



CHAOS THEORY: INSIDE THE MIND OF AN ENTREPRENEUR

IN MANY WAYS, BEN LAMM WAS A TYPICAL BAYLOR STUDENT. THE FINANCE AND ACCOUNTING MAJOR (WITH A CONCENTRATION IN PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT TECHNOLOGY) ENJOYED SPENDING TIME WITH HIS FRIENDS. HE JOINED A FRATERNITY AND PARTICIPATED IN EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES. HE STUDIED, GOT TO KNOW HIS PROFESSORS AND WENT ON A SUMMER INTERNSHIP. BUT, UNLIKE MOST BAYLOR STUDENTS, LAMM RETURNED FROM HIS INTERNSHIP AS AN ENTREPRENEUR.

"I was able to create training courses at a higher quality and a faster pace than their current San Francisco-bay contractor," Lamm said of the California biotech company where he interned. "When I left, they awarded me a pretty large contract to continue this work.

AT THAT POINT, I HAD TO START A BUSINESS."

So, while still a student, Lamm started Simply Interactive, an interactive marketing and e-learning services company that would be his first business venture. He partnered with now retired business professor James Moshinskie (most often referred to as "Dr. Mo"), to create the company, which retained the biotech company as a long-term client and added many more, including Fortune 100 companies, along the way.

"Obviously, I learned a lot from Dr. Mo," Lamm said, "but I learned a lot from all my professors. They were supportive of what I was doing, and they continued to challenge me in other areas of my business education."

But for someone like Lamm, the most important thing about the business school was the way he was being taught."

The focus of my course work was mostly project-based," he said. "Anyone can take a test, but not everyone can build and deliver a project. It teaches students how to work with a team and be competitive at the same time."

Those project-building skills and competitive spirit, Lamm said, have helped him to understand how to make his businesses more successful.

"In addition to skills, I also learned how to be creative," he said. "Professors at Baylor didn't just give us anything for free. They would give us some knowledge and expect us to go use it, expand on it. It was an interesting opportunity to help us to apply what we learned."

Lamm turned those creative projects and his newly created business into a major success, even before graduation.

"My senior year at Baylor, I went to seven [job] interviews, thinking I would work in private banking or private consulting for a few years and then go out on my own," Lamm said. "But I think deep down I knew I would never make it working for someone else."

Simply Interactive was already doing better than he had imagined, and the profits were higher than all of the offers he received from places he had interviewed.

He eventually sold Simply Interactive and has now turned his full attention to his newest venture: Chaotic Moon Studios in Austin, Texas.

Along with Dr. Mo and two other partners, Mike Erwin and William Hurley, Lamm created the mobile application development company, where he serves as chief executive officer.

Chaotic Moon Studios has an impressive and growing list of clients, including the Discovery Channel, Groupon, Microsoft, Hello Kitty, HTC and Sesame Street. Most recently, they launched the first-ever, fully digital, tablet-only, daily publication designed specifically for the iPad, called *The Daily*, for News Corporation.

"It's a very interesting company," Lamm said. "We offer several core services, including custom application development, mobile strategy and content publishing that can work for any client from a startup company to a Fortune 100 company."

In addition to creating and developing a company's mobile presence in the marketplace, Chaotic Moon Studios also specializes in helping companies that have previously attempted marketing their own applications and been unsuccessful, through a process they call Application Resurrection.

"People who have spent a lot of money on an app that hasn't met a company's expectations can come to us," Lamm said. "We'll get it where it needs to be; we'll rebrand and re-launch using our customized method."

In addition to helping other companies, Chaotic Moon Studios also builds, designs and sells their own mobile applications and games.

Their most rapidly growing division, according to Lamm, is research and development.

"THIS IS PROBABLY GOING TO BE OUR MOST PROFITABLE DIVISION AND WILL HELP SCALE CHAOTIC MOON STUDIOS TO A BILLION-DOLLAR COMPANY," HE SAID. "CHAOTIC MOON LABS IS WHERE WE DESIGN, DEVELOP AND TEST GROUND-BREAKING MOBILE INNOVATION CONCEPTS,

which one day will go underappreciated and most likely credited to someone else who licenses or buys the technology.

It's our very best hardware and software designers, operating system designers, form factor designers."

The company holds around a dozen patents and co-patents, and remains very secretive about everything surrounding this part of their business, down to its location.

"It's extremely off the radar," Lamm said. "It's not open to the public. My wife barely knows where it is."

In addition to the creative products and services provided by Chaotic Moon Studios, Lamm said one of the best things it has is the right work atmosphere for him.

"This is my first business experience with not being bored," he said. "In a short period of time, we've grown to be a huge force in the industry. I find that I have to give Chaotic Moon 100 percent of my focus.



MIKE ERWIN

BEN LAMM

That's new to me. I've always had something else going on in my off time, but not now."

Because so much of his time and energy is dedicated to the company, there are some things on which Lamm simply will not compromise.

"Our people come first, and we won't change for our clients," he said. "If you tell us not to come to a meeting in flip-flops and t-shirts, we won't be coming to the meeting. We're not changing who we are. We hired some of the best and brightest engineers and designers from some of the top research and development labs in the world, including Microsoft, Apple and IBM. We've given all of ourselves to our company and our brand."

Small details also give a clue about the uniqueness of the company. All of their business cards, for example, are handmade and hand-embossed.

"We spend more on proposals than some people spend on whole projects," Lamm said. "We're expensive, but we're that good. You get what you pay for."

And Chaotic Moon Studios has to be that good.

They don't advertise, and their phone number is not listed anywhere.

"One hundred percent of our business is from referrals, press and just being awesome at what we do," Lamm said.

This type of business, he said, with this type of atmosphere, is exactly what he always hoped he would do with his career.



"I always wanted to have the opportunity to work with brilliant people and create bleeding-edge technology," he said.

"I've always wanted to be in control, and I knew that meant starting from the ground up. I will never be happy as a full-time employee of a company. I think if that happened I'd probably be fired pretty quickly. I need to keep being innovative, and to do that, I have to do things my own way."

Judging by the rate Chaotic Moon is growing, and by their ever-expanding list of clients, Lamm's own way may be the right way.

The key, however, Lamm said, is something he learned back at Baylor from Dr. Mo.

"DO WHAT YOU LOVE, WORK REALLY HARD AND WORK WITH PEOPLE WHO ARE SMARTER THAN YOU," HE SAID. "ALWAYS KEEP CHALLENGING YOURSELF. DON'T EVER GET COMPLACENT. DO WHAT YOU LOVE AND DO IT WITH GREAT PEOPLE. THAT'S BEING SUCCESSFUL."

www.baylor.edu/bbr/moon



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