

## Life Planning

# Define What Makes You Tick—Your Personal Manifesto

by Lynne Meredith Schreiber



Work as Freedom. Work as Family. Work as Fulfillment. That's the Sloan brothers' manifesto, the core of their life plan, and it's the bedrock of every endeavor taken up by the founders of StartupNation.

They define it as "your personal mission, your values, what drives you forward," the flag that flies above an entrepreneur's career. At least it should. To borrow a phrase, it works if you work it.

Charles Massimo, founder and president of CJM Fiscal Management in Garden City, N.Y., runs his wealth-management firm by four values: family, trust, loyalty and discipline. He went out on his own four years ago mainly because the big companies where he'd worked were lacking in all four.

"People are trusting their life-savings to me," Massimo says. "I tell my clients no one's going to care about their finances more than me. We treat everyone as family—people we work with as well as our clients."

A solid manifesto takes time to create, Massimo continues. Essentially, it has to come from living life.

For him, the birth of triplets seven years ago helped define what his is all about. Two of them are autistic, with special needs, and Massimo brings into his business the idea that his clients also have people who depend on them.

"As things change in your life, parts of your manifesto are going to change," he explains. "You always have to be aware of the true core values. Those have been with you your whole life, whether you recognize them or not."

## Just Do It

The dictionary defines a manifesto as "a public declaration of motives and intentions"—not a bad thing to have when you're creating a company.

"No business plan truly reflects what's going to happen," says Peter Burns, whose manifesto is "Ready, Fire, Aim." An entrepreneur who has started more than a hundred businesses, Burns was one of the original members of the Young Entrepreneurs' Organization. "You have to get up to bat and swing. Success in entrepreneurship is swinging the bat."

Burns' personal manifesto has led him to get into and succeed in dozens of industries where he had no previous knowledge or experience, including his original startup – importing mopeds and renting them at American resorts.

"You find the people who are good at the tasks," he says. "Don't outthink yourself or say you can't do it. Just get up there and swing."

## Merging Life and Work

David Becker's manifesto, "Business as a creative platform," has allowed him to bring his personal passions into the office and use his business skills to feed his philanthropic desires.

Becker, president of Philippe Becker Design, founded the San Francisco company in 1998 with his brother, Philippe, based on this manifesto. They wanted to "connect all the dots on the page."

"We view this business as not an end in itself but as a means to doing what we want to do," Becker says. Under their manifesto, the Beckers have created their own wine label, transforming their passion for wine into a fruitful pursuit. They've also used their creative skills to assist Mayor Gavin Newsom on Project Homeless Connect—again merging life and work into one.

"I have an entrepreneurial goal, and that is to leverage the very talent that we use on behalf of our clients for ourselves," Becker says.

Coming up with a manifesto isn't always preceded by an "Aha! moment," he says. "It's just reaching a level of maturity" where all your values converge.

"You're kind of self-censoring if you are not firing on all cylinders about the things that really excite you."

## Clue in to the Buzz

Patrick Coulson created GolfBuzz.com in April 2006 out of his passion for both golf and technology. But he was guided by sort of an expanded manifesto he calls "startup principles."

"It had to be a business that you could explain to your grandparents and they could understand it," Coulson says. He also wanted to be among people—colleagues and clients—who were passionate about what they were working on. And it had to be a business that, if asked about it at a dinner party, would make him the most interesting person in the room.

"I definitely think it's helped us build a culture and a product that we're all passionate about," he says of his personal manifesto. "It's definitely a place you want to work. It's satisfying."

And at the end of the day, that's exactly what you want.