



## Technology entrepreneur encourages others to 'go for it'

Published on Friday, September 11, 2009

Doug Goodman, CEO of Ridgetop Group, moved to Tucson after 23 years in Portland, Ore., where he earned his MBA degree. Earlier, Goodman completed a degree in electrical engineering from California Polytechnic State University in San Luis Obispo. It should be no surprise that combination of degrees yielded a technology entrepreneur.

Even when he got here, Goodman was no stranger to Southern Arizona. "I'd been coming here for years working at Fort Huachuca," Goodman said. "My wife liked the area. At first we came for winters and finally bought a condominium and settled in."

That condo, complete with card table and a computer, turned out to be the birthplace of Ridgetop Group in 1999. A decade later, the company now has 35 employees.

Goodman has enjoyed successes in aerospace and commercial engineering. He started with a company that is now part of General Dynamics, worked at Tektronix in Portland and has served in management roles in other technology companies. Asked what he's best at he asserts, "I recognize when technology is ripe for commercialization and understand how to find commercial applications."

Goodman likes Tucson and pursues a strong relationship with the University of Arizona.

"We take students as interns who go on to become full-time employees," he said. "In Portland we saw startups spun off from Tektronix and Intel and I believe the same thing will happen here with opportunities originating at the UA."

His business premise is straightforward. "Our customers want to know when critical electronic systems will fail prior to failure so they can take mitigating or corrective actions. Initially, they didn't believe it was possible to do this in electronics but we created test structures and tools to do just that."

For fun he travels with his wife. They've been to Africa, one time having their vehicle charged by a rhinoceros, an incident Goodman describes as "unsettling." In particular he talks about his interest in botany, studying how plants adapt to their surroundings.

To succeed Goodman affirms, "You have to stay focused and be the best at what you do. People who do that keep at something until they succeed, whether they're working as employees or for themselves."

He likes being in charge. "I like that the buck stops on my desk. I have to deal with disappointments and problems. But it's rewarding to create something that didn't exist before. As a company I know we have to grow and maintain profitability." He credits his success in part to "listening to problems, asking the right questions and finding the right person to make the decision. You can damage the delegation of authority easily if you're not careful. I'm good at knowing when to intercede and when to not."

Goodman believes, "you can get in a fog of detail when you work in technology. The CEO must create a management team that strengthens the fabric of the company. It's not about me as the CEO but a company that can sustain itself whether I am here or not."

Like most CEOs he sees hiring the right people as one of his biggest challenges. "We need more than technical capabilities and there's no room for prima donnas. Managers and engineers need to contribute to our value proposition, realizing that ultimately we have to sell product. Technical staff know I will take them out of their comfort zone, working directly with our customers."

Communication is high on Goodman's lists of critical skills, particularly when people may not want to hear what you have to say. "You need a certain level of diplomacy so people trust you whether you're delivering good news or bad. We try to be transparent with staff and share our picture of the landscape, celebrating accomplishments."

Goodman, like his staff, works in a cubicle rather than a private office. He believes that for young, emerging companies cubicles promote good and frequent communication.

If you're working at a company and have an idea for a product Goodman advises, "Go for it! If you don't you'll always wonder if you should have, and you can always go back to the job with a richer experience."

If you're considering a CEO position in an established company he suggests, "Go in with eyes open. A lot of people and their families depend on you; it's an awesome responsibility. In an established company your role is to serve stakeholders, to protect employees and provide an environment where they can grow. You have to manage through challenging times and make the right decisions."

Goodman is inspired by those who seek to inspire others such as televangelist Robert Schuller and the late Norman Vincent Peale. His values his faith, and believes that, "Anything you can visualize you can achieve. I am inspired by people who live that way."

Goodman wants you to know that Ridgetop Group is a small company with exciting leadership where everyone works toward a common goal. "There's a genuine sense of community — a community of technical experts that excel at execution."

## **Biz Facts**

### **Ridgetop Group Inc.**

A world leader in providing advanced electronic prognostics and health management solutions, semiconductor IP blocks, and built-in self-test (BIST) solutions for critical applications

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