

# BEARS IN THE WORKFORCE

FORGET ABOUT A STANDARD NINE-TO-FIVE WORK SCHEDULE, AND LOG ON FOR A SKYPE CALL TO CHINA AT 10 P.M. INSTEAD. TAKE A RISK AND DISCOVER YOUR CAREER PASSION. START USING CREATIVITY IN YOUR JOB SEARCH. NETWORK TO ENTER INTO A NEW INDUSTRY. THE WORKFORCE AND OUR WORK ENVIRONMENTS ARE CHANGING, AND WE CAUGHT UP WITH A FEW ALUMNI WHO SHARED THEIR STORIES WITH US.

BY KRISTIN TODD STIRES

SHELBY

MIKE

JENNIFER

DRAKE & DAVID

Shelby Burford has always loved business and entrepreneurship. He also loves a good story, and he has plenty of them — like the one about his first venture, when he set up a lemonade stand off a dirt road in his tiny, rural Indiana town. His parents still have a photo of a tractor pulled up next to the stand.

Once, he and his sister held an “art sale,” which consisted of coffee filters dyed with food coloring displayed on a card table in the family’s front yard. The art sale was strategically planned when funeral service attendees were arriving at the church next door. Burford’s dad happened to be the officiating pastor, and as you can imagine, the art sale was quickly shut down.

At age 14, Burford started his own graphic design company, which he kept throughout his time at Baylor. Then, there was the time he was a contestant on “Wheel of Fortune.”

But one of his more recent stories begins on a New Year’s Day flight to Seattle in 2011. Burford had graduated with a degree in Entrepreneurship

## CREATIVE

in December 2010 and decided to move to Seattle, but he needed a job.

“I booked a one-way ticket to Seattle,” Burford said. “On any flights I had taken before, I always brought a résumé with me because you never know who you’ll be sitting next to on a plane. I thought printing an abridged version of my résumé on cocktail napkins and having the flight attendants pass them out with beverage service would be a good way to make a connection with each passenger.”

Burford enlisted a company specializing in weddings and events to print up 250 résumé napkins. After approaching the flight attendants with his idea, Burford was given permission to hand out the napkins himself. So he followed the beverage cart down the aisle and distributed his résumé, which included his seat number, to 160 passengers; however, it wasn’t quite the target audience he had hoped for.

“The passengers ranged from supportive moms and families that said ‘Great job!’ and ‘Good luck!’ to uninterested tourists who were

wiping their mouths with the extra napkin,” he said. “There weren’t really any business people.”

Burford decided if the right people heard the story about his cocktail napkin résumés, it could lead to some job interviews. He emailed the *Seattle Times* and an article ran less than a week later.

“After the article ran, I received about 100 emails and ended up doing 27 interviews over six months,” he said. “There were some positions that I thought were great, but they fell through; there were other positions that I ended up turning down.”

Burford finally landed a job at Biz Kid\$, a public television series that teaches youth about money, business and entrepreneurship. As marketing and brand manager, he oversees social media efforts, writes a blog, conducts research and creates retail products. One of his major projects has been the launch of a pilot program to incorporate Biz Kid\$ video content paired with lesson plans into high school and middle school classrooms, and he is now working to expand it nationally.

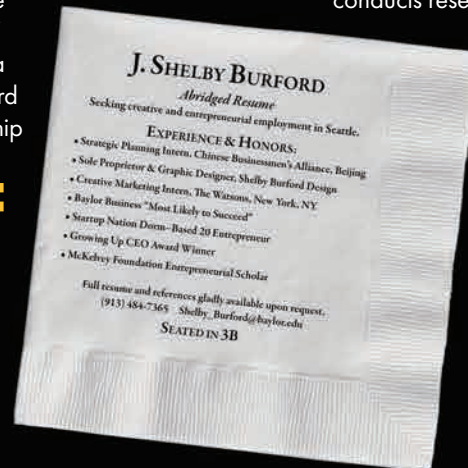
## RÉSUMÉ

“Finding a job can be a difficult process, but it is your responsibility to communicate that you are the employee that company needs,” he said. “That involves being creative, taking initiative and getting into a company’s world before they are even looking for someone. There will always be a need for excellent people, but persistence is vital.”

Burford has garnered further coverage from media outlets, including *The Kansas City Star* (syndicated column) and American Public Media’s *Marketplace Money*®, and his creativity continues to serve him well. In April 2012, he returned to campus to compete with a friend in the Baylor Entrepreneurship New Venture Business Plan Competition — they walked away with the \$15,000 first place prize. But that’s just another story to add to his collection.

“In my classes at Baylor, I learned how to tell a compelling story in business,” he said. “That’s why the napkin résumés ultimately worked. It created a story that was interesting and caught people’s attention. It was more than just a pragmatic story about a kid looking for a job.”

\*At time of print, Burford accepted a new role with Amazon.



BBA '10  
MARKETING AND BRAND MANAGER  
BIZ KID\$  
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# SHELBY BURFORD





**N**eed to know how to beat jet lag? With more than three million airline miles logged, Mike Markwardt is a true international businessman and can give you the inside scoop on travel.

"I've been to China 85 times in the last 32 years; I should win some type of award for that alone," he laughed. "Back in the '80s and early '90s, before the Internet, you had to travel to overseas factories. It was the only way to properly communicate and to get your product in front of the big buyers."

Before he began racking up frequent flier miles, Markwardt attended Baylor on a partial track scholarship as a pole-vaulter. After graduating with a degree in Management and Marketing, he joined the family business, Encon Industries, a ceiling fan supply company that his father started in the late '70s.

"It was one of those product categories that comes along once in your lifetime," Markwardt said. "My dad was the first American to import a container of ceiling fans into the United States in 1977, and the business just took off."

In 1991, Markwardt started the company's European division with warehouses in Germany and England. Five years later, the division was generating close to \$20 million a year. Markwardt also spent time in Asia developing relationships with Walmart, Target, Home Depot and Lowe's buyers, and learned how to speak Mandarin.

"It was exciting to see the dramatic growth of the business," he said. "We had close to \$100 million in revenues when we sold the company in 2000."

The Mandarin lessons and international supplier relationships proved extremely beneficial to Markwardt as he embarked on his current venture, Legaré Furniture, in 2004. The company designs and imports office, media, occasional and youth

bedroom furniture made from Moso bamboo or eco-friendly MDF. No tools are needed for the furniture assembly; in fact, Legaré's major selling point is a three-minute product assembly time.

"In Italian, 'legaré' means 'to connect' or 'join together,'" Markwardt said. "Since our furniture is designed for tool-free assembly with interlocking pieces, we thought the name was a great fit for the company. I describe the furniture as 'IKEA on steroids.' We have a similar style, but our pieces are made with better quality materials, and tools aren't needed for assembly."

Legaré furniture, manufactured in China and imported to the U.S., has won numerous industry design awards, and Markwardt emphasized the importance of patents for protecting an innovative product.

"We have several U.S., Canadian, European, Taiwanese and Chinese utility and design patents in place," he said. "That's the name of the game in the import business. If you don't have intellectual property rights, it's really hard to maintain gross profit margins because your product can get knocked off easily."



Markwardt handles global sourcing, distribution and all international sales for Legaré.

"About 60 percent of our business is outside the U.S.," Markwardt said. "This is strange for a company as small as ours, but with all my years in the ceiling fan business, I had a lot of experience selling internationally."

Each year Markwardt attends international import/export trade fairs in Cologne, Germany; Shanghai, China; and the Canton Fair in Guangzhou, China. Although with technological advances, he doesn't have to catch quite as many flights these days.

"My factory inspectors in China can do a walk-through and show me what's going on in real-time with Skype

video on an iPhone," he said. "The technology is really helpful and convenient. It's important from a quality assurance standpoint to stay on top of every shipment."

Markwardt maintains ties to Baylor through his daughter Haley, who is a junior Entrepreneurship major, and by serving as a board member for Baylor's Technology Entrepreneurship Initiative, which offers the Immersion Into International Interdisciplinary Innovation (i5) program. Through the program, Baylor students travel to Shanghai and partner with Chinese students to work on projects for sponsor firms. Legaré served as a sponsor firm last year, and Markwardt supports the program's focus on cultural immersion.

"I think it's important to immerse yourself in the culture when traveling to other countries," he said. "Appreciating that culture helps you get closer to the people. When in Rome, do as the Romans do."

# MIKE MARKWARDT

BBA '81  
CEO, LEGARÉ FURNITURE  
FORT WORTH, TEXAS



[bbr.baylor.edu/mike-markwardt](http://bbr.baylor.edu/mike-markwardt)

Location courtesy of American Airlines  
C.R. Smith Museum





BBA '92  
CO-OWNER/DIRECTOR,  
EXPRESS HOT YOGA STUDIO  
THE WOODLANDS, TEXAS

# JENNIFER BALLEW



It was 2002, and Jennifer Ballew couldn't seem to shake a recurring upper respiratory infection. Stress from her job as a controller had compounded, and her health began to decline. However, this impasse was a blessing in disguise and led Ballew to discovering her true career passion: hot yoga.

Before entering Baylor, Ballew faced a head versus heart decision. She enjoyed art, yet she had a knack for accounting and knew it could provide a dependable career path.

"During high school, I had dabbled in art and really thought I would be an art teacher one day," Ballew said. "However, my best class my senior year in high school was accounting. When I enrolled at Baylor, I ended up picking Accounting and Information Systems as a double major, thinking that I could always do art on the side, but this degree would give me the education I might need to work out in the 'real world' after college."

After Baylor graduation, Ballew started work as an auditor at KPMG. She earned her CPA license and later worked for E\*TRADE as a controller in its day-trading division. The company was undergoing a merger when Ballew's health began to fail.

"It seemed that every six weeks I was suffering from repeated upper respiratory infections, which evolved into a bad case of pneumonia," she said. "A good friend of mine took me to a hot yoga class, and in a very short period of time, I had a better handle on my stress and health. This transformation sparked my desire to share the gift of yoga with others."

These days, it's usually about 105 degrees in Ballew's world, but she doesn't mind it. In 2005, she opened a Bikram yoga-style studio in The Woodlands, a community north of Houston, Texas. Bikram yoga is practiced in a heated room (generally 105°F with 40% humidity) and involves a series of poses within a 90-minute class. The heat increases flexibility and boosts the immune system by raising the internal body temperature, which stimulates production of T-cells. Ballew later adjusted the curriculum, cut classes to 50 minutes and renamed the studio Express Hot Yoga; she is currently working on opening a second location.

"We originally opened up a Bikram yoga studio, but after four years we realized and recognized that people have a huge constraint on time," she said. "So we began the process to transition to Express Hot Yoga, a yoga concept we developed that has the same benefits but fits your schedule by offering shorter classes more often."

Although she left the corporate world behind, Ballew's business background has provided the foundation needed to run her studio. Along with classes, Express Hot Yoga offers on-site massage services and childcare for busy parents taking classes.

"The interesting part of finding my career passion is that I originally chose the conservative path of provision, but through life's turns and bumps, I ended up in the arts teaching my true passion," she said. "Although accounting was not my greatest passion, it gave me what I needed to open and run a yoga studio that can make a difference in another's life."



And Ballew is truly focused on taking a holistic approach to making a difference in the lives of others. You can't see it, but written underneath the paint above the studio entrance is the statement, "This is a place where miracles happen every day." That's exactly what Ballew experiences and hopes for with her students, whether it's an individual undergoing physical transformation or simply gaining self-acceptance.

"The great thing about yoga is that it draws people from many cultures, shapes, sizes, economic conditions and health issues," she said. "There is no hierarchy in the yoga room. It is just about you looking at yourself – all the good, the bad – and finding the real beauty of who you are on the inside. We all spend so much of our money, time and effort working on things outside of us, but through the practice of yoga, we can come to some place within ourselves that recognizes what we truly seek lies within."



# DAVID DOMINY

BBA '10

ASSOCIATE, SWEARINGEN REALTY GROUP  
DALLAS, TEXAS



# DAVID DOMINY

**B**aylor University has been part of the Dominy family for more than five decades. David Dominy, BBA '82, and his son Drake, BBA '10, are just two members of the Dominy clan who have earned Baylor degrees. Don't forget David's wife Kimberly, BBA '84, his son Dalton, BBA '12, and daughter Kirstyn, a junior at Baylor, who will soon graduate as well. And that doesn't even count extended family members.

"Baylor has been a family tradition dating back to my grandfather, who graduated in 1957," Drake said. "Baylor has always been a home for me since I visited for Homecoming when I was young."

Real estate has also become a family tradition. David followed in his father's footsteps and worked in commercial

appraisal before joining a firm that was starting up a multi-family development arm. Within six years, David helped the firm develop 5,600 apartment units.

"My father started his own commercial valuation firm 50 years ago in 1962," David said. "Although I first intended to enter the medical field, I changed to business and pursued accounting and finance, which I knew would play a key role in my goal of real estate development."

David joined his father's firm in 1990, and continued to build and diversify the firm following his father's retirement in 1995. In 1999, David became a founding member of Integra Realty Resources (IRR), which now includes 63 offices and is the largest independent valuation and consulting firm in the U.S. He serves as managing director of the Houston office and as vice chairman of the national IRR organization.

Drake found his niche in the real estate industry as well and works as a broker for Swearingen Realty Group in Dallas.

"Swearingen focuses primarily on representing tenants in office lease transactions," Drake said.

"As a broker I provide the expertise of finding a tenant the most efficient office space to meet their requirements and negotiate beneficial lease terms."

While they both attended Baylor and work in real estate, David and Drake's entrances into the workforce were separated by 28 years and major innovations – the most apparent being technology.

"There is no comparison in the availability of information in 2010 versus 1982," David said. "The computer class I was required to take included punch cards. Now, online information allows for a much more transparent and educated opportunity search."

"I found out about my current position through a listing on Baylor's Hire-a-Bear website," Drake said. "The ability to search a company's website and access recent company news is an advantage. On the flip side, companies expect you to be up-to-date on what is going on in their business."

Although technology has changed the job search, economic conditions are prone to cyclic patterns.

"In my opinion, the job market for real estate in 2010 was very similar to the market in 1982," David said. "In both cases

financing sources were scarce and new development was non-existent. The trickle down from this lack of activity pervades most areas related to real estate."

As new graduates continue to enter the workforce, Drake emphasized the importance of networking.

"Relationships are important in every field," Drake said. "A company may not have the opening that you are looking for today, but it is important to foster relationships for future opportunities."

David added that first impressions are just as critical as they were in the '80s.

"Perception can and should become reality," David said. "How you present yourself in the first meeting will establish the tone of the interview and/or negotiation. A great attitude can overcome some shortcomings, but a bad attitude can be a cancer to a company."

[bbr.baylor.edu/david-drake-dominy](http://bbr.baylor.edu/david-drake-dominy)