

Business Owners' IdeaCafe

Spotlight on Top Business Owners in Business Consulting & Coaching

KnowledgeLabs News Center

Name: Seamus Phan

Location: Singapore

Type of Business:

Keynote speaker, writer, journalist, researcher, corporate trainer

What does your business do?

Provides keynote speeches and custom training programs to corporate and government clients, and syndicate well-researched editorial content to trade publications, print media, newspapers, magazines, TV and radio stations.



When and why did you start the biz?

I co-founded a successful international consulting firm, McGallen & Bolden Group, since 1991 (with series of mergers involved), and subsequently decided to pursue a more independent path in late 2001. This venture was started as a personal vehicle to spend more time for myself.

How Many People are in your Company?

2 to 5.

Where's your office?

I work mostly out of home, and share a small table with some other colleagues at a real work place as well, just to reduce my running costs. There is cable/DSL connectivity at home, and I have a full recording studio for on-air (TV and radio segments) production, as well as a fast Apple Mac for all kinds of creative, journalistic, writing and development work. Plus, I get to watch news on cable TV channels anytime, and can simply lie down for a quick nap when I'm really tired. There is also a minimalist home gym with free PowerBlock weights, bench and other equipment, to push my body around a bit.

What's the toughest part of running your biz?

As with any business, that of finding prospects and turning them into endearing customers. Prospects are harder to find these days, with less knowledgeable but hungry people entering every segment of the market with cut-throat basement prices with correspondingly low quality work. However, we soldier on.

What's the most fun part?

Obviously, you no longer report to bosses, and you are completely accountable and responsible for your own successes and failures. I enjoy that. Plus, you have better control of time, and can lead a decent, good quality personal life.

Anything you would have done differently?

Perhaps I can scale back my personal pursuits of additional studies on top of the PhD I have already earned, so that I can bring more personal attention to the work and business. But just a learning point in my life that I can't possibly do so many things at one time.

What's next on the horizon for your biz?

To continue to build allies with leading trade publications, magazines, dailies, TV and radio stations, and to foster more partnerships with North American book distributors and agents who can help enhance our book products business.

What advice do you have for others?

Never borrow money and expect to turn a fast profit, especially in these difficult times. I did borrow against credit in my first venture, an advertising and design studio, and that was exceptionally harsh for the heart. Subsequently, I build consulting firms with no loans whatsoever, and was able to steadily build the firms without bad sleep every night. For this venture, I continue the philosophy of not borrowing money from the banks. I'm free to do what I want, and grow the business slowly but surely.

How do you use Idea Cafe to help your biz?

To be able to network with other like-minded creative professionals and learn from what they have done in North America, and be able to share my own domain knowledge and expertise as well. After all, knowledge is gained best by sharing, not by keeping to one self.

School (where, still in school, degree)?

Greenwich University, PhD, Business (Quality Management)

Prior jobs or business?

Co-founder/Partner, McGallen & Bolden Group Ernst & Young, Senior Consultant (Human Resource) Price Waterhouse, Practice Development Executive Citibank Asia Pacific Banking Institute, Publications Director Seagate Technology, Training Officer

Favorite Food?

Cooked Japanese food

Is there any one person or event in your life that led you to go into business for yourself?

I was talking to a dear friend and mentor, John Law, who told me to at least stay longer at one of the jobs I dreaded (not those mentioned here). I listened to his advice, and soldiered on and stayed long enough. Finally, I began to formulate my business plan whenever possible, and decided that my individuality was best suited to working for myself, and not stuck in some bureaucratic scenario.

Anyone you publicly want to thank?

(Not in any order): John Rapp, John Law, Bill Ferguson, Dr Phil Hines, Roma Kubchandani, Peter Lee, Dr Douglass Capogrossi, Dr Angela Keogh, Dr Harvey Menden, Dr Bruce Niedrauer, Dr Norman Pearson, Dr Kenneth James, David Chin, Philip Khoo, Anthony Lim, Ter Hui Peng, and my folks and brothers of course. But frankly, too many people to thank through my life!

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