

HEALTHY BEARS

Whether it's going to the gym, eating better or recovering from illness, being healthy is an ambition for most people. But for some professionals, being healthy has become a business endeavor too. From fitness to nutrition to healthcare, Baylor Business graduates are contributing to health-related industries. We talked to five alumni who cater to the growing health-focused market.

BY BECCA BROADDUS

DENVER

Fredenburg

If anything can prepare you for being the CEO of a startup company, it's ultrarunning. At least, if you ask Denver Fredenburg.

Ultrarunning is the sport of long distance running at distances longer than a marathon (26.2 miles). Fredenburg, CEO of the functional fitness equipment company Hyperwear, has run in 11 ultramarathons.

"I don't know that anything can prepare you for the world of startups and being an entrepreneur like ultrarunning," Fredenburg said. "It's a very patient game. You put your nose down when you're uncomfortable, and you keep going. Keep your nose down, put one foot in front of the other, and eventually, something is going to give. I get some relief from that in running a startup."

Although Hyperwear is a startup in the strictest sense of the word, the business is growing in size and esteem. The company was founded in 2007 and incorporated in 2011 when Fredenburg got on board. Now, Hyperwear products are used in more than 20 countries, from the Netherlands to Indonesia, and they've been featured in Fitness Magazine, Men's Health, Prevention Magazine and more.

"Those public relations hits have helped with growth," Fredenburg said. "Most of the big hits find their way to us, which I love. It's proof of the strength of our organic, grass roots marketing efforts."

The company received a lot of attention with minimal cost in a short period, but like any new business, it has its struggles.

"I had to go out and successfully raise money before I could afford to pay myself," he said. "I had never raised money before, so that was one of the biggest lessons for me."

To raise the money, he reached out to multiple angel networks for funding, including Baylor Business's own Baylor Angel Network (BAN), an investor network providing early stage capital to entrepreneurs with developed business plans, complete products and early revenue.

"I had the opportunity to present to the Baylor Angel Network," he said. "My mom was and is a professor at Baylor, my dad was a football coach at Baylor, and I was the captain of the Baylor baseball team. I grew up in and around Baylor. To be able to go back on campus and present to arguably some of the most successful Baylor grads was a dream come true."

Fredenburg credits BAN for helping to get Hyperwear off the ground, but capital isn't the only challenge for startup businesses.

"Another one of the biggest challenges is growing a good team," he said. "It is one of the things I'm really excited about right now. We're to a point where we have fantastic people. In a startup, you have to have the right people who are willing to work hard and wear a lot of hats for not a lot of pay."

Yet despite the challenges, Hyperwear continues to grow.

"One of the biggest shifts in fitness in the last decade is toward functional fitness," Fredenburg said. "These big gyms are now dedicating a third of their floor space to functional space instead of just machines. It lends itself naturally to functional accessory products like ours. We're finding ourselves in functional areas in clubs and big spaces where we wouldn't have been ten years ago. It's created an opportunity to expand the product to more places and areas."

Hyperwear is focused on making loyal customers out of commercial users like personal trainers and coaches right now, with the intent to eventually market directly to the end user.

"We're using the commercial channel to build credibility, authenticity and a huge army of ambassadors to reach consumers," he said. "Our value proposition is that we can sell to the commercial customer, but at the end of the day, our product is focused on the end consumer."

With the remarkable growth and renown Fredenburg has helped bring to the startup the past four years, the company is well-positioned to continue this trend. So keep an eye out at your local gym and on your favorite television program for Hyperwear equipment.

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