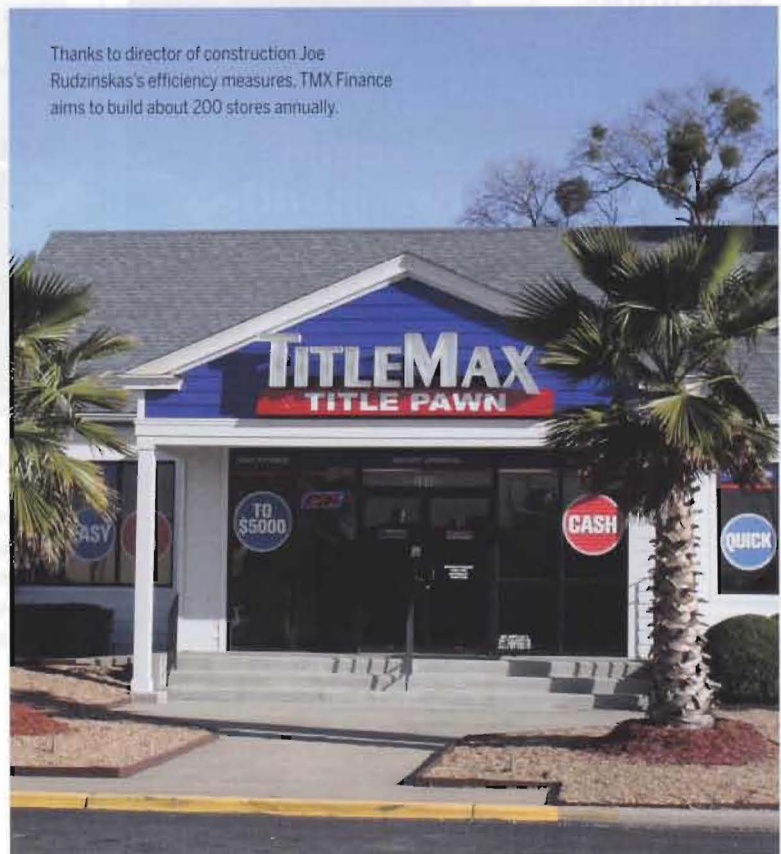


Photo: Allison Jackson

“We don’t have a lot of bureaucratic levels here, so the work environment is more intimate and responsive.”

Joe Rudzinkas, Director of Construction

For Rudzinkas and his team, it’s not unusual to have 80–100 stores in various stages of construction at any given time. Much of the legal legwork, though, including permitting and community relations, is handled by the company’s real estate professionals and attorneys, freeing Rudzinkas up to focus on improving construction efforts and their practical results. “Often, our bright new stores enhance neighborhoods,” he says, “many of which are in various stages of revitalization. We enter markets aggressively, building multiple locations at a time, and the process has to go as smooth as possible. Obviously, we utilize sophisticated technology to track and report each project and maintain schedules.”

Rudzinkas explains that the only way to maintain such a high production level is to have an assembly-line approach, where his department is divided into three wings: reconstruction deals with surveying, estimating, design, and permitting; construction handles utilities and telecommunications, build-outs, FF&E, and maintenance; and a final wing takes care of signage and branding. Rudzinkas relies on the combined construction experience and wisdom of his three department heads for guidance and perspective. “At the end of the day, even if we disagree, we all leave on the same page, having all contributed to the future of the whole,” he says. “One of our mottos is ‘Unstoppable’ because there’s always a way to do the job the right way if you’re relentless.”

A Message from Watchfire

“Watchfire provides some of the best customer service I’ve ever experienced; we typically realize a 30 percent increase in volume the first two months after installing their LED signs. Their Ignite software is user-friendly, allowing us to quickly drive consumer awareness of our offerings and increase store visibility with brilliant graphics and animations. I highly recommend their services.” —Joe Rudzinkas, Director of Construction, TitleMax

Designed, engineered, and manufactured in Danville, Illinois, Watchfire LED signs are powerful tools to drive brand recognition, increase customer traffic, and grow sales—24/7. We are proud to partner with the world’s most recognized brands—especially industry leaders such as TitleMax. Our team will help create corporate signage advertising that highlights your products and gets results. Watchfire and our network of custom sign dealers are ready to bring your building renovation a strong return on investment from day one. What are you waiting for? Call today.

Every team member works on every new location at some point along the development pipeline, so all the members end up relying on one another’s success. This encourages healthy competition while still pushing individual departments to operate as a team first, and for Rudzinkas it’s still the best system. “When there’s a bump in the road, which is not unusual, we just make on-the-fly adjustments, and the system keeps flowing with little fanfare without a hitch,” he says. “After seven years, the process works quite well.” **ABQ**



MEET Joe Rudzinkas

Where did you go to school?

I was a nautical engineering major at the United States Merchant Marine Academy.

What was your first construction job?

MZ Retail Services, managing retail store fit-outs, rebrands, and remodels for various locations.

How did you wind up working for TMX Finance?

There was a certain amount of divine intervention. A recruiter sent a long-forgotten résumé of mine to TMX Finance. I ended up meeting with the owner for a half day. We drove around town, looking at properties, and as he dropped me off at my car, he made me an offer. I was in shock, as it wasn’t your typical job interview, but I wasn’t so shocked that I didn’t see the opportunity.

What personal goals do you have in your current role?

Having accepted Christ, I mean to honor Him through my actions and to do better today than yesterday, always trusting God will put me exactly where He needs me.

OFF THE BEATEN PATH

How **Dan Aiman** built a legal team in Wisconsin to handle the affairs of one of the biggest players in furniture

BY GARY N. BOWEN

How do you build—then lead—an international corporation's legal team from scratch, especially when your headquarters might be seen as less than “geographically desirable: in this case, in the middle of the great North American woods?” What does it take to attract, mold, and keep the best and brightest? According to **Ashley Furniture Industries Inc.**'s general counsel **Dan Aiman**, a man who is doing just that, “You have to hire smart, manage smarter, and have every team member see themselves as stakeholders.”

Founded in 1970, Ashley is one of the largest, most recognized home-furniture manufacturing and retailing firms. Though based in the small town of Arcadia, Wisconsin, Ashley's products are marketed worldwide under the Ashley and Millennium labels to the tune of \$3.3 billion in annual revenue.

Since 2011, when Ashley decided to establish an in-house legal team, Aiman has been vice president and general counsel at the company. “They did it for the usual reasons: a desire to lower costs and also make them more fixed and less variable,” says Aiman of the founding of the legal team. “But they also wanted an *esprit de corps* that's exemplified by internalizing such duties.”

Aiman was charged with establishing Ashley's entire legal division. But building it from scratch, especially when the corporation is headquartered in a Wisconsin town populated by 3,000 people and a 90-minute drive from the closest major metropolitan area of Minneapolis and St. Paul, was his first challenge.

“We didn't get a huge flood of applicants,” Aiman says. “But, on the other hand, there wasn't a dearth of interested prospects either. Not everyone wants to work off the beaten path

in Arcadia. But that can be an advantage, because our prospect list is leaner and composed of qualified people who want to be here. So, the first objective was obvious, attract and hire the right people. Fortunately, we have.”

Aiman's team is small and includes a few paralegals and three attorneys who handle various legal aspects involving human resources, licensing, general business transactions and contracts, transportation, and insurance. “We still outsource our real-estate legal work, and—when necessary—litigation,” he says. “I also benefit from having my original law-firm mentor working here, **Bill Koslo**, who primarily interacts with executive officers and works on special projects. He's practiced law longer than I've been alive and is a great resource. I bounce a lot of ideas off of him. And if we need an extra hand on a project, he loves to roll-up his sleeves and pitch in.”

Since no legal team member has a particular specialty, compartmentalization is not part of the landscape. “There's a lot of teamwork, and a certain amount of cross-over involved: especially on large projects,” Aiman says. “No one gets pigeonholed for very long, and rarely does one team member work on any single project alone.”

“Most importantly, I trust the people I hire,” Aiman adds. “And it's not difficult qualifying these prospects from a smaller pool, because they want to be here.”

A large metropolitan law firm might receive hundreds of applicants. But Aiman rarely receives more than 20 or 25. “So it's just a matter of deciding which ones we want to bring in for interviews, which usually ends up being around one person in five. What we look for, past their qualifications, is how they'll fit in as both leaders and followers, because the sum is greater than the parts.”

Aiman knew from previous experience that he's never been one to micromanage, so with the team assembled, he now lets each



“IF I PUT SOMEONE IN A POSITION THAT'S OVER THEIR HEAD, IT'S MY FAULT. PEOPLE GROW BEST IF THEY'RE NOT PLACED IN NO-WIN SITUATIONS.”

—Dan Aiman

member do what they do best. And since Ashley's culture embraces collaboration, Aiman is secure in delegating, though he admits to sometimes doing too much. "If I put someone in a position that's over their head, it's my fault," he says. "People grow best if they're not placed in no-win situations."

Aiman also encourages his team to lean on, and lead, each other. "Sometimes they need direction from me, so I need to know if the one who approaches needs guidance or reinforcement of their opinion," he notes. "I'd rather counsel them more on the former by helping them see an issue from all sides. My goal is give them a framework to make sound decisions, not to rubber stamp decisions they've already made."

In fact, Aiman's involvement has been tailored to help each team member realize balanced solutions, rather than simply justifying opinions. "We've hired the right people who respond to our culture," says Aiman, noting how well it's worked thus far. "And though it was challenging to find folks interested in working in a smaller community, I think we'd all say it was worth the effort." ■

Mowry & Grimson, a boutique firm in Washington, DC, and Shanghai, has provided focused strategic advice to Ashley Furniture on customs and international trade matters for nearly a decade. Working with Dan Aiman, Mowry & Grimson brought a Constitutional challenge seeking Ashley's share of federal import duties paid to US furniture manufacturers.



mcandrews
McANDREWS HELD & MALLOY LTD

McAndrews, Held & Malloy, Ltd. has been a proud partner of **Ashley Furniture** for over 25 years.

Congratulations
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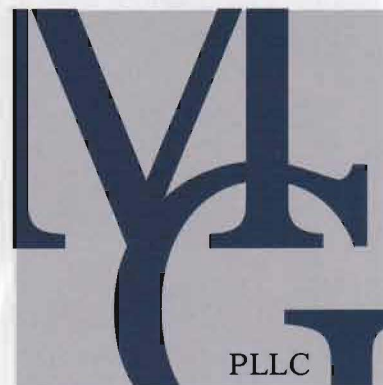
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HACKING IT IN ALACHUA COUNTY

Jim Kilberg pulls on the sum of his past experiences to handle his biggest project to date: **Plum Creek's** 30-year plan to create sustainable timberland in central Florida

Jim Kilberg is Plum Creek Timber's senior vice president of real estate and land management. His responsibilities include development, recreational leasing, and conservation. Currently, one of his largest initiatives is spearheading a community collaboration project in central Florida, coordinating dialogue between local residents and community leaders in conservation, economic development, and education to create a comprehensive plan for the firm's 65,000 acres in Alachua County.

Plum Creek is a real-estate investment trust focused on the growing and harvesting of trees. One of the largest private landowners in the United States, with a market capitalization of \$6.9 billion, Plum Creek owns over 6.4 million acres in 19 US states. Kilberg breaks down his story to show what it takes to oversee such an impressive project.

AS TOLD TO GARY N. BOWEN

“My most compelling task is the one before me. Alachua is a 30-plus year project, which is exhilaratingly complex. It's a puzzle of how various constituencies can collaborate to produce an outcome in which many stakeholders benefit: community residents, local and regional economies, and conservationists.

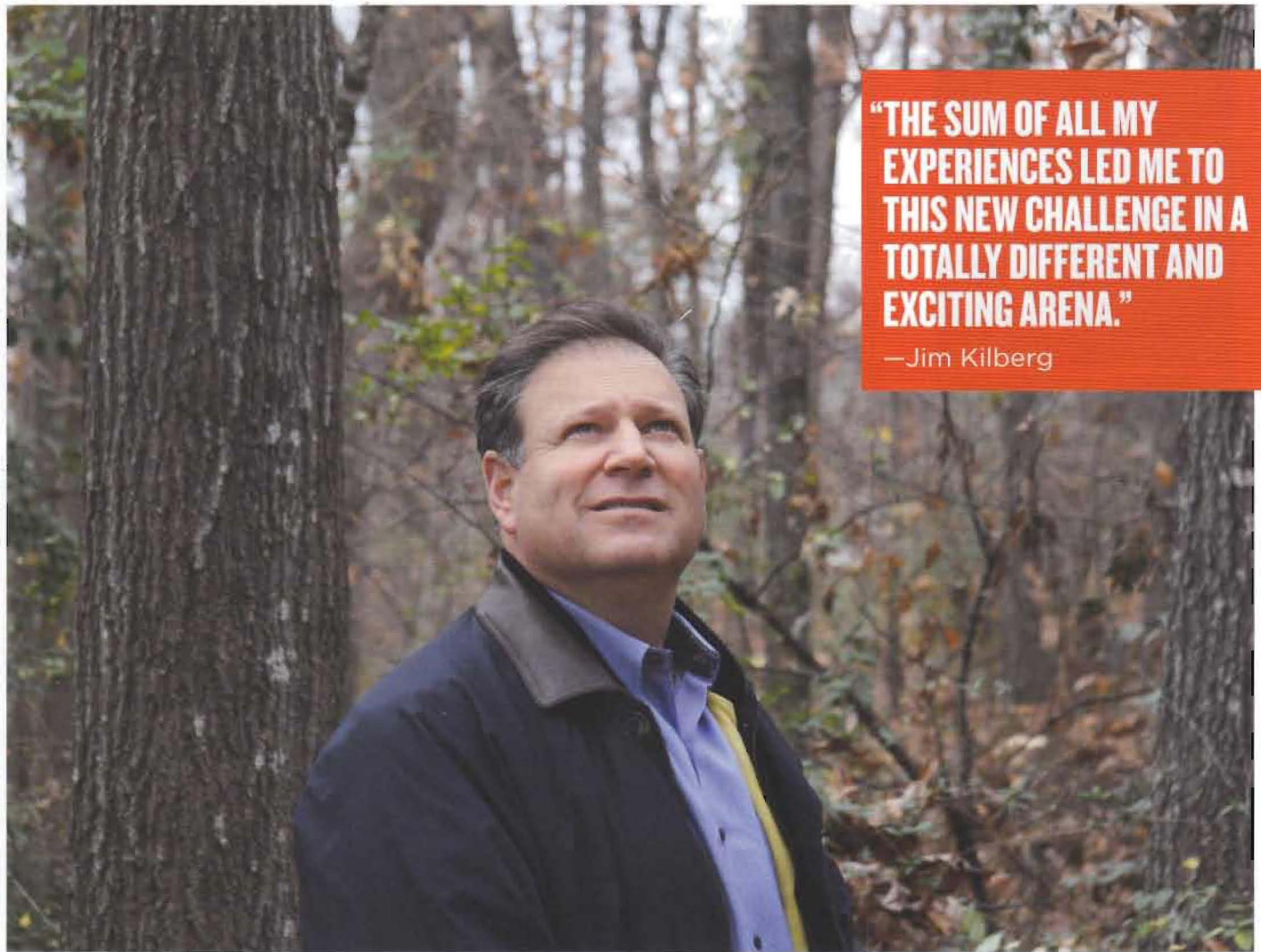
To facilitate this collaboration, we held task force meetings, community workshops, and educational forums. We had no preconceived

notion on what this could become. But what became clear is that the community wants to create jobs and opportunities, while conserving and protecting natural resources. Early in my career, I couldn't have dreamed I would get to work in a sandbox of this magnitude.

Today, conservation funding in the United States is at critically low levels. Fewer federal dollars are devoted to conservation. We've reached a point that, for conservation to survive, it must find a way to work collaboratively with the development community. I firmly believe that through this type of collaboration, conservation, and development can come together to create wonderful outcomes.

There have been points in my career where I was given responsibilities I felt under-equipped to perform. But to grow, you must take risks and accept intellectual challenges. You do your best and find out that you're capable of growing into these challenges. You string a few such experiences together and one day discover that what you once feared becomes a strength, and you anxiously await your next unknown challenge.

I've been fortunate to work at companies with the fortitude to embrace change, and the vision to accept entrepreneurial spirit. Beginning with an IBM internship in 1977, I gained a strong background in marketing. My next employer, AT&T, paid for my MBA. This allowed me to secure a position with Trammell Crow Company (TCC), the nation's largest commercial real-estate developer at the time. I learned much there from unbelievably talented people. But, due to the recession in the late '80s when commercial real estate dried up, I learned my first hard lessons as we gave back a lot of



"THE SUM OF ALL MY EXPERIENCES LED ME TO THIS NEW CHALLENGE IN A TOTALLY DIFFERENT AND EXCITING ARENA."

—Jim Kilberg

properties to lenders and downsized our office from 125 people to 25 overnight. It was the first time I faced true professional adversity. One lesson learned at TCC was to be good to your people because consolidation necessitates painful change for you and those who work for you. Also, never burn a bridge. My relationships would almost magically aid me in the future.

This experience allowed me to form my own company, developing **Publix** grocery stores with an equity partner, but one of my former Crow relationships led me to my next opportunity.

A year later, with the economy still reeling, a friend and former associate at TCC introduced me to **PepsiCo/Pizza Hut**, which was looking for someone to manage Northeast US store development. My TCC tenant experience served me well in this significant leap to a more corporate, less entrepreneurial environment. And I learned two more bellwether lessons that I draw on every day. First, personal relationships based on listening are pivotal at every organizational level. The second was my introduction to outsourcing, not yet a formal business strategy, and how it can insulate firms from human-capital tragedies that accompany dramatic contraction.

Then, in 1995, I met executives from **Pep**

Boys at a social function. As luck would have it, Pep Boys needed a vice president of national store development. During my tenure, the company went from opening 10 new stores a year to over 250. Such ambitious growth requires a lot of people. However, after my experience at PepsiCo, I built a department that was half in-house and half outsourced.

I hired over 100 people for Pep Boys in three years (including outsourced development and brokerage partners). But then, their stock saw a dramatic slide. Overnight I had to let almost everyone go. I felt personally responsible for these people and used my network of recruiters from my Pizza Hut days to help them find new positions. Little did I know how quickly that good karma would be returned, because I was also looking for a way out.

A former Pep Boys associate coincidentally was in the office of the new president of National Retail with TCC and mentioned my name in passing. This led to my virtually immediate return to Crow as their EVP of national retail services. By this time, TCC was enthusiastically outsourcing, an area in which I had significant experience. It wasn't long before I was promoted and moved back to the South, as a central figure in TCC's

WHAT I'VE LEARNED

JIM KILBERG'S RULES FOR SUCCESS

1. "Never burn a bridge—you never know when who you work with will become a window to your next opportunity."
2. "Integrity first, last, and always in your personal and professional life."
3. "Listening will always serve you better than speaking."



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We congratulate Jim Kilberg and Plum Creek Timber for their groundbreaking approach to creating value for their shareholders.

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“THERE HAVE BEEN POINTS IN MY CAREER WHERE I WAS GIVEN RESPONSIBILITIES I FELT UNDEREQUIPPED TO PERFORM. BUT TO GROW, YOU MUST TAKE RISKS AND ACCEPT INTELLECTUAL CHALLENGES.”

—Jim Kilberg



Global Outsourcing Services business.

Five years later, another Crow counterpart went to work for Plum Creek, to start up their real-estate program. Plum Creek was trying to develop a strategy to understand the best value and outcomes for its portfolio, and build an organization to execute that strategy. Within those rural timber assets, there was significant potential for “alternative value.” The sum of all my experiences led me to this new challenge in a totally different and exciting arena, and I enthusiastically accepted [Plum Creek’s] executive offer in 2003.

A master plan is emerging for this large development in Florida. We can’t assume anything when working in a community with various—and sometimes competing—interests to create a new comprehensive plan. We must listen with an open mind. Gainesville has become a “brain hub” city, with highly valued intellectual capital available

for collaboration. To help the Plum Creek master-planning process, we’ve engaged big thinkers.

Any development over 15,000 acres requires both a sector plan and a DSAP [detailed specific area plan]. The entire parcel is currently zoned for agriculture and timber. Legally we

are permitted to divide it all up and sell in small parcels. But Plum Creek considers long term stewardship and the interests of the community where we will continue to live and work well into the future.

How do you show the public that something is happening other than just talk and planning? And most importantly, how do you produce true economic development for a community, and maintain perpetual respect for the environment? We’re identifying these answers together with complete transparency, as we all work to create a new economic development paradigm. ■

A Feather-Light Touch

Zip Signs CEO Fred Bennink trusts his staff, and delegates astutely to achieve time-tested service success **BY GARY N. BOWEN**



CEO Fred Bennink attributes much of his success to never micromanaging.

When Zip Signs Ltd., one of the largest full-service digital-sign companies in Ontario, celebrates its 40-year anniversary this year, there's no question that a round of applause and recognition will go to CEO Fred Bennink. He's been at the helm for 30 years, and under his stewardship the company has grown from a handful of employees to its current roster of 80. Specifically, it's his ability to unoppressively hone his staff's sense of direction and purpose that has made Bennink such a successful leader and his company such a mature, popular service provider.

"There are executives who micromanage," Bennink says, "but on the other hand, you must have faith in the company structure and your ability to hire the right people. Our employees have more skills and expertise than I do, so I establish the boundaries and then let them do their good work." Employees who know how much they are valued as people and team members create a very strong peer-driven organization, the CEO explains, and micromanagement isn't necessary when motivated employees clearly understand policies, goals, and job descriptions.

Constantly pursuing these objectives, Bennink sees himself as more of a company visionary, a client liaison—when necessary—and, on occasion, a bit of an in-house cheerleader. "We create an environment where people



"An important, and fun, part of my job is to recognize [employees'] good work and single it out—unlike micromanagers, who typically dwell on the opposite."

—Fred Bennink

aren't afraid to make a mistake," he says. "But an important, and fun, part of my job is to recognize their good work and single it out—unlike micromanagers, who typically dwell on the opposite."

Bennink also conducts monthly "state of the company" meetings to establish the coming month's goals, recognize outstanding work that led to the previous month's goals being met, and go over some of the company's generous employee-benefit programs. These include monthly profit sharing and a continuing employee education program, which Zip Signs helps underwrite.

While his project managers do the day-to-day managing, Bennink himself keeps in close touch with clients. This allows him to learn about his teams' strengths and shortcomings directly, and he relays this information to his managers so that they can modify their processes and improve Zip Signs' service delivery. "When clients tell me where we're falling short, I've been in this business long enough to have a good understanding of what needs to be done to improve the service," Bennink says. "It seldom takes more than a couple of minutes for me to explain the client feedback to the managers for them to understand—and not long after for them to make any necessary modifications to the rest of their team members. The process is well honed to a fine edge, and tangible improvement becomes apparent very quickly."

With his company now consistently meeting its short-term goals, Bennink has begun setting his sights further into the future. "I've been here for 30 years, so I can see my days here winding down," he says, quickly adding, "That won't come anytime soon because I'm having too much fun. But, we visit and revisit our strategic and tactical term goals. My son and son-in-law are part of the business, so we are leisurely developing a management succession plan well in advance of the day it will actually occur. We're also developing five-year plans surrounding service, sales, and staffing modifications to the organization. Just the technology of our business and how it can quickly change makes these a necessity. And it keeps us on the leading edge of success." **a**



With no plans to retire anytime soon, Bennink has already begun succession planning.

Zip Signs
By the Numbers

thirty

Number of years Zip Signs has shown a profit since Bennink bought the company

22

Number of years that Zip Signs has exceeded 25% compounded growth

1 million

Number of consecutive hours without lost employment time due to a workplace accident

fifty-four

Record number of consecutive months during which employees received profit-sharing checks

4

Number of nonprofit boards and committees that Bennink currently sits on



The Dining Consultants

When restaurants need to get up and running quickly, **Café Concepts** takes the reins

LOOK AND LAYOUT ARE CRUCIAL TO ANY RESTAURANT'S success. Kitchen equipment must be chosen and placed so that cooking staff can move around unimpeded, seating must be arranged to maximize customer capacity and comfort, and signage must be clear and convincing to draw diners in. Café Concepts, Inc., a family-owned consulting business established in 2001, takes care of all of this, and its young age and intimate approach are winning it clients both large and small.

The firm has partnered with restaurant chains' corporate offices, individual franchisees, and independent eateries, including Baja Fresh, Capriotti's Sandwich Shop, and the Counter.

"On average, we provide these services to about 50 restaurants per year," CEO Jill Walsh says. "About 70 percent of them involve major national and regional chain restaurants. The remainder is with individually owned restaurants."

Walsh believes a large part of Café Concept's success is because it approaches service delivery from a different perspective than its competitors. "Many of them have been in business for more than 70 years and have fixed, bureaucratic business models," she says. "But as an entrepreneurial-outsourcing provider, we offer the advantage of quick and nimble response to the shifting needs of our customers—sometimes at the drop of a hat and more than once."

Jill and her husband, Café Concept's vice president and COO, have noticed a significant shift in customers' needs in the down economy of the past five years. The company is still doing substantial business, but it's working less on new construction and more on rebuilds and remodels. A lot of the builds are in locations such as strip malls or sites where other businesses are immediately adjacent, and there are still some renovation projects involving old stand-alone locations, but Café

At a Glance

Location
Rancho Santa Margarita, CA

Founded
2001

Employees
7

Specialties
Restaurant branding and interior design, kitchen development, and kitchen-appliance vending

Above: For U-Swirl, a frozen yogurt franchise, Café Concepts handled design planning as well as furniture and equipment procurement.



Café Concepts has done restaurant planning and design for a variety of clients, including the Counter, a custom burger chain.

Concepts takes the same passionate approach regardless. “We do full project management,” Walsh says. “We will go out and do rough-in plumbing and electrical checks, wall-backing checks, field measure the jobs, and manage the installation—either by our crew or the general contractor’s.”

Each new client and project comes with its own set of challenges, and some of the trickiest have involved negotiating strict franchisor-franchisee relationships.

“The franchisors grant us the access to the account, and we must hold firm to their standards, designs, and specs, but the franchisee is the one who contracts with us and purchases from us,” Walsh says. “Our mantra of

“We offer the advantage of quick and nimble response to the shifting needs of our customers—sometimes at the drop of a hat and more than once.”

JILL WALSH, CEO

responsive, personal service becomes an asset in helping to build a solid consensus between franchisor and franchisee within a window that’s often much less than 90 days.”

Café Concepts works differently but just as closely with independent restaurant owners. “The dynamics are different because a single restaurant owner is so intimately invested in his or her project, which often includes a unique brand or standard of service,” Walsh says, adding that many independent owners also have special needs, including particular kitchen setups for their chefs. “Here again is where our responsiveness is an asset because the sequence of development can be different.

At the end of the day, Café Concepts is there to help all its new franchise owners and independent clients create successful businesses, and that means Walsh and her team have to do whatever it takes. “We do a lot of adapting and adjusting in short periods of time,” she says, “but that’s our stock-in-trade.” —*Gary N. Bowen*

Top 5 Pillars of Success for Café Concepts

- 1 **Possess a standard of quality** that parallels or exceeds customer expectations.
- 2 **Be nimble** in order to respond quickly to changing customer needs and desires.
- 3 **Remain familiar with the latest technology** for design, procurement, and all vital inventory and PLU services.
- 4 **Keep close relationships with manufacturers** and be intimately familiar with any changes in their products and services.
- 5 **Retain relationships with food-service purveyors**, both domestic and international.

A Message from Glacier Design Systems, Inc.

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