An Interview with...Bill Hayduk, Founder & President of RTTS

The Zicklin School of Business at Baruch College, NY, NY recently interviewed Mr. Hayduk in front of the students from the Honors program of the MBA in Entrepreneurship. Below is an excerpt from that interview.

Current Position

Please describe your current business.

I am President and Director of Professional Services for RTTS, the premier professional services firm that specializes in providing software quality for critical business applications. RTTS counts almost 200 of the Fortune 500 as clients and has partnerships with IBM, HP, Microsoft and Compuware.

I oversee the professional services division: sales, marketing, accounting, finance, legal, HR/recruiting departments, negotiate contracts, set corporate strategy, meet with customers, handle alliance relationships, etc.

What particular skills and qualifications, both technical and soft skills, are important in starting and running your own business?

From a technical skills perspective - programming, architecture and process knowledge are important. Sales skills are also extremely important - you must sell customers, partners, employees on a sound and achievable vision. And finance - you must be able to budget, project income/expenses.

How is entrepreneurship a good fit for you, and for whom might it be a bad fit?

It is a great fit for me – I have always been an idea person who gets frustrated when good ideas do not get reviewed or implemented. I like having my hand in everything. I am very driven. Entrepreneurship is not good for people who are not self-motivated and driven.

Career Progression

- 1st job – *Mutual Fund Broker (1 year).* This job taught me sales, cold calling, closing the deal.
- 2nd job – *Foreign Exchange (6 years).* I became manager and then the youngest VP in a 3,000 person firm. This taught me management, the financial services industry, recruiting and hiring, technology as a power end-user, legal (I was compliance officer), and the sociology of dealing with people in corporate environment.
- 3rd job – *Management Consultant, Financial Services (1 year).* I represented a large bank that assisted a Fortune 500 insurance firm in their move from mutual company to a stock company. I learned sociology of bureaucratic large firms and their internal mechanisms and how to successfully navigate this environment.
- 4th job – *Senior Vice President, Boutique Foreign Exchange Firm* (2.5 years). Became SVP and COO. Learned how to run all aspects of a small firm, including front office, finance, legal, sales and marketing.
- 5th job – *Management Consultant (1 year).* I worked on a reengineering project for a Fortune 50 bank (1 year). I learned all sociology and mechanizations of a global bank. We were deep-rooted in technologies and methodologies. It was here when I decided to go back for my Masters in CS (Zicklin School of Business at Baruch College). It also was here at this global bank that I discovered an uncovered hole in the market for what RTTS does, and decided to pursue it.
- 6th job – Founder and lead consultant for RTTS (11 years and going).

How and when did you decide to pursue an entrepreneurial venture?

While on my 5th job when I discovered a hole in the market (automated testing of software). Developers hated to do it and business people were not skilled in that area. I approached two firms with a business plan about starting a joint venture. The first one could not come to an agreement with me financially and the second one built the division but deemed me expensive overhead and built my idea without me.

How did you get started?

I started with an idea. I wrote a business plan and then performed independent contracting before selling potential employees on it. I partnered with a software vendor to piggyback on their business model and then I brought on their NY sales manager (Ron Axelrod) as my business partner to head up software and consulting sales. We boot strap-financed the company with a small equity investment from each of us. I continued to pay my salary through consulting and his through software sales while we went about hiring, training and placing employees. We sold employees on the concept of a "virtual office" of support through pagers and email, since we had no office.

What challenges did you face when starting your business, and what challenges did you continue to face in this line of work?

When starting our business, we had issues with cash flow and competing for quality candidates.
Now we have competition from offshore, which forces a downward pressure on pricing.

How has your entrepreneurial experience differed from (or remained similar to) the business plan you initially created for yourself?

I do not perform as much hands-on consulting as I did in the past and the size and scope of my job and the company as a whole has grown dramatically.

General Career Management for Current Students

MBA students often enter business school with the goal of starting their own businesses upon graduation. What advice do you have for them as they consider this option?

- Make sure you fully understand the amount of effort that it takes to be successful. I worked 60 hours per week on client site, invoiced customers, performed interviews, executed payroll, built our web site and handled all accounting and operations during my free time and went to school at night.

- Be passionate about what you do. No passion = decreasing effort.

- Understand your segment and industry. Know the competition. Focus on barrier-to-entry.

For those who may have limited business experience, what are your thoughts on getting experience in an established company before branching out on your own?

I highly recommend getting experience in whatever industry you plan on entering with your business. Reading about how to fly a plane is a lot different than flying a plane.

About Bill Hayduk:

Bill has an excellent reputation in the technology field and is particularly noted for his test methodology and automation expertise. Bill has successfully implemented large-scale automation projects at many Fortune 500 firms. He has managed projects in most verticals, including banking, brokerage, multimedia, ISVs, government, telecommunications, healthcare, education, pharmaceutical and insurance.

Bill holds a Master of Science degree in computer information systems from the Zicklin School of Business (Baruch College) and a Bachelor of Arts in Economics from Villanova University. He has been a selected speaker at industry-specific trade conferences, as well as a source of information for corporations and has been referenced in many industry trade publications.

About RTTS:

RTTS is the premier professional services organization that specializes in providing software quality for critical business applications. With offices in New York, Atlanta, Orlando, Philadelphia and Phoenix, RTTS has been serving Fortune 500 and mid-sized companies since 1996. RTTS draws on its expertise utilizing best-of breed products, expert engineers and proven methodology to provide the foremost end-to-end solution that ensures application functionality, reliability, scalability and availability.

For more information visit www.rtts.com.