



ENTREPRENEURSHIP CORNER



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MCLEAN WATSON VENTURE CAPITAL

Q. SO, WHY AREN'T YOU A BANKER OR A CONSULTANT?

A. In the venture capital industry, I am close to the action and can feel the pulse of our companies and their industries. The work is proactive, in contrast to some, service professions (like law) in which I once worked. One piece of magic in this business is the variety of people, opportunities and industries to which I am exposed. I was a lawyer in a large firm and in my own firm for 8 years. It is an honorable profession, but I like the high risk/reward business of building new enterprises.

Q. WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO START A COMPANY?

A. I have been selling lemonade at stands since I was 5 or 6, and have had small businesses pretty consistently since that time, so it was an extension of my character to work for myself. When we started McLean Watson Capital in 1994, my partner John Eckert and I determined there was an opportunity in Canada because venture capital and early stage technology investing had barely started. We were building on a high profile success with a Montreal company called Softimage, so starting McLean Watson Capital was an evolutionary step. In addition to gut feel, we wrote a business plan where the numbers and opportunity added up. The power of written business plans never ceases to amaze me.

Q. WHAT DOES YOUR COMPANY DO?

A. Our job is to help entrepreneurs build great businesses. We are venture capitalists - or asset managers - of relatively early stage companies. We invest primarily in Canada and South East Asia, and have an office and partner in Singapore. Beyond investing, we do what we can to help build our portfolio companies. We have expertise in transition management – helping companies get from A to B.

Rather than being confined to a narrow industry, we have a fairly broad mandate. Our expertise includes technology investing (mainly information technology, telecom), and mineral exploration technology (hey, Canadians are world leaders in this area). We control the largest ground geophysical services company in the mineral exploration industry, and founded our own mineral exploration company. We also have invested in media and life sciences.

Q. HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN AT IT?

A. If you don't count lemonade stands, selling subleasing forms and school ties to my law school colleagues, and so on, my first material investment was in Softimage. I closed the deal over the fax machine while I was supposed to be in class at INSEAD. It turned out to be the first Québec company to do its IPO on Nasdaq, the first public company Microsoft purchased, and was voted one of the "Top 100 Small Companies in the World" by Forbes while I was co-Chief Operating Officer.

Q. WHERE DO YOU INTEND TO TAKE IT?

A. To the moon. See page 8 of our business plan.

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Q. WHAT IS YOUR DEFINITION OF SUCCESS?

A. Doing the right thing in all aspects of your life, personal and professional, and knowing it.

Q. WHAT KEEPS YOU UP AT NIGHT?

A. Parenting teenagers is a 24/7 job. We lost an employee on September 11, 2001 in the World Trade Centre, and in one of our businesses three others died at work.

Q. HOW CAN THE INSEAD ALUMNI HELP YOU?

A. I have had tremendously good fortune to work with many great INSEAD anciens. A great example is www.zenoglobal.com; a new technology for advertising that turns still graphics into video images. Launching a new company

with global appeal takes a unique kind of entrepreneur. Les anciens Akash Sahai and Chris Bulger are piloting Zeno to new heights. Kamal Hassan worked hard to get the company going, as did my classmate, Luc de Waegh. We have investors from INSEAD and our Singapore agent is also a graduate. We look forward to plenty more help from graduates in the out-of-home advertising, retail, real estate and media industries!

Q. WHAT DID YOU LEARN SINCE YOU STARTED THIS COMPANY?

A. Three things...

People build great businesses. The magnificent Toronto entrepreneur Ed Mirvish summarized it best by the title of his autobiography – 'Business is People'.

As we were taught in my entrepreneurship class at INSEAD (it was the first year it was run), it is **opportunities and not ideas that make money.** Ideas are a dime a dozen, opportunities are more subtle and infinitely more valuable.

Do what you love.

Q. WHERE CAN I GO TO LEARN MORE ABOUT YOUR COMPANY?

A. www.mcleanwatson.com
www.zenoglobal.com
www.thefightnetwork.com
www.quantesciences.com
www.vismand.com
www.i4i.com

