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For reporters, covering some of the most important stories requires a certain level of risk.

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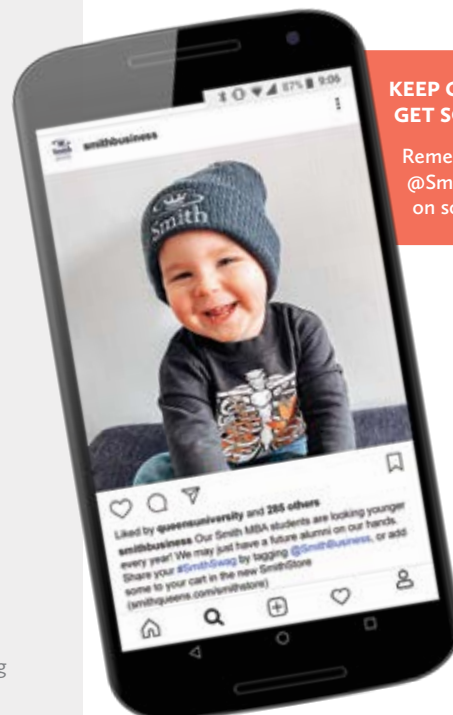
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DEAN'S MESSAGE

By the time this magazine reaches you at home in one of the 85 countries where Smith alumni live, we will have just passed the one-year anniversary of the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. Further, we will be approaching one year since the murder of George Floyd, which ignited a call to action that resonated around the world demanding an end to systemic anti-Black racism. Both tragedies are driving transformational change at Smith.

The shift to remote teaching and learning has taught us a great deal about what can be achieved, what works and what doesn't for both faculty and students, and how best to use technology to keep engagement and quality high. As we plan for a return to greater on-campus program delivery, we have an opportunity to apply lessons learned and be deliberate and creative in how we incorporate online elements to optimize the learning experience and benefit students.

The school has been engaged in creating a more inclusive community through purposeful actions and initiatives that break down barriers to access and participation as we eliminate inequities that have disadvantaged members of BIPOC, LGBTQ2S+, underserved and under-represented groups. A culture of inclusion affords a rich learning and work environment where everyone feels welcome, feels they belong and are empowered to thrive. This is not only important, but essential to attract and retain diverse talent.

Guiding these changes is Smith's newly released **Equity, Diversity, Inclusion & Indigenization (EDII) Strategy & Action Plan**. Access, equity and inclusion are essential to our school's future and to position our students to succeed as global citizens, role models and leaders. You can read more about the plan's accountability metrics and how it will drive change on our website at smithqueens.com/inclusion.

Some highlights of what has been happening at Smith include:

Strong enrolment. People want to further their education when the economy falters. Program applications are up, as is student enrolment in Commerce and across most graduate programs. The lessons learned in our pivot to remote learning will help us make learning more accessible and extend it beyond degree programming—another strategy to support Smith alumni with lifelong learning.

New program offerings. In November, Smith launched the Master of Financial Innovation and Technology, the first program of its kind in Canada designed to address the significant gap in financial technology education. We also partnered with MIT to offer a new pathway into three of Smith's AI and analytics-related

master's programs via the edX/MITx MicroMasters in Statistics and Data Science, establishing a new recruitment stream. Our Executive Education team continues to build on our strengths to deliver short-format remote learning programs that address today's changing needs of managers and executives. ("Leading Virtual Teams", "Maintaining Motivation Through the Pandemic" and "Leading Through Turbulent Times" are just some of the timely sessions held.)

Thought leadership with impact. The Institute for Sustainable Finance (ISF) at Smith released a landmark research report providing a data-driven capital blueprint for Canada's low-carbon transition. The Capital Mobilization Plan and other important work from the ISF has garnered interest and recognition from industry and government. In November, Canada's big five banks provided \$5 million in funding to the institute in support of its mission. The Government of Canada has invited ISF faculty to present to key committees and now references ISF research in policy decisions.

We're hiring new faculty. With new programs, strong enrolment and recent retirements, we will welcome five new assistant professors in July in the areas of Business Economics, Accounting, Finance and Strategy. We have also created a new position and are actively recruiting a faculty member with an excellent record of EDII-relevant scholarship and teaching. Additionally, Queen's Principal recently announced the appointment of Dr. Wanda Costen as the new dean of the business school. You can read more about Dr. Costen on page 7. I will continue to serve as dean until the end of June, move ahead on our priorities, and check off a number of key items on the "to-do" list, as well as support a smooth transition.

I would like to close with a big thank you to our students, faculty, staff and alumni. Thank you for your resilience, grit and perseverance over the last year, and for the ongoing support as we learn how to do better, to be better and to stay true to our values.

Brenda Brouwer
Dean (interim)
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Inside Smith

A student with winning ways

Sophie de Goede is a standout on the field, on the court and in the classroom.

Earning a Commerce degree at a top school like Smith is tough enough. But what about working on that degree while playing on not one, but two, Queen's Gaels varsity teams. Oh, and doing it all with a plus-80 average.

Who has time for that, let alone the energy and ability?

The answer: Sophie de Goede, BCom'22, of Victoria, B.C. A two-sport athlete, in rugby and basketball, de Goede was in January named one of U Sports Top 8 Academic All-Canadians for 2019-20. She is just the sixth Gaels athlete ever to receive the honour.

The Top 8 were chosen from more than 4,900 U Sports student-athletes who achieved Academic All-Canadian status. That means they maintained an average of 80 per cent or better while competing on one or more of their university's U Sports varsity teams.

A standout for the Gaels women's rugby team last season, de Goede finished as Ontario University Athletics' top rugby scorer in 2019 with 76 points and was named conference MVP for a second straight season. In basketball, she led the Gaels to a



Commerce student Sophie de Goede.

15-7 record and the playoffs, averaging 12.5 points, 8.5 rebounds and 1.8 assists per game.

Gaels women's rugby head coach Dan Valley says "to watch Sophie not only manage but excel as a Commerce student and member of two varsity sport programs speaks to her truly unique skill set. In this regard, Sophie is unlike any student-athlete in the country."

Both of de Goede's parents played for Canada's national rugby team. And she loves basketball so didn't want to give up either sport. How has she been able to balance two sports and studies? It comes down to good time management. "I find I'm able to make more use of time because I have so much going on," she says.

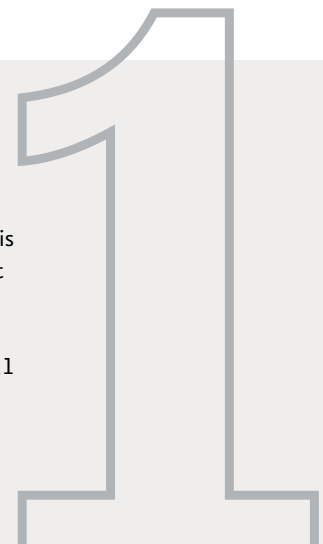
COVID has halted many university sports. But with students able to take classes virtually, de Goede is continuing her studies while playing rugby in England for Saracens of the Allianz Premier 15s women's rugby league. And if that's not enough, she has another goal now: to play for Team Canada in the Rugby World Cup in New Zealand.

PHOTO | QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY

Masters in business

Several Smith programs have landed spots on the latest *Financial Times*' best business-school rankings. The Master of International Business is No. 1 in North America and Top 60 in the world on the *Times*' Masters in Management list for 2020. The full-time MBA program is Top 100 in the world on this year's Global MBA ranking. And it's the No. 1 Canadian school for both career services for students and overall graduate satisfaction.

Two other programs also made the *Times*' Top 100 global Executive MBAs list. The national EMBA is No. 81 in the world with strong rankings for student and faculty diversity. The Executive MBA Americas (a partnership with Cornell University's Johnson School of Management) is No. 46 globally and No. 11 for career progress. The latter score is calculated by changes to seniority level and size of company that alumni work at now.





Making a match

The Career Advancement Centre's concierge service helps recruiters find the right skills in a pandemic.

Some years are tougher for job seekers than others. But 2020 might go down as the hardest on record—perhaps worse than 2009's Great Recession. It wasn't just that COVID lockdowns nearly shuttered the economy, causing Canada's unemployment rate to vault to 9.5 per cent last year, from 5.7 per cent in 2019. It was that securing a job suddenly got more complex. In-person job fairs and interviews were out. The ability to mingle on Zoom became a thing.

For students graduating from master's programs like Smith's Master of Management Analytics, Master of Finance or even MBA programs, there was an added challenge. Many have specialized skills—which are still in demand. But as the pandemic raged, how to get in front of companies seeking those skills?

That was a question asked at Smith's Career Advancement Centre. The CAC provides career support services, such as personal branding, networking and interviewing skills development, to students. It also helps corporations with on-campus recruiting.

Rishi Behari, corporate relations manager, special projects, says the CAC needed to find new ways to connect graduates and companies during the pandemic. "How were we going to interact with these companies now that the world had changed?" he says.

The answer: In January, the CAC launched an opt-in program for all master's students in which detailed "resumé books" filled with info about each student's skills are uploaded to Quest, the CAC's career management platform. A form on the CAC's corporate site lets recruiters specify the talent they're seeking, then receive resumé books that are a fit. Students, meanwhile, get tailored "hot jobs" emails.

The approach, says Behari, is something like a dating match site. An added benefit: it can shorten the time to market for students while increasing candidate-search efficiency for employers, regardless of whether they're seeking entry-, mid- or senior-level talent in marketing, finance, analytics or other disciplines.

The CAC has been working hard to support business recruitment in the pandemic. In December, it received the Best Innovation by a Career Centre award from corporate partner CIBC in recognition of the CAC's use of event technology for networking and information sessions.

The goal of this new program, Behari says, is to offer a concierge service to both corporations and students. "We're meeting employers where they are, and now they can browse candidates in real time." To learn more visit smith.queensu.ca/recruiting/contact.php

Support from a distance

When Jay Handelman announced he was stepping down as associate dean of faculty last year, the school knew it would need a replacement with the right experience during the pandemic. Who better than someone who has researched virtual and remote work for over two decades?

In January, longtime professor Sandy Staples began his two-and-a-half-year term in this important role. "I am essentially a conduit between what faculty think and where the dean decides we should be going," says Staples. "My goal is to make at least a small difference in my colleagues' success."

Since hallway chats aren't possible these days, Staples is encouraging faculty to reach out virtually if they need help or just to introduce themselves.

For his part, Handelman, who served as associate dean of faculty since 2017, and remains an associate professor of marketing, is wishing his successor well and says he appreciated the opportunity to interact with a wide range of faculty. "I really came to appreciate the diversity of ways in which our faculty members make a contribu-

tion to the teaching and research culture of the school."



Sandy Staples

The SmithStore is open

Now you can buy your school gear anytime, from anywhere.

Pretty much everywhere you go, you're bound to come across a Smith grad. These days, fellow alum may be even easier to spot. They're the ones wearing a Smith sweater, stylish Smith socks or drinking from a genuine Smith tumbler—all from the SmithStore.

Opened in November at smithqueens.com/smithstore, the online shop carries some 80 Smith-branded products—everything from shirts, hats, hoodies and other clothes, to accessories like mugs, journals, luggage and golf balls. There are face masks, of course, for these “unprecedented times”. And, for the class of 2042 (or thereabouts), a Smith baby romper, plus cute “Cooper Bear” and “Morris Moose”, stuffed animals.

It wasn't always so easy to get Smith merchandise. Hats and shirts were available at Homecoming and some school events. But there was no one-stop-shop, says Andrea Strike, associate director of operations in the school's marketing department, who developed the store.

When Strike started getting calls from alumni and parents wanting to buy school merchandise, she decided the time was right for a store. “Parents especially wanted to buy presents for their kids at the school,” she says.

The SmithStore makes it easy for the Smith community to show school pride, no matter where they live. Items are shipped worldwide, says Strike, and orders have already come in from Italy, Spain, the United Arab Emirates, Sierra Leone and other countries around the globe.



Among the store's bestsellers so far: quarter-zip and rugby sweaters. Also hot: Smith socks, available in 12 colourful looks and patterns. “We've already heard from people of how they connected with a fellow alumnus because one was wearing Smith socks or carrying a Smith cup,” says Strike, “And because of that, they struck up a conversation.”

PHOTO | BILL CASSIDY



Low-carbon leader

In February, finance professor Ryan Riordan was named a “2021 Changemaker” by *The Globe and Mail's* Report on Business for his research on Canada's low-carbon economy and his leadership in creating Smith's Master of Financial Innovation and Technology (MFIT). He was among 50 emerging leaders cited for their role in transforming business today.

Last fall, Riordan co-authored the “Capital Mobilization Plan for a Canadian Low-Carbon Economy”, the country's first such plan. It found that Canada can meet its 2030 greenhouse gas emission targets with \$128 billion in investments over the next decade—an achievable investment goal that represents 0.62 per cent of Canada's 2018 GDP. He was also instrumental in creating the MFIT, the first master's program on financial technology in North America. It launched last November.

PHOTO | GREG BLACK PHOTOGRAPHY

Wanda Costen is a graduate of the United States Military Academy at West Point.

The new dean is announced

Wanda Costen is joining Smith School of Business over the summer.

Smith will soon have a new dean. **S**Wanda Costen, an academic leader whose career also spans the private sector and military, will begin her five-year term on July 1.

Queen's University Principal and Vice-Chancellor Patrick Deane made the announcement on March 30. He calls the appointment "an incredibly important one for the university." Costen, he says "possesses a depth and breadth of experience which includes both academic and leadership skills that will be transformative as Smith continues to develop and enhance its reputation for business education."

Costen is now the dean at the school of business at MacEwan University in Edmonton. Before that, she held a senior academic leadership role at North Arizona University and academic roles at the University of Tennessee, University of Nevada and Washington State University.

At Smith, she will take over from Brenda Brouwer, interim dean since November 2019.

Costen earned her doctorate in sociology from Washington State University and an Executive MBA from Pepperdine University. She completed her undergraduate degree at the United States Military Academy at West Point. She was a member of just the seventh West Point class with women. In 2013/14 she was a Fulbright Scholar with the University of the West Indies at Mona, in Kingston, Jamaica.



"Post-secondary education is essential for improving society," Costen says. "I believe business education has a responsibility to develop talent with the capabilities and desire to address social problems, while creating economic sustainability in their communities."

She adds: "Our role is to create learning experiences that challenge students' world views, biases and beliefs to develop open-minded, courageous leaders willing to take risks for the greater good."

Costen's research covers women and leadership, strategic human resources, racial and gender inequality in organizations, managing diversity, and ethnic minority student experiences. She has consulted on equity, diversity, inclusion and Indigenization issues in the public and private sectors with Aon, ATB, TD Bank and with several municipalities.

Her teaching expertise includes strategy, leadership and ethics, human resource management, organizational behaviour, employment law and diversity. At MacEwan's business school, she put in place a faculty search process to reduce bias in hiring while enhancing equity. She also established a feed grant fund to inspire junior faculty through support for scholarly productivity and collaborative student-engaged research.

Before academia, Costen held leadership roles with companies such as Aramark Services, Pepsi-Cola and Greyhound Lines. She served as a platoon leader in the United States Army in Frankfurt, West Germany. Costen grew up in a military family and moved around the world as a child.

Stay tuned for the next issue of *Smith Magazine*. We'll have a full interview with the new dean.



Anishinabek Nation

The Anishinabek Nation flag features an Animikii (thunderbird) at the centre. According to traditional teachings, this powerful, spiritual animal is said to create the sound of thunder just by the flapping of its wings. The bird is also a protector with the ability to bring rain that nurtures and cleanses the earth.

Métis flag

The Métis flag, with its white infinity symbol, represents the joining of two cultures: First Nations and European, from which a new Indigenous people emerged—the Métis—with their own unique culture, traditions, language (Michif), way of life, collective consciousness and nationhood.

Six Nations Confederacy

This flag symbolizes the Hiawatha wampum belt—the emblem of unity that brought peace among the Five Nations—Seneca, Cayuga, Onondaga, Oneida, and Mohawk—with the sixth nation, the Tuscarora, added later. Collectively, the confederation's people are known as the Haudenosaunee.

Queen's University is situated on Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee Territory.

PHOTO | LARS HAGBERG

Smith's EDII strategy and action plan now live

Social activism and racist, homophobic attacks on campus spurred urgent calls to examine our own roles in perpetuating inequities and to address systemic racism and exclusion. Smith heeded the call. The school's equity, diversity, inclusion and Indigenization (EDII) task force created a strategy to advance system-wide and cultural changes at Smith.

The result: a strategy and action plan to drive change and create a more inclusive environment.

The strategy (at smithqueens.com/inclusion) has six core dimensions: responsible conduct; accessible and inclusive student experience; teaching and learning; support, resources and capacity; research

and thought leadership; and community.

Accountability is central to the plan. It includes metrics, targets and key performance indicators to benchmark and monitor progress.

"The work ahead of us is both challenging and vitally important," says Interim Dean Brenda Brouwer. "We must eliminate forms of discrimination that have perpetuated inequities in our environment, curricula, research and administrative operations, and change attitudes that have disadvantaged many.



Transgender Pride

Stripes at the top and bottom of the flag are light blue, the traditional colour for baby boys. The stripes next to them are pink, the traditional colour for baby girls. The white centre stripe is for those who are transitioning, intersex or nonbinary.

LGBTQ2S Pride

This flag represents the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and two-spirit (LGBTQ2S) social movements. The colours symbolize the community's immense diversity: red for life; orange, healing; yellow, vitality/sunlight; green, serenity/nature; blue, harmony; and violet, spirit.

Two Row Wampum

In 1613, the Haudenosaunee and Dutch formed an everlasting relationship built on friendship and peace. A belt, made of purple and white wampum shells, symbolized this new venture. The purple rows represent the two different cultures and traditions as they travel side-by-side on the river of life. The white rows represent peace, friendship and respect.

Flags raised in solidarity

These six flags were raised across several Queen's buildings in response to a June 2020 hate crime in which flags at the university's Four Directions Indigenous Student Centre were vandalized. Here in Goodes Hall, the flags are a reminder of the school's commitment to equity, diversity, inclusion and Indigenization. Each has its own story and meaning.

Access, equity and inclusion are essential to our school's future and to position our students to succeed as global citizens, role models and leaders."

IT TAKES A (GLOBAL) VILLAGE

The strategy builds on the work of students, staff, faculty and alumni who have devoted time and effort to advance equity, diversity, anti-racism and inclusion at Queen's.

It also draws from past reports including the Principal's Implementation Committee on Racism, Diversity and Inclusion (PICRDI), the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Task Force Final Report, and the recent Reform Smith proposal expressing

the urgent need for accountability and action.

The strategy was finalized after a consultation process with the Smith community. The action plan will be updated annually to maintain momentum and build on gains made.

Ultimately, success will be determined by the impact of our actions in changing culture, attitudes and creating a strong sense of belonging, Brouwer says. "We are answerable to the community for the commitments we make. It is through the efforts of many and support of all that we will deliver on the plans and realize our goals."

Read our EDII plan at smithqueens.com/inclusion

Calling Congress

A finance professor adds up the numbers for Washington.

It's not every day that you can claim a hand in passing a law. But on Jan. 12, Professor Wei Wang, PhD'06, could. That's when then-President Donald Trump signed the Bankruptcy Administration Improvement Act.

The act resulted from efforts by the "Large Corporations Committee of the Bankruptcy and COVID-19 Working Group". The group comprises 21 law, finance and business professors. Wang, who teaches finance at Smith, is the only Canadian-university member. The group formed last March to study the pandemic's impact on American companies and to suggest policy changes when needed. The act that Trump signed follows the group's recommendation to increase the number of judges at certain bankruptcy courts and pay for extra court staff and resources.

"Our group looked at how many cases a judge can handle and how many will be needed based on the expected jump in bankruptcies," Wang says. "This is important because we need financial and legal systems to operate smoothly through this crisis."

The group has recommended further actions that haven't yet become law.

One that Wang worked on extensively would give bankrupt small and mid-size corporations access to U.S. federal financing through the Paycheck Protection Program. Without it, many would be "prematurely liquidated," he says.

Changes made to Commerce admission processes

New strategies to champion equity and diversity in the recruitment and admissions of undergraduates have been put in place at Queen's. As a result, a number of changes were fast-tracked for Commerce this cycle (with more to come in the next year):

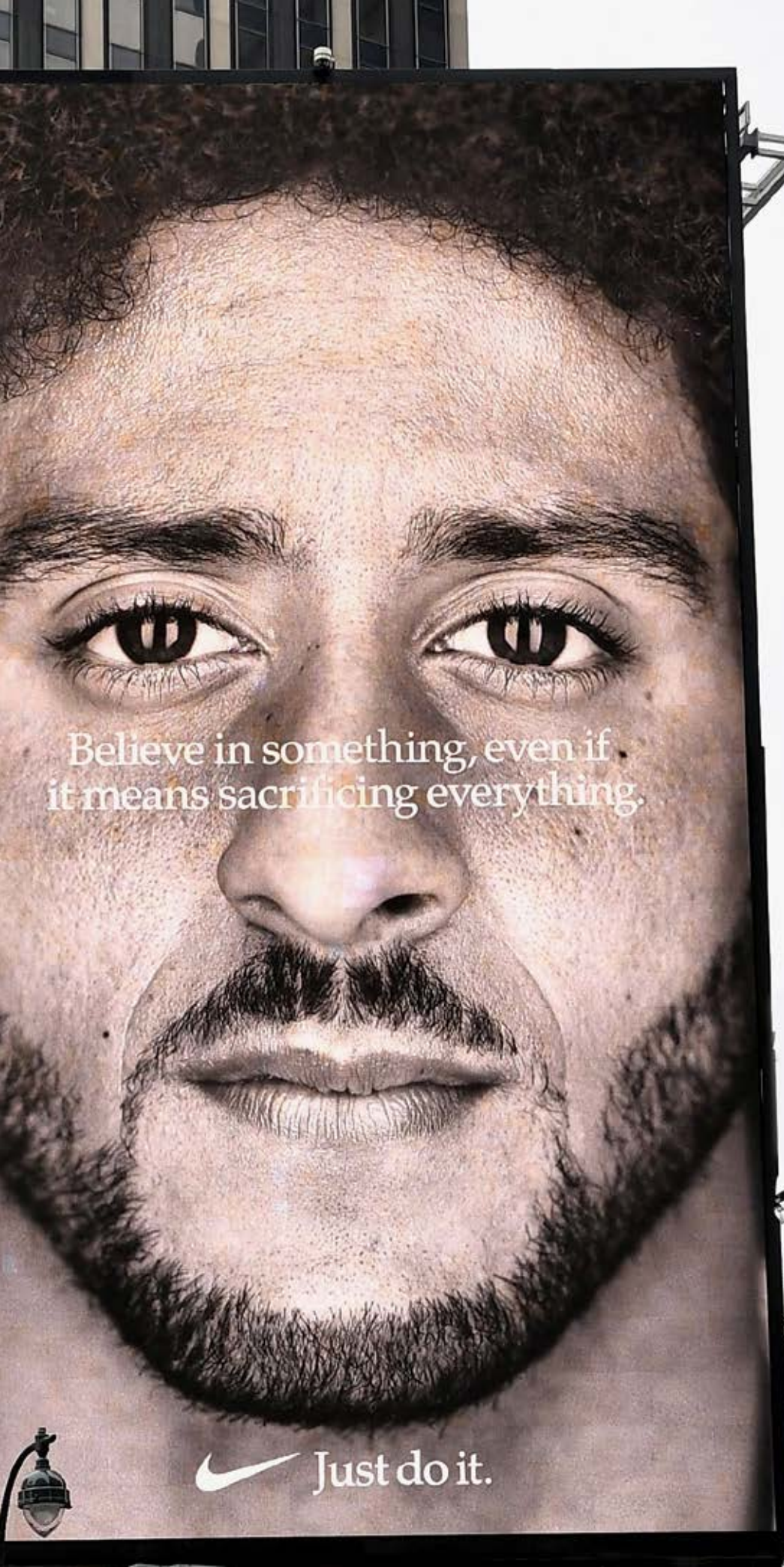
- Applicants are no longer asked to list extracurricular activities. Applications focus on supplemental essays to capture a wider range of experiences and perspectives. The same essay process is being used by some other faculties and schools at Queen's.
- The essay topics selection changes multiple times through the admission period.
- To mitigate against bias in assessment, essay submissions are read by Smith and Queen's staff trained by the university's Human Rights and Equity Office. Readers will include Smith faculty and staff with diverse perspectives and those with lived experience as a member of BIPOC, LGBTQ2S+, or underserved and under-represented communities, or with professional experience and training in equity, diversity, inclusion and Indigenization.

• In prior years, a portion of Commerce essays (typically 10 to 15 per cent) were read by Smith alumni at events in the Toronto area. The practice was suspended due to COVID restrictions. A new approach and secure-content-sharing system is in development to involve a broader range of alumni for the next application cycle.

Several other initiatives are underway at Queen's:

- Applicants are encouraged to complete a new Equity Admission Self-Identification form. It was developed in consultation with Queen's Human Rights and Equity Office, for use by admissions staff as additional consideration when assessing applicants who meet minimum academic requirements and have completed all program prerequisites. The data collected will also inform outreach and recruitment initiatives. For the 2021 application cycle 1,156 Commerce applicants have completed the form. This represents 13 per cent of the overall applicant pool.
- New merit- and needs-based financial awards have been created, including the Commitment Scholars Award and the Commitment Bursary. These provide financial assistance and other supports to eligible incoming students who self-identify as Black, Indigenous, racialized, LGBTQ2S+, or students with a disability.
- New Equity Ambassadors will offer peer support for prospective students in navigating the admissions and financial-aid processes.
- Applicants will continue to have access to the Indigenous Students Admission Pathway and First Generation Admission Pathway, where applicable. ■





Believe in something, even if
it means sacrificing everything.

 Just do it.

Do The Right Thing

Professor Jacob Brower shows why corporate social responsibility programs still matter. Even if they don't pay off like they used to. →

By Jordan Whitehouse

A Nike ad in New York City with Colin Kaepernick is an example of the next wave of corporate social responsibility.

In September 1970, famed American economist Milton Friedman wrote an essay for *The New York Times* titled “A Friedman Doctrine.” In it, he argued that a company has no social responsibility to society. Rather, a company’s only purpose is to make money for its shareholders. Business people with a social conscience, he wrote, “are unwitting puppets of the intellectual forces that have been undermining the basis of a free society.”

It was a shocking argument, given the social and political upheaval of the time. In the 1960s, people began to question their trust in politicians, institutions and big business. The environmental movement had kicked off. Organizations like Greenpeace would soon pressure companies to do better. Many economists believed that because large corporations had such a tangible impact on society, they absolutely had a responsibility to the public. No matter. Friedman’s stance proved enormously influential. Even in 2016, *The Economist* called his shareholder theory “the biggest idea in business”.

And yet, as Smith associate professor of marketing Jacob Brower points out, what many forget about Friedman is that he wasn’t necessarily against companies doing good things for society. But to be justified, corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives had to make a positive impact on a firm’s bottom line. Near the end of Friedman’s *New York Times* essay, he wrote that it may be in the long-term interest of a large corporation to give back to its community: “That may make it easier to attract desirable employees, it may reduce the wage bill or lessen losses from pilferage and sabotage or have other worthwhile effects.”

Brower wasn’t the only one to notice this nuance in Friedman’s argument. Beginning in the early 1990s, corporations started using CSR as a way to differentiate themselves from competitors, attract customers and make more money. And, as Brower found in his research, it did work for some of them. But by the early 2000s, so many companies were embracing CSR that it no longer helped them stand out. As a result, companies could no longer expect the same kind of payoff that CSR pioneers got in the ‘90s.

But that doesn’t mean firms should abandon CSR. In fact, they may want to sharpen their strategies. That’s because today, Brower believes, we’re in the early stages of what he calls “CSR 3.0”. To differentiate themselves on the CSR scales now, firms need to think about the broader social values of their customers.

BEYOND PHILANTHROPY

Brower began researching CSR over a decade ago while working on his doctorate at the University of Texas. But his interest goes back to his undergrad days at the State University

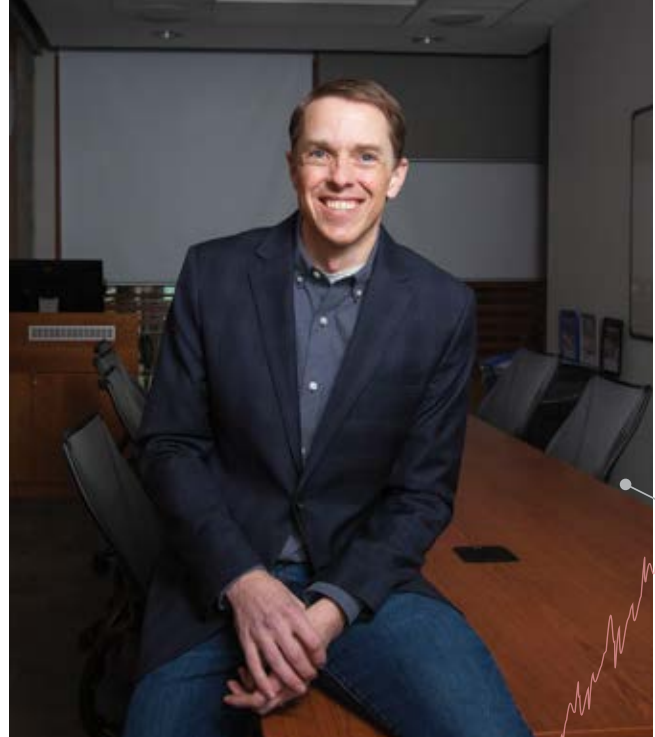


PHOTO | LARS HAGBERG

Corporate social responsibility today is like an insurance policy for brand reputation, says Jacob Brower. “It helps protect you.”

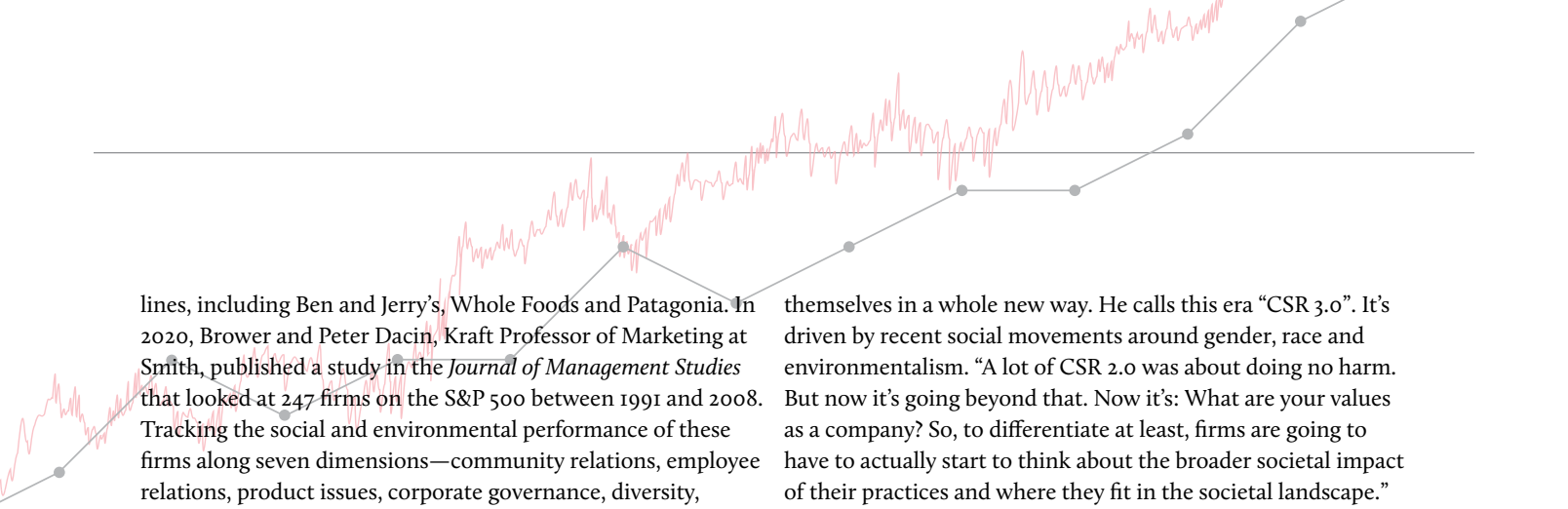
of New York College at Geneseo. There, he majored in economics but minored in environmental studies. Naturally, sustainability became an interest. Soon, he was thinking about how corporations can make the world a better place. “The power of corporations right now is mind-boggling,” he says. “The big impacts are going to happen through corporations.”

Take Walmart, for example. The world’s biggest retailer employs more than 2.2 million people. Its supplier network stretches around the globe. Revenues top \$US500 billion. If Walmart were a country, it would be the world’s 24th largest by GDP. “If we can even nudge a company like Walmart to improve by five per cent in terms of its environmental impact, that’s a massive impact on the world,” says Brower, who at Smith holds the title Distinguished Faculty Fellow of Marketing.

Although CSR has really only become popular in business over the past 30 years, it does have a longer history. The roots of some modern CSR activities are found in the paternalistic approaches of certain corporations in the late 1800s and early 1900s. In the 1880s, for example, the Pullman Palace Car Company created a model industrial town outside of Chicago. It housed all employees and provided essential services and amenities such as running water, sewage, a library and theatre.

Throughout most of the 20th century, however, few corporate actions went beyond philanthropy. That started to change in the early 1990s. And this is where Brower’s research on CSR really begins—what he calls the start of “CSR 2.0”. “I think there are a few reasons CSR started taking off then,” he says. “There was a bit of an economic slowdown. But it was also a response to the over-opulence of the 1980s that people were finding unsatisfying. So, I think firms picked up on this and were looking at it as a way to differentiate themselves.”

And indeed, some of them did successfully use CSR to separate themselves from the pack and improve their bottom



lines, including Ben and Jerry's, Whole Foods and Patagonia. In 2020, Brower and Peter Dacin, Kraft Professor of Marketing at Smith, published a study in the *Journal of Management Studies* that looked at 247 firms on the S&P 500 between 1991 and 2008. Tracking the social and environmental performance of these firms along seven dimensions—community relations, employee relations, product issues, corporate governance, diversity, human rights issues and environmental performance—Brower and Dacin found that CSR adopters in the '90s were more likely to see greater profits and higher stock market valuations due to their CSR activities.

“The power of corporations right now is mind-boggling. The big impacts are going to happen through corporations,” says Brower.

But these early CSR movers also took on big risk. “With any sort of differentiation, there’s always risk,” says Brower. “If you do something that’s completely off-the-wall bonkers and people don’t understand it, the market doesn’t know how to respond to it, and stakeholders may not reward you for it.”

This also holds true with particular CSR initiatives within particular industries. Take oil-and-gas giant BP, for example. In 2001, it famously rebranded itself from “British Petroleum” to “Beyond Petroleum”. It pledged a “commitment to the environment” and promoted itself as “the supermajor of choice for the environmentally-aware motorist.” Nine years later, an explosion at BP’s Deepwater Horizon rig in the Gulf of Mexico unleashed the largest marine oil spill in history. Buckling under the weight of its own hypocrisy and financial pressure, BP soon abandoned many of its solar and wind assets. It also ditched the rebranding.

What’s interesting, though, notes Brower, is that as CSR became institutionalized in the early 2000s, and firms no longer experienced the same financial upsides from it compared to in the 1990s, the risk to companies came from *not* engaging in CSR. Why exactly? Brower explains: “Eventually, you get to this point where if you don’t adopt CSR, people look down on you. It doesn’t necessarily pay off in financial returns, but you can run a lot of risks if you aren’t doing it. So, CSR almost becomes insurance—it helps protect you.”

THE KAEPERNICK EFFECT

Today, CSR is an everyday part of doing business. But Brower says he’s now seeing companies using CSR to differentiate

themselves in a whole new way. He calls this era “CSR 3.0”. It’s driven by recent social movements around gender, race and environmentalism. “A lot of CSR 2.0 was about doing no harm. But now it’s going beyond that. Now it’s: What are your values as a company? So, to differentiate at least, firms are going to have to actually start to think about the broader societal impact of their practices and where they fit in the societal landscape.”

As was the case with CSR 2.0, however, early CSR 3.0 adopters are susceptible to big financial and reputational risks. Take Nike’s 2018 advertising campaign featuring Colin Kaepernick, the NFL quarterback who knelt during the American national anthem to protest police brutality and racial injustice. While some praised Kaepernick for his courage, others slammed him as unpatriotic. Nike’s ads played off the fact that those who seek social justice often do so at their peril. In one ad, Kaepernick says, “Believe in something, even if it means sacrificing everything.” The subtext was that by the time the ads aired, Kaepernick was out of the NFL, and some suspect he was blackballed by the league’s teams for refusing to stand during the anthem.

As expected, Nike’s ad campaign proved controversial. A wave of videos on social media showed people burning Nike shoes. But Brower believes that the ads, in the end, paid off. “And the reason for that is that Nike knows who its core stakeholders are and the values they hold. The people who burned Nikes didn’t go out to buy new Nikes to do that. They dug some out of the closet or found some someplace else. They’re not the core Nike customers. They’re not the ones affecting Nike’s business.” Nike’s sales proved that point. During the fiscal quarter in which the ads started running, Nike reported income growth of 10 per cent, driven mostly by higher revenues. Nike’s share price went up, too.

Thus, one of Brower’s biggest pieces of advice to companies looking to bolster their CSR programs: Understand what your customers truly value. As a 2017 paper he co-authored shows, CSR initiatives aimed at the values of customers might not always grow bottom lines, but they can mean customers are more likely to stay committed to you.

Brower’s other piece of advice: Be consistent. This, too, is backed by a 2017 paper he co-authored. It showed that organizations that implement a CSR strategy and then drop it, and then implement something different, do as much damage to their bottom lines as companies that implement very few CSR initiatives.

As for what’s next for Brower, he hopes to soon publish a study looking at how sustainability officers and the orientation of top management teams impact companies’ commitment to sustainability-related CSR.

Milton Friedman is likely turning in his grave. Brower is unperturbed. “I think [CSR] is fascinating,” he says. “This research motivates me and makes me want to get up every day. I can’t imagine having done all of my research on anything else.” ■



A year ago, Sarah Jordan, MBA'07, BSc(Eng)'04, became chief executive officer at Mastermind Toys. Then the pandemic hit ...

By Brenda Bouw

Most CEOs are advised to spend their first 100 days on the job listening and learning about the organization before making any big moves. Those rules didn't apply to Sarah Jordan, who took the top job at Mastermind Toys, Canada's largest specialty toy and children's book retailer, just weeks before the COVID-19 pandemic turned the retail industry upside down. It was not only her first CEO gig, but she was the first to take over from co-founder Jonathan Levy, who held the position since the company started in 1984.

"I thought I was going to quietly make some changes to this hidden retail gem in Canada," recalls Jordan, 39, who was brought in to



supercharge the company's customer experience, culture and its mission to be "Canada's Authority on Play."

The pandemic had other plans. Within weeks, before the government-ordered shutdowns, Jordan closed the company's 68 stores across Canada, which accounted for more than 95 per cent of its revenue. At the time, the company did not have any contactless curbside pickup offering in place.

"I really felt the heaviness of the situation," Jordan recalls of that time in March 2020. "I felt like it was a defining moment for leadership, at least in my lifetime, at least in my career lifespan, and that I was never going to encounter another moment like this. I knew I needed to rise to the occasion."

JORDAN'S JOURNEY

Before getting to how Jordan handled the pandemic as CEO, some background: She was born in Ottawa and raised in Whitby, Ont., about 50 kilometres east of Toronto, to supportive, hard-working parents. Her dad, a registered forester, and her mom, a nurse, had a big influence on her life, ambitions and career path.

"My parents raised me with a 'can-do' attitude," she recalls. "I had no concept of a glass ceiling growing up. I was treated just like my older brother, who also made me fierce."

She excelled in math and science at school and chose to study engineering at Queen's University for the challenge. "I felt like it was the hardest program I could do," she says. Still, she wasn't sure she wanted a career as an engineer. "I love being challenged. I am always searching for the next insight, trend or pattern. I'm a proud problem-solver. I think engineering continued to harness in me that real curiosity because there's never a black-and-white answer. You're learning to always solve complex problems."

It was her grandfather who pushed her to consider a career in business. An engineering professor, meanwhile, suggested that she earn her MBA after noticing her interest in some of the program's business-related content.

Taking the full-time MBA program at Smith in 2006-07 was pivotal for Jordan. It taught her how to become an effective leader and work with diverse teams. "What I learned, in a very safe space, was the kind of leader I wanted to be," says Jordan, who, at 24, was the youngest in her MBA class. "I had to learn how to inspire other people, to deal with conflict . . . and to delegate."

After graduation and 15 years of work with companies on transforming their customer experience, including 10 years

with The Boston Consulting Group advising Fortune 500 companies and three years at Scotiabank, Jordan's drive caused her to want to "own the change agenda," as she puts it. "I wanted to own the transformation, not just advise people on doing it." Then along came the offer at Mastermind Toys.

THE MASTERMIND MAKEOVER

Jordan was hired to helm Mastermind Toys a decade after Birch Hill Equity Partners, a private-equity firm, purchased a majority stake in the Scarborough, Ont.-based company, taking it from about a dozen to 68 stores. Jordan's job was to reimagine Mastermind Toys' store footprint and e-commerce platform, capitalizing on its reputation as a retailer of the top-trending specialty children's toys and books, with an emphasis on educational products.

The mother of two young children wasn't even a regular Mastermind Toys customer when she joined the company. Much of her toy shopping for her own kids had been done online with other companies. That experience as a customer, she believes, helped her to overhaul Mastermind Toys' digital strategy. "It wasn't a turnaround; it was a turn-it-up," she says, "meaning I was taking what were already some amazing ingredients and taking them to the next level." To get there, she put in place a four-pillar strategy. It included launching a digital reinvention; elevating toy curation; amplifying the brand purpose; and driving a performance-oriented culture. "My first six weeks were really about meeting and learning about the team [and] reshaping the organization around those pillars," she says.

As part of that process, she travelled to stores across the country, talking to Mastermind Toys' associates. She asked them about their employee experience as well as more probing questions such as: "If your store was a kid's toy, what would it be?" "If you could do one thing differently tomorrow, what would it be?" "If you could have an event in your store for your customers, what would it be?" "What is your favourite book to sell and why?" "What is your favourite toy to sell and why?"

All good questions. But as news of the pandemic grew dire, and cases spread across Canada, Jordan was forced to ask serious questions about protecting the health and safety of her employees and customers. "I knew that we would have to find another way to meet our customers," she says. "And we did."

Instead of drawing up a pandemic business plan on her own, Jordan turned to her employees. "I looked at the →

“What I’ve learned over my career is if you give someone a stretch opportunity, and you believe in them, they will not let you down.”

Sarah Jordan
photographed in the
Mastermind Toys
Playroom in Toronto.

PHOTOS | GREG BLACK PHOTOGRAPHY

Mastermind Toys team, and I said, 'I need three things from you right now: One, I need you to keep Mastermind Toys special. Two, I need you to be bold and scrappy. And three, I need us to build momentum to come out of this stronger.'" She wanted her team to move fast, be innovative, and not worry about making mistakes along the way.

Like most brick-and-mortar retailers, Mastermind Toys' priority was boosting its online activity to drive sales, and to build and maintain customer engagement. The company also needed to implement physically distanced in-store and curbside pickup. Mastermind Toys began hosting a daily story-time reading on social channels and weekly virtual birthday parties, and launched a Grandparents Day promotion on the first Tuesday of the month. It also struck corporate partnerships, such as the first branded pop-up digital store on Loblaw Marketplace; a partnership with RBC Rewards and RBC Ventures; and a "surprise and delight" program with MadeGood, in which the Canadian brand's organic snack bars were given out in stores and curbside as an unexpected treat for customers.

Jordan also relied on digital platforms to connect with employees, holding virtual coffee chats and town hall meetings. She worked to inspire her team by encouraging members to work together on new ideas and opportunities throughout the pandemic.

"I know that I operate at my best when someone believes in me; and what I've learned over my career is if you give someone a stretch opportunity, and you believe in them, they will not let you down," she says. "I thought about all of the times when I've been at my best; when I've been at my 'wow' moment, and I tried to create those conditions for the team." [For more, see "Leading with purpose" on this page.]

WONDER AND DELIGHT

In November 2020, despite all the obstacles that came with the pandemic, Mastermind Toys won the international toy industry's Most Innovative Retailer award at the TAGIEs (Toy & Game International Excellence Awards).

The company's success comes as the industry overall is experiencing steady growth. Global toy-market revenues are expected to see an annual compound growth rate of more than four per cent between 2019 and 2025, according to one global industry forecast report, driven by growth in the education, entertainment, interactivity, development and engagement sectors. The industry also saw surprising growth during the pandemic, the report notes, with lockdowns inspiring more people to buy toys, games and puzzles. →

SARAH JORDAN:

LEADING WITH PURPOSE

The Mastermind Toys CEO on leadership in a year like no other.

When COVID-19 hit, Sarah Jordan was only weeks on the job as CEO of Mastermind Toys. Quick decisions had to be made. Among them: Jordan decided to close all stores before the government-mandated shutdowns. That move, she says, was grounded in the company's values, which gave her a "clear compass" to deal with the uncertainty. It was also an important lesson in dealing with the pandemic: **Lead with purpose.** Here, Jordan explains other lessons she learned in leading her teams.

Be the chief communicator

Jordan believes that employee experience drives customer experience. "So, it's important for me to give employees and customers a direct channel to ask questions, share concerns and offer feedback. For instance, our Grandparents Day was born out of a comment by a team member during one of my early visits to a store. From there, we've continued to improve it by listening to customers."

Reinvent the water-cooler moment

"Remote work meant finding new ways to connect with employees," Jordan says. "As we shifted to working from home, I held virtual coffee chats with employees to hear their challenges and provide company updates. We also started bi-weekly virtual town halls that have become a forum for employee recognition, team building and to highlight company projects."

Focus on progress over perfection

"I've asked my team to be bold and scrappy," says Jordan. "That means giving them permission to innovate and put the customer first—even if there are some mistakes along the way. It allowed us to act quickly, rolling out new programs like our first contactless curbside service and our 'Virtual Verified' birthday parties. I've challenged the entire team to find more ways of saying 'yes', and I've yet to be disappointed by what they have delivered and accomplished."

Celebrate small wins

"The pandemic forced everyone to revisit priorities and embrace change," Jordan says. As a result, "it became really important to celebrate the small wins as a team. By creating a culture of celebration, we're establishing a momentum that will position us to come out of the pandemic stronger together."



Mastermind Toys has 68 stores across Canada. In November, it won the international toy industry's Most Innovative Retailer award.



According to The NPD Group, toy sales increased 10 per cent in Canada in 2020. Jordan says Mastermind Toys had the best November in the company's 36-year history, before a second round of lockdowns was announced for non-essential retail in Ontario and Manitoba, and further retail capacity restrictions were rolled out coast-to-coast in December.

While such restrictions brought a renewed emphasis on at-home play, retailers like Mastermind Toys still had to find ways to get their products to customers. Jordan says the toy-store chain's rapid transition from a physical to a digital retailer was possible thanks to an understanding of what customers wanted in these challenging and often difficult times. "We really focused on

being a resource for parents, educators and caregivers. What do they need right now? How can we bring the same wonder and delight experienced by our customers in our stores to our online channels? And we focused on coming out of this stronger, and using this time as an opportunity to reinvent the business," she says. "For me, it was an acceleration of our strategy . . . We had to move faster."

The pandemic also validated Jordan's leadership style, which includes engaging employees to drive cultural change and deliver what she calls a "world-class customer experience." She believes strongly that employee experience drives customer experience.

"Authentic leadership is being accepted for how effective it can be," she says. "I believe we are seeing a lot of examples of really inspiring leadership in this time . . . that includes empathy and strength, courage and compassion." ■



On March 11, we passed the one-year anniversary of the World Health Organization declaring COVID-19 a global pandemic. One year of isolation, rolling lockdowns, and, for many, working from home. One year in which the resilience of businesses, communities, individuals and families was tested.

Stepping into the pandemic's Year Two, however, there's light on the horizon. Every day more people get vaccinated. Though COVID variants remain a problem, we can finally see a day, sometime in the fall perhaps, or slightly beyond, when normal life starts to return.

But will it ever be the same? It's hard to imagine that it will. Seismic events like a once-in-a-hundred-years pandemic tend to leave their mark. It seems fitting that as we head into the post-pandemic future, we look back and reflect. What have we learned? And how can we do better?

When it comes to business and the workplace, there is no question the events of 2020 have had a dramatic effect. It wasn't just the pandemic. The murder of George Floyd, and Black Lives Matter, have permanently altered the conversation around race, diversity and inclusion.

So where do we go from here? One thing is for sure: The benefits and challenges of the massive shift to remote work has businesses now considering what a return to normal might look like. And on a larger scale, firms are grappling with their role to drive social change in areas of sustainability and equity, diversity and inclusion.

With these thoughts in mind, *Smith Magazine* asked faculty and alumni leaders for their thoughts on the future of work in four key areas: leadership teamwork, technology and office, and diversity and inclusion. We hope you find inspiration in their ideas, on the following pages. The fact is, we can build back better. Let's start right now. →

– Kristen Sears, *Smith Magazine*

LEADERSHIP



Redefine how value is created and assessed

by Jean-Baptiste Litrico

Pandemics of the past have often caused profound changes in our societies. The Black Death dealt a blow to the feudal system in Britain. In more recent times, the Spanish Flu forced overhauls of the health-care systems in several countries.

The COVID crisis has laid bare long-standing social and environmental issues that can no longer be ignored,

and that will require new approaches in the post-pandemic world. Glaring inequalities in socio-economic opportunities and profound inequity in exposure to the health, social and economic impacts of the virus have been revealed.

A global movement against systemic racism has gained strength, propelled by the untamed willingness to connect and to stand together for a just cause, in spite—or because?—of the social isolation imposed by shutdowns. Habitual smog caused by environmental degradation and pollution has momentarily dissipated over many large cities, offering a glimpse of what a cleaner future might look like.

Demand for social change seems at an all-time high. The idea that businesses have a responsibility to build a more equitable and sustainable society is no longer seen as extreme; it has become self-evident.

Business leaders should pay attention and anticipate the new demands being placed on them. They should start thinking about the impact of their business activities in much broader terms, but also in much more elaborate ways. They should begin to rethink and redefine how they create value—what value, and for whom.

Jean-Baptiste Litrico is Distinguished Faculty Fellow of Strategy and director of the Centre for Social Impact at Smith.



Leaders must adapt to the evolving needs of employees

by Tina Dacin

COVID-19 changed everything. From working at home for most of the population to shifting demands and pressure on the home front, the last year has significantly altered our daily lives.

The pandemic has been disheartening as well as disorienting. Uncertainty about the future and the everyday stresses of navigating the “new normal” have proven challenging for even the most resilient among us.

Leaders have had to adapt their management style to meet the new needs of their businesses and employees. As leaders continue to adjust to the evolving effects of the pandemic, they should consider these questions:

1. How can we know what we cannot see? How can I see without being “there”? Setting up good systems of communication are key to building shared understandings of the present and the future.

2. How can we give space to our own voice and emotions as well as to those on our team? How do we support and engage our workforce? How can we manage the need for control and allow ourselves to be vulnerable at the same time? This takes compassion.



Shift attention to outcomes

by Meghan Roach, BCom'05

The past year has caused companies to rethink the ways we work and how best to create an environment that fosters innovation, camaraderie and progress by different means. It has driven me, as a leader, to broaden my understanding of the factors impacting employees. This is especially true of those things outside of the physical office that have meaningful implications on one's work.

To better prepare for the future, business leaders need to redefine expectations. They must shift their attention to desired outcomes rather than exactly where or how employees accomplish them. In my role, I work collaboratively with my senior leadership team to establish objectives and key results at the company-wide level. Then, I enable leaders to independently determine how best to achieve these results.

In the right environment, remote work, flexible hours and job sharing are all possible; however, it requires business leaders to empower employees, to create defined objectives, and to hold individuals accountable for clearly defined outcomes.

Undoubtedly, these changes will take time. It remains up to us, as business leaders, to take the first step.

Meghan Roach is the president and CEO of Roots.

Explore new avenues for employee bonding



by Michele Romanow, MBA'08

During the pandemic, companies were forced to become fully remote. Then, they realized that their employees were equally, if not more, productive.

Take my company, Clearbanc, for example. We had an in-office-all-the-time kind of culture. We didn't believe in a remote environment. As a fast-growing startup, it was important to have everyone together in the same place, problem-solving, brainstorming. The pandemic proved us wrong. Turns out, we can be a successful remote team.

But now the new challenge is, how do companies help their teams build the bonds that were previously created from casual conversations and interactions in the office? At Clearbanc, we practise "Radical Candor"—bestselling author Kim Scott's management philosophy on caring personally while challenging directly. The truth is, it's hard to give difficult feedback if you haven't made a personal connection.

Organizations working remotely will need to find a new way to simulate the more social conversations that naturally occurred in the office. I predict that global offices will spend more time doing internal retreats and conferences a couple of times a year so employees can build those bonds.

Just as we used to travel to conferences to network with people outside the company, now we will travel to meet the colleagues we speak to every day—but have never met in person.

Michele Romanow is co-founder and president of Clearbanc.

3. What are the ways we can create high-quality connections? High-quality connections give you energy and hope.

4. How can I, as a leader, demonstrate care and foster inclusion? Demonstrating care includes checking in, showing interest, following up and expressing gratitude.

This set of questions represents four important aspects of good leadership: the qualities of compassion, communication, connection and care. Each of these qualities was essential for leading during the pandemic. They will be equally important post-pandemic.

Tina Dacin is the Stephen J.R. Smith Chair of Strategy & Organizational Behaviour.



Strive for a balance of autonomy and belongingness

by Matthias Spitzmuller

Working remotely has affected us all in many different ways. But what should organizations be doing next to promote effective teamwork?



As we come out of the pandemic, I believe teams should work towards a state in which both the experience of autonomy and belongingness can be realized. We need to maintain the freedom that employees currently have to decide where they want to work and when they want to work. But we must also address loneliness, fatigue or even depression—all of

which were frequently reported during the pandemic.

Research on teams finds that autonomy can paradoxically co-exist with belongingness and cohesiveness. There are five structural dimensions on which teamwork can be designed:

1. Teams can have a strong leader or share leadership responsibilities.
2. Teams can have clearly defined task interdependencies and interfaces between team members. Or team members can perform their work largely in isolation.
3. Teams can have the same goals and rewards for all members. Or they can offer individualized goals and rewards.
4. Teams can communicate virtually or do so face-to-face.
5. Teams can have a shared history and destiny. Or they can operate for a limited time, after which they disband.

Organizations need to find a balance across all five of these structural dimensions. As long as we are operating in a virtual setting, it is important to

define clear interdependencies, have leaders who step up, emphasize shared goals and rewards, and have a shared future of the team to complement the larger degree of autonomy that we experience through virtual teamwork.

Looking ahead, few organizations will maintain an all-virtual presence. Many will move towards a hybrid model. For those teams that return to the office, it will be important to protect the strengths of virtual work: uninterrupted time for strategically important projects and respect for personal socializing preferences.

What else? We must eliminate “presenteeism”—showing up to work when sick. If we learn to watch our bodies and to protect ourselves and our team members from the consequences of illness, then this pandemic will have made teams not only more resilient, but also wiser and healthier.

Matthias Spitzmuller is Distinguished Professor of Organizational Behaviour.

Lead with intention

by Jana Raver



If a pandemic had to happen, we're fortunate it occurred in 2020 and not a decade before. The operational continuity we've seen—with businesses, schools, communities and social connections operating virtually—was only possible because of the recent emergence of powerful virtual collaboration platforms.

With these tools, many organizations barely missed a beat. Many say they aren't going back. Virtual and hybrid workplaces—with some workers in offices, others at home—are here to stay. But the transition has not gone smoothly everywhere. The mere existence of collaboration tools does not guarantee success. So, what is the key to build and sustain virtual and/or hybrid teams? The answer: intentionality.

Leading a team of remote workers requires forethought about communication and collaboration. Successful virtual leaders are intentional in planning communications and workflow. All team members

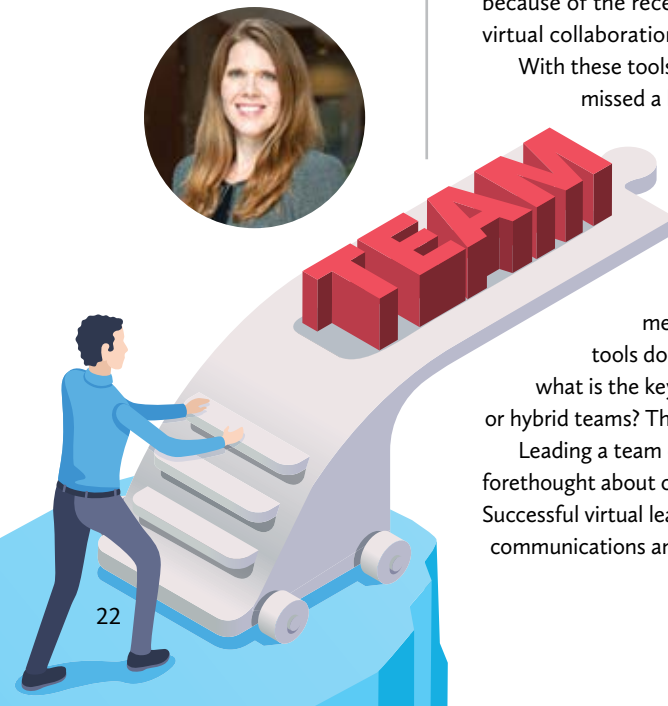
have access to the information they need.

As we move forward, workplace communication must be abundant—and visually documented, ideally in shared workspaces (not email). Leaders need to set up a virtual collaboration architecture coupled with communication norms around using team message channels, case management notes, wikis, or other freely-accessible communication modes.

Maintaining social bonds and shared purpose also requires intentionality. Unless leaders intentionally plan team social events and regularly highlight the team's goals and purpose, remote workers will begin to feel disengaged. With hybrid teams, it is important to include everyone in virtual bonding events to avoid workplaces fracturing into in-groups and out-groups.

Leaders who intentionally plan their virtual communication architectures, along with virtual events that foster cohesion and purpose, will ultimately be more successful in post-pandemic workplaces.

Jana Raver is the E. Marie Shantz Professor of Organizational Behaviour.



Make a strategic human resources shift

by Amanda Hudson, EMBA'12

We're entering a new age of work. Organizations that can shift their focus from hierarchical employee relationships to networks of teams will be able to keep up with the demands of change and outperform their competition.

Moving from manager-employee relationships to team networks will require a change in strategic human resources. For example, rather than hiring people with specific qualifications into defined jobs indefinitely, organizations will need to understand better the skills, abilities and strengths of each employee. Based on these profiles, employees will be deployed to one or more teams to solve current problems. They might find themselves on a core team for years and on several other teams for shorter periods, depending on the organization's needs.

Training for employees to become better team performers will be necessary. Research by Google into what makes an effective team discovered that *who* was on a team mattered much less than *how* a team operated. One of the major elements of successful teams was "equal conversational turn-taking." In other words, in meetings, every member contributed equally to the discussion. By comparison, we know that just a few people dominate the conversation in most meetings today.

As we re-imagine the future of work, the importance of "the team" will only grow. Leaders must start envisioning how that will happen within their organizations. And then make the right investments to bring it to life.

Amanda Hudson is the founder of A Modern Way to Work.



Hardwire your culture for the "new normal"

by Jennifer Wenzel, EMBA'12

What can we expect to outlast the pandemic in the workplace? A few things come to mind: The remote and in-office workforce; flexible schedules; and personalized work experiences. Yes, all that *and* delivering work faster than ever are here to stay. As we move ahead, the lessons from the last year must be hardwired into company culture. How? Through the design of work, organizational policies and the reinforcement of new management capabilities.

At the Canadian Red Cross, we are doing that. We're strengthening our employee and volunteer communications through the use of pulse surveys, webinars and task forces. We are learning that we can unleash capacity by making work easier—evaluating workflows, providing technology and ensuring role and decision-making clarity.

But there's more. One workplace capability that I see gaining prominence is organizational network analysis. It can help businesses understand how employees interact with one another and how work gets done. By identifying important connections and barriers in information flow, organizations can be deliberate in building social ties amongst their workforce and increase operational effectiveness.

Additionally, the onboarding experience will need to be redesigned to build team cohesion and create an understanding of cultural norms in a remote workplace. Equity in how opportunities are given and performance is evaluated will also be critical, though challenging for managers. After all, managers may find themselves overseeing both remote *and* in-person teams. To respond effectively they will need to be intentional in how, when and with whom they communicate and how they evaluate performance based on outcomes. Becoming attuned to unconscious bias will help them navigate the challenge.

Jennifer Wenzel is senior director, people services strategy and organizational effectiveness at the Canadian Red Cross Society.



Keep the focus on the “real work”

by Kathryn Brohman



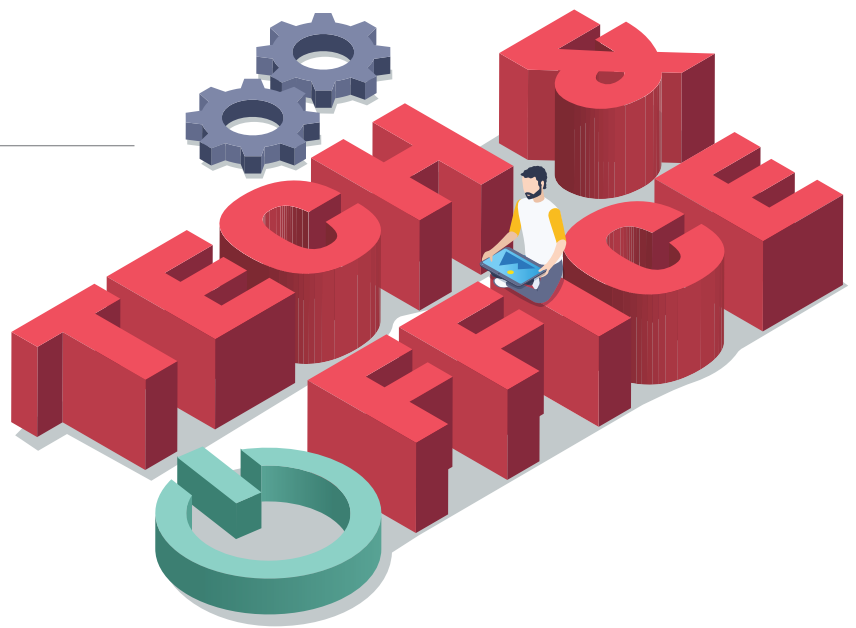
Last May, I co-authored an article entitled “The next stage of the crisis is upon us” on Smith Business Insight (read it at: smithqueens.com/insight) that made reference to a historical six-stage crisis model. I wrote that organizations were moving out of the so-called “honeymoon phase” of the COVID-19 crisis toward a more challenging stage: “disillusionment”. In this stage, companies would come to realize a return to normal was no longer an option. Leaders would be tested on their ability to embrace an entirely new level of uncertainty.

In many ways, the disillusionment stage played out as anticipated. For example, companies reeled in their goals to get clarity: a set of 90- to 120-day work priorities.

However, a byproduct emerged that we did not predict. Greater clarity on the work, amplified by the rapid adoption of virtual collaboration tools, unleashed a natural source of capacity among workers to get things done. Approvals were accelerated and cross-functional work flowed easier because people got clarity on what work was really important. They felt a sense of responsibility to connect their day-to-day work to actual results. Simply stated, we learned that when smart, capable people are given a clear set of priorities, the right technology tools and a sense of urgency, they will naturally seek out the best way to drive desired results.

Virtual collaboration tools have become ingrained in the modern work fabric. However, in the final “reconstruction” stage of the crisis, clarity on the work will reduce as tensions between short-term priorities and longer-term strategic goals begin to re-emerge. Leaders should analyze and identify the practices that made them an effective execution leader during the previous stages of this crisis and actively future-proof their approach.

Kathryn Brohman is Distinguished Faculty Fellow of Digital Technology.



Leverage tech to create a personalized employee experience

by Dagmar Christianson, MBA'20



The last year reminded us of how important individual employees are to organizational success. Now it's time to combine advancements in technology with a critical mass of people and work data to put the “human” back into human resources.

Historically, companies relied on a manager's memory and written records to track employee preferences, performance and development needs.

Making sense of all this information isn't something humans do well. It's a task better suited for machines.

Artificial intelligence algorithms, when trained ethically and effectively, will let organizations understand their people in a holistic way that was not previously possible at scale. The result: a “smart” workplace in which learning, upskilling and reskilling can be tailored to each person.

Meaningful opportunities look different to everyone. It won't be enough to assume that leaders understand an individual employee's journey by mapping high-level personas. Instead, with AI, each worker can have a personalized profile that considers their wants, needs, motivations and priorities.

Intelligent organizations are already collecting people data. The result is an ever-growing repository of institutional knowledge. This can be leveraged to power enabling tools that support the individual employee experience across the entire talent lifecycle.

Such tools will allow employees to reclaim their agency to choose the projects they want to work on, or to provide data-supported nudges to prompt more strategic career-path decisions. Organizations that recognize the cruciality of listening to employees, and flex to meet their needs, will come out the other side with a more personal, human experience in the workplace.

Dagmar Christianson is an independent workforce transformation consultant.

Adopt a flexible hybrid work policy

by Anton Ovchinnikov

Working from home is here to stay. Not the 100 per cent work from home that we see now, but a hybrid of a few days in the office and the remainder at home. Several factors will contribute to this:

1. COVID destigmatized working from home: Data shows that people are generally more productive at home. That was the case before COVID, too. But pre-COVID, there was a major self-selection of people who worked from home. Research suggests that those who did might not have been the most productive employees to begin with. Now, working from home is not about slacking off.

2. Switching to working from home was risky and costly, and since the benefits were unclear, many businesses were unwilling to experiment. COVID forced the experiment, and it was generally a success.



3. Research studies show that people like working from home part of the week. On average, participants in one large-scale study indicated that they would be willing to forego eight per cent of their pay to have a flexible arrangement between office and house. They indicated the time saved on commute and the flexibility with home and family-related matters as the main drivers of value.

Working from home, however, has several implications that businesses must watch for. First, businesses need to rethink office space. Social distancing is also here to stay, so while fewer people will work from the office, more space will be needed per person. Additionally, the composition of office spaces might change—away from skyscrapers with packed elevators to mid-rise office parks.

A troubling sign of working from home is that it might interfere with promotions: a pre-COVID field experiment at a large Chinese travel agency showed that employees who worked from home were significantly less likely to be promoted, despite actually being more productive. This was both because their work was less visible than that of their colleagues who worked in the office,

and because they had fewer opportunities to develop leadership skills as a result of interacting less with others. Thus, it will be critical for companies to have a flexible policy intermixing working in the office with working from home.

COVID forced millions to learn how to work at home. Post-COVID, we will need to relearn how to better work in the office.

Anton Ovchinnikov is Distinguished Professor of Management Analytics.



Explore how tech can make remote work more human

by Eva Wong, BCom'oo

Prior to the pandemic, the company I co-founded, Borrowell, had a definite in-person culture. People worked from home occasionally. But most meetings, collaboration and socials were in person.

As a tech company, the move to remote work last year was technically easy. Everyone had a laptop. More challenging, however, was replicating all those unplanned interactions that being in the office afforded. For example: learning through osmosis from colleagues' conversations; quickly pulling people into a huddle to solve a problem; or getting to know someone over lunch or a walk to the coffee shop.

As we move forward, it's my belief there will be new and better technology solutions that enable these unplanned

interactions, as well as creative collaboration, to happen virtually. At the onset of the pandemic, many organizations had to quickly adopt new communications platforms to maintain organizational efficiency. Moving forward, I encourage leaders to explore ways to use technology to foster a sense of connectedness.

In many ways, working virtually has been great for us at Borrowell. During the pandemic, we acquired a company on the West Coast, so being remote levelled the playing field between us. There isn't

a divide based on whether someone is working in the same office or across screens. But there is still something missing. And while technology might not be able to completely replace in-person interactions, I know we'd all benefit from remote work feeling more personal, more connected and more human.

Eva Wong is co-founder and chief operating officer at Borrowell.



Take accountability and meaningful action

by Kate Rowbotham



For many organizations, 2020 was an awakening on equity, diversity and inclusion. EDI issues mattered before, but they were perhaps easier to ignore. For example, organizations that previously resisted accessibility steps (such as working remotely) that would have benefited employees with disabilities suddenly had their whole workforce at home.

Of course, the move to remote work brought extra burdens for those caring for younger children and older relatives. News story after news story in 2020 featured moms who were thinking about quitting their jobs. In November 2020, an RBC report highlighted that moms with kids under the age of six made up most of the coronavirus workforce exodus.

Beyond the pandemic, the Black Lives Matter movement brought the issue of ongoing racial

discrimination to the forefront. Organizations that had never acknowledged their own racism and discrimination were suddenly posting black squares on social media to show solidarity. For many organizations this act was nothing more than performative.

What I really hope happens post-pandemic in equity, diversity and inclusion is accountability. This means:

1. Acknowledging and apologizing for the harms that happen in organizations (and organizational leadership's complicity in those harms).
2. Collecting data related to EDI and the experiences of Black and Indigenous employees and employees of colour. We need to seek out and listen to their stories.
3. Critically examining and changing organizational policies that exclude certain people from full participation in the life and work of organizations.
4. Embedding the values of equity and anti-racism in all organizational practices.

Being accountable also means taking all the above actions with humility and courage, and recognizing that the impact of your actions matters more than the intent.

Kate Rowbotham is Distinguished Faculty Fellow of Organizational Behaviour.



Create a future-forward talent management strategy

by Randeep Purewal, AMBA'17

A year after the world went virtual, it's no surprise that most employees prefer working remotely (or at least having the option to do so). There are obvious benefits. But remote work presents challenges for talent management and equity.

Equity is created by establishing a diverse, equal and inclusive workplace. While each organization has different starting points, companies that want to be future-forward-ready should consider these questions when re-imagining what their workplace will look like:

How diverse is your organization? Diversity goes beyond standard characteristics such as ethnicity and gender. Companies should focus on how to make their employee base more diverse in ideology, education, geography and socio-economic backgrounds, for instance. Research has proven that truly diverse teams outperform non-diverse teams. Hence, the first step is to avoid groupthink culture.

Does everyone have equal access to opportunities? Unfortunately (and regardless of physical versus remote environments), talent management tends to invoke biases and subjectivity. Therefore, it is critical to implement an unbiased and data-driven process for promotions and hires. Remote work has influenced organizations to favour internal hires over external hires. It is therefore more important than ever to remove obstacles and systemic barriers for existing employees.



Do employees feel they truly belong?

And can they bring their best and whole selves "to work"? It's leadership 101 to customize your management style to each employee and understand their behaviours, preferences and drivers. Consequently, employers should offer employees flexibility and create a level playing field despite one's personal commitments. Further, creating a safe zone with policies on inclusion and mental health, as well as procedures for handling incidents in these areas, will allow employees to feel more comfortable being their authentic selves.

Randeep Purewal is founder and CEO of Divercial Group.

Allow time for talk

by Raga Gopalakrishnan

The hallmarks of a truly inclusive workplace, where everyone feels welcome and comfortable being their whole selves, are respect, humility, self-education, self-awareness and empathy. How do we get there? What stands in our way?



An ever-increasing workload and performance-driven environment pushes us towards a mindset that the workplace should be a place limited to work. That there should be little to no time devoted to non-work interactions.

Yet, pandemic or not, no matter how hard we try, when we are at work we cannot simply flip a mental switch and leave everything that is not work-related “at the door”. We need to be able to allow ourselves some guilt-free time during work to talk and to have conversations about things other than work, both within and outside our own “work bubbles”.

More often than not, the interactions we have with our colleagues—in-person or virtual, online or offline, work-related or not—affect us, consciously or subconsciously. We assume. We judge. We feel. We react. We are human. We need to talk to each other. And when we talk, we must also listen. When we listen, we must process. When we process, we must reflect. When we reflect, we must question.

When we break down how we communicate in this way, we slow it down. This allows us to consider a broader range of contexts and alternatives than we otherwise might have. Thus we can respond thoughtfully rather than instinctively (respect), recognize our ignorance where appropriate (humility), educate ourselves in these areas (self-education), reflect on what we have learned each time we go through this exercise (self-awareness), and develop a deeper understanding of the issues of inequity faced by those who are different than us from their perspective (empathy).

Raga Gopalakrishnan is assistant professor of operations management.

Address systemic racism: support Black-owned businesses

by Colin Lynch,
BCom’07, ArtsSci’07

As we move to new ways of working, we must recognize the challenges of inequity for Black Canadians.

Marginalization of Black employment seekers, business owners and entrepreneurs in this country is well documented. Prior to the pandemic, only one-third of Black Canadians were in the top half of the income ladder, while over half of non-racialized Canadians were.

During the pandemic, despite job-searching at much higher rates than non-racialized Canadians, the Black unemployment rate was over 50 per cent higher than the national average. Meanwhile, Black businesses are hurting. They’re shutting down at a pace much higher than recorded by national averages. Meanwhile, Black-owned startups are funded at a much lower rate than non-Black new ventures.

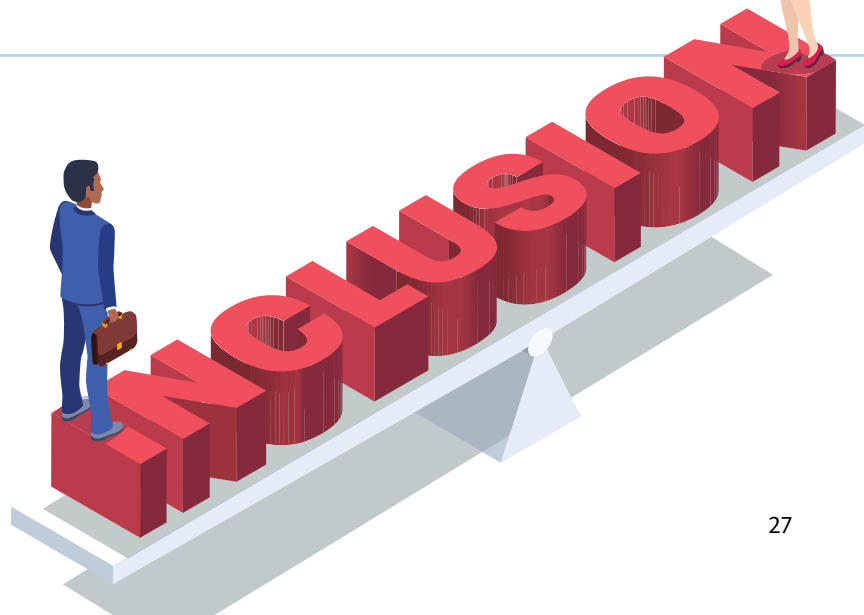


This is a whole-of-Canada problem. We must support Black-owned business. To address this, over 250 Black Canadians have come together to launch the Black Opportunity Fund. The BOF is raising a \$1.5-billion fund that will generate \$90 million to \$125 million in investment and philanthropic capital each year. That capital would permanently support 450-plus community-based organizations and fill funding gaps for nearly 8,000 Black businesses.

The BOF has already attracted contributions from more than 20 corporations. A new national ecosystem of partners, working together for transformative change, will make significant progress toward dismantling the barriers of anti-Black racism.

As Canada looks to build an inclusive post-pandemic economy, we must empower Black Canadians to lead systemic change for ourselves and our country.

Colin Lynch is co-founder of the Black Opportunity Fund and a Trustee Emeritus of Queen’s University.





IMPACT & INFLUENCE

Aziz Garuba, AMBA'12, is helping to tell the stories of amazing Black leaders around the world.

By Robert Gerlsbeck

“Everyone has a story. Everyone is a leader in their own way,” says Abdul-Aziz Garuba. He should know. The Accelerated MBA grad is the host of *Made to Lead* (madetolead.co), an up-and-coming podcast that’s all about leadership.

For Garuba, 35, whose day job is director of finance transformation initiatives at RBC Capital Markets, *Made to Lead* is more than a hobby. It’s a passion with a purpose. It showcases the personal and professional stories of leaders of African descent. “It is easy sometimes to use the same paintbrush to label a whole group of people, particularly Black individuals,” says Garuba. “But there is uniqueness in everyone. Africans and Black people have to tell our stories ourselves. No one’s going to do that for us. That’s what I’m trying to do.”

Over the next few pages, we’ll dig into his podcast, what drove him to start it and what he hopes to accomplish. We’ll also learn about his story and career path. First, let’s start with a question:

Q Your background is in accounting and finance. So how did you become a podcaster?

Garuba: The idea started in 2018 with the Canadian Association of Urban Financial Professionals, which I’m involved with. For our 20th anniversary, we put on an event called Black on Bay Street to celebrate the progress of the organization and Black professionals on Bay Street. I thought: How do we continue this story? I was interested in podcasting so I wrote down a few concept ideas. At the beginning of 2020, I decided to do it. But I changed the focus to be not on Black people on Bay Street but about people of African descent globally.

Q Why did you decide to focus on leadership as a theme?

I’ve always had a thing for leadership, impact and influence. I wanted to profile people who are leading in their own way but don’t always have the title. Especially

for Black people, leadership can be very community-focused. They may have leadership in their community but not necessarily a title in their professional lives. I started playing with the name and design and branding in early 2020. From all the research I did on podcasts, I thought people would listen on their way to work. Then the pandemic hit and everyone’s commute just stopped. But I launched it anyway [in March last year], and it just took off.

A year later, *Made to Lead* has two seasons and 23 episodes recorded. A third season started in April. Each episode runs around 45 minutes. Garuba asks the questions, then steps back to give his guests time and space to tell their stories—where they grew up, where they went to school, their influences, how they moved up the career ladder, their hardships and what drives them. It’s a fascinating mix of inspiration and information led by Garuba, a deft interviewer with a soft touch. →

Few of his guests are famous. Yet they make for compelling interviews. Omye Phillips [Season 2, Episode 9, “It’s All in the Mind”], for example, is divisional vice-president of pharmacy operations at Rite Aid and one of the youngest executives at a Fortune 500 company. She pursued a career in health care after her mom died of cancer when she was 10. Mide Akerewusi [Season 2, Episode 10 and 11, “Fracture to Failure to Philanthropy”] grew up homeless with a single mom. He now helps others as CEO of AgentsC, a non-profit consultancy specializing in social change.

Q Your podcast has listeners around the world. Any thought on why it has caught on?

Garuba: I think because there wasn’t anything within the space on a podcast level that some of my audience could relate to. I modelled my show after Guy Raz’s *How I Built This* podcast, because I love that style. I love learning about not just the business that these entrepreneurs started but their personalities. And I wasn’t able to find something that did the same for Black people or for Africans in particular. And that’s what people have told me: “I haven’t found anything like this before.” “I didn’t know that I needed it until I heard it.” So my podcast may fill a gap that people didn’t know was missing.

Q You feature people in many different industries, but are there similarities to their stories?

Yes. You always hear that Black people have to work twice as hard. And that is true. But for a lot of Africans on the show, that attitude was something we were already built with from childhood. That’s how we were raised—not to work twice as hard because you’re going to compete with other ethnicities but work hard to get what you want. That’s a uniform theme. Yes, you will experience

racism or discrimination in certain cases, but the one thing people won’t be able to take away from you is the actual hard work that you do.

In fact, Garuba would make for a good guest on his own podcast. He has his own story to tell.

He was born in Nigeria to parents who taught him to love learning and reading and to see the possibilities for himself in the wider world—to be a global thinker. Part of that came from his mom. “Her attitude was, you never know where you will find yourself,” he says. But his dad, a Nigerian diplomat, also had an influence. In 1999, when Garuba was 13, his father was appointed ambassador to Canada, and the family moved to Ottawa. Garuba still remembers seeing snow for the first time.

“My first winter was probably one of the worst experiences of my life,” he recalls. “There was a day in January of 2000 when the temperature dropped down to minus 50 degrees. And I still had to go to school. My school was one of only three that were still open because it was so cold. And, of course, with Africans and education, nothing is stopping you from going to school. So that was traumatic.”

But he had a curious mind and loved exploring Ottawa. “I would try and learn as much as I could. I read widely so I knew a little bit about a lot of things, which as a shy, introverted kid helped in conversations. I would drop these weird stats that no one knew or cared about but people would find very interesting. You know, the bird with the largest wingspan. So I was a little bit nerdy, but it helped in creating a social environment for myself.”

Despite the weather, Garuba’s dad thought Canada was a good place to grow up. So after his term as ambassador ended and he was recalled to Nigeria, the family stayed put and made Ottawa their home. After high school, Garuba enrolled in business school at the University of

Aziz Garuba

My Other CV

Hometown:

Lagos, Nigeria and Ottawa, Ontario

What was your first job?

Sales associate at The Gap

What are you reading right now?

A Promised Land by Barack Obama

Favourite all-time movie:

The Lion King (original animation)

What do you like to do when you’re not working?

Editing photos and creating my podcast episodes.

What’s the best advice you ever got?

Speak to be understood, not just to be heard.

Best memory from your time at Smith:

The boat cruise and subsequent takeover of a near-empty club in Kingston on a Wednesday by our entire MBA class.

Favourite travel spot:

Cape Town, South Africa

What’s on your playlist right now?

South African Amapiano

My idea of perfect happiness is:

Being anywhere sunny with my family.



Ottawa. At first, he wanted to pursue a career in the aviation industry. That stemmed from a love of planes he'd had since he was a boy. But accounting soon piqued his attention. Upon graduation, he got a job at the Canada Revenue Agency in Ottawa.

Working for the taxman had its advantages, but after a while Garuba began to think about a different career, perhaps consulting or investment banking. To get started, he applied to Smith's Accelerated MBA program. But he worried about getting in. His undergraduate grades had been average at best.

He recalls one particular AMBA admission question: "Do your grades reflect your abilities?" Garuba responded with a firm no. "And then I proceeded to explain why. In undergrad, a lot of folks that were with me spent a lot of time focused on the academics, focused on getting good grades. I loved being in class and listening to teachers, but I didn't enjoy tests. Instead, I got involved in all these other things, being on the student council, case competitions. Those things taught me soft skills and I had opportunities to network with some interesting business leaders in Ottawa."

To his surprise, Garuba was accepted into the AMBA program—and loved every minute of it. Upon graduation, he was hired by RBC for its leadership-development program. In 2018, after five years at RBC, he joined Ernst & Young as engagement manager of financial transformation. Then, last summer, he returned to RBC.

When he first moved to Toronto from Ottawa in 2013, Garuba started attending events run by the Canadian Association of Urban Financial Professionals (CAUFP), which promotes the advancement of Black professionals. It was, he says, "the first time I had ever actually seen a room full of all Black professionals in finance—ever." He joined and eventually became president, a role that he used to expand the organization's profile, especially with the banks.

Q How did you grow the Canadian Association of Urban Financial Professionals as president?

Garuba: I focused on building deep relationships with Bay Street. I wanted to get us to a point where we could clearly articulate the value from a diversity and inclusion talent perspective that we were bringing to firms. I also focused on closing skills gaps so that our members were well-qualified for any opportunity, so that we weren't always going to label a lack of opportunity as being due to discrimination or racism at the first instance. So, let's fix the things that we can control. And after doing all that, if things don't progress, then we can boldly say that there is a systemic issue or other problems that need to be addressed that are outside of our control. Fast-forward to where the organization is right now, and it has a membership of over 700 people and growing.

Q You also looked to encourage Black high-school students to consider a finance career, right?

The youth piece was a part of a strategy that we developed to do what I called at the time "flood the pipeline". If out of 10 people applying for a job, there's only one Black person, the probability of that person getting hired is 10 per cent. What if we can put six, seven people on the bench? Then the probability of at least one or two Black people being hired is much higher. So we revamped our youth strategy. We put in place programs so that young people could be more informed about opportunities. We wanted the banks to provide internships. That was the only way students could get direct experience and have a good company on their resumé, so that when they graduated, it would be easier for them to get a job in the industry. Today, the banks frequently hire Black talent from our youth programs and from our organization.

In 2019, Garuba was among the winners of the Chartered Professional Accountants of Ontario's Emerging Leader Awards. The awards go to CPAs aged 34 and under shaping the future of the accounting profession. It was recognition of the substantial contribution that he has already made in his field.

Garuba believes that he does his best work when he is helping organizations transform. That dates back even to his undergraduate days when he was on student council and took the initiative to update the student organization's paper-based system to electronic. He also points to the work he did with the CAUFP and, of course, his current role at RBC as director of finance transformation initiatives.

Then there's his podcast. Two months after *Made to Lead* debuted, George Floyd was murdered by police in Minneapolis. His death sparked outrage, protests and the Black Lives Matter movement. Inevitably, some of his guests discuss their own experiences with racism and discrimination, despite the podcast being focused on leadership and people's career journeys.

An example: *Made to Lead's* first guest in Season 1 was Dr. Obi Jude Nzeako, a trauma and orthopaedic surgeon from England who spoke about the problem of Black →



doctors being disciplined at a much higher rate than non-Black doctors. So, Nzeako surmised that for himself, “being an average surgeon just wasn’t good enough.”

For Garuba, such stories further emphasize the importance of highlighting Black professionals, letting them tell their stories and how they are leading in their own way.

Q Since your podcast is about leadership, let me ask you: Who are the leaders that inspire you?

Garuba: Number one would be my dad. He was the first in his family to go to university, he was born on the farm in Nigeria. When you think of someone that literally was given birth to on the farm, and then who made it through to the highest levels of foreign service, that’s an awesome story. He’s retired now but everyone that I’ve spoken with who knew him in the prime of his career, they always tell me he was a man of integrity and a man focused on helping people.

Another is Barack Obama. His presidency was one of integrity and community. As a leader, you should be concerned about those around you. You’re a servant first. And that makes the best leaders, people that know how to serve, know how to galvanize people towards a common goal. Obama did that, and his entire administration was literally scandal-free, which you can’t say about a lot of other presidents.

And then there are people like my grandmother, my mother’s mother, in Nigeria. Nigeria had a civil war in the 1960s, and she lost everything, including two sons, and had to rebuild her life again. She lost her husband before the war, too. She went from being a housewife to almost a refugee in her own country. She started life again for herself and her remaining kids through entrepreneurship and through teaching. She was the one who taught me to read and write and count. And for me, she represents the resilience and ingenuity of women.

Q In *Made to Lead* you ask guests to explain their purpose in life. So, what’s your purpose?

To impact as many people’s lives as possible, one person at a time. That’s my personal mission statement, and it drives a lot of decisions that I make or things that I decide to get involved in. So let’s take the role that I have at RBC. The work that I do will have an impact on the business, which ultimately will affect the clients and our business leaders. The work that I did with the Canadian Association of Urban Financial Professionals was highly impactful to a lot of people in changing the course of their futures. Even the one-on-one coaching and mentoring that I do, I’m happiest when people come back and say that something has changed in their life in a positive way as a result of our interaction. And that’s what gives me the greatest joy. ■



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REPORTING FROM WASHINGTON

Does journalism still matter? In the age of social media and fake news, some say no. But Idrees Ali, BCom'13, the Pentagon reporter for Reuters, explains why it does. And why he's made it his career.

By Idrees Ali

U.S. Defence Secretary James Mattis talks with reporters, including Commerce grad Idrees Ali (beside Mattis, right, in photo), outside the Pentagon in 2018.

When thousands of former President Donald Trump's supporters stormed the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, much of the United States and the world watched on live television in horror as the Capitol was effortlessly overrun. If it hadn't been for reporters at the Capitol, many of them risking their lives to cover the event, people wouldn't have seen and read of the magnitude of what unfolded that day in near real time: an assault on a symbol of democracy.

The weeks since have seen story after story exposing the events that led to the assault and how those in power, particularly Donald Trump, could have helped stop the situation escalating to the point that it did.

Coverage of the insurrection in January was just the latest example of journalists doing their job: providing accurate information to people around the world while holding those in power accountable.

I have been a journalist in Washington, D.C. for the past five years, covering the U.S. military and its wars, from Afghanistan to Iraq, under Trump. It has allowed me a unique perspective into how journalism works, the important role it plays in society and the struggles journalists encounter around the world. →

WHAT IS JOURNALISM?

There are different types of journalism, from breaking news to months-long investigations, across different platforms, from text to television. But at its core, journalism is about informing the public, giving voice to the voiceless and shining a flashlight on issues that would otherwise fester and linger in the darkness.

My path to journalism, like that of many reporters, was not linear. After barely making it out of business school with mediocre grades, I realized that a career in finance, or any other option that required even a minimal amount of math, would likely end in failure.

So why a reporter? My family has been involved in journalism in Pakistan for decades. My grandfather fought for free speech, even at the cost of his health and life, in a country where journalists are routinely harassed and, in some cases, killed.

My family's rich history in journalism and perseverance through difficult times to inform the public inspired me to become a reporter, even as the industry was going through massive changes and newsrooms around the world were making cuts.

While earning my graduate degree in journalism at the University of Maryland, I worked on an investigative series for *The Washington Post* looking at the threats faced by journalists around the world. The story allowed me to interview journalists who had fled the Syrian civil war. I also told the story of a prominent Pakistani journalist who was shot multiple times by the Taliban for simply doing his job.

That investigative series helped start my career. It allowed me to get a job at Reuters, one of the world's largest news organizations with nearly 200 bureaus around the globe. After a brief internship,

Idrees Ali asks a question at a Pentagon news briefing in 2018. Top photo: Ali (at the mike) at a press conference in Kabul, Afghanistan during the Taliban-U.S. peace deal signing.

I was lucky enough to become one of Reuters' two Pentagon correspondents.

Having started my journalism career in Washington, D.C. in the last few months of President Barack Obama's administration, I did not realize how much different a Trump administration would be. The U.S. military has traditionally been isolated from politics. But early on, it became clear that Trump would try to politicize the military. This issue would take up much of my professional time in the next four years.

From covering air strikes against Syrian forces in 2018 to reporting on how close the United States and Iran came to war after top Iranian General Qassem Soleimani was killed in 2020, there were few days when I wasn't nervous about how military tensions could escalate.

As a Pentagon correspondent, my job is to focus on where the U.S. military stands on key global issues. The Pentagon is unique in that its building in Arlington, Virginia has a dedicated space for journalists to work out of. Most of my time is spent talking to sources in the building or attending press briefings. These, however, were limited in number under Trump.

THE RISKS OF THE JOB

One of the most enjoyable parts of being a reporter is the travel. As a Pentagon correspondent, that's especially true.

From visiting war zones to reporting in faraway places like Mongolia, I've had the opportunity to write from different parts of the world.

Almost everyone, no matter where they live, is touched by journalism every day in some way or another. That may include watching a press conference on television about a local council meeting or reading about a foreign conflict in the newspaper the next day.

For reporters, covering some of the most important stories requires a certain level of risk.

My first real experience with any sort of danger came during a trip to Afghanistan with U.S. Defence Secretary Jim Mattis in 2018. At the time, the United States had announced that it would be sending thousands of additional troops to Afghanistan in the hopes that this action might bring the Taliban to the negotiating table.

Unlike war correspondents, who travel around war zones with no security to speak with locals, I experienced quite a different set of circumstances in these parts of the world. Usually, Pentagon correspondents are flown aboard the defence secretary's plane and are in a security "bubble" at all times. We're driven around in convoys or flown in heavily armed helicopters from one point to another.

On this particular trip, about a half-dozen reporters were flying on



PHOTOS | U.S. DEPARTMENT OF DEFENCE





a Chinook helicopter back to Kabul's airport after covering a meeting between Afghan President Ashraf Ghani and Mattis. About halfway through the flight, one of the armed troops observing out of the helicopter spotted what looked like some type of threat to the helicopter from the ground. (It could have been anything from preparations for a missile launch to someone releasing a kite from their rooftop). Within seconds, the helicopter took evasive manoeuvres and released flares over Kabul so that if a missile had been launched, it would hit the flares rather than us.

Ultimately, there was no threat. But it was a reminder of the dangers journalists can face when reporting the news.

But it barely compares to the risks faced daily by journalists worldwide. Many are threatened, kidnapped, arrested or killed for simply doing their jobs. According to the Committee to Protect Journalists, nearly 600 journalists have been killed around the world in just the past decade, and a record number of journalists were imprisoned globally last year.

Besides physical threats, journalists have to deal with a growing push by governments to spread "fake news"

that undermines facts and hides actual information from the public. While the most prominent example is Trump using misinformation to rally supporters to decry an election that Joe Biden won fairly, similar tactics are becoming common around the world.

Today, governments are using technology and the law to go after journalists. There have been reports of journalists targeted by spyware that can be linked back to countries like Saudi Arabia, swarms of bots going after journalists on Twitter if they write unflattering stories, and large-scale Internet censorship. Governments have also targeted journalists by accusing them of running afoul of arcane laws.

In 2019, two Reuters journalists were freed from prison after spending more than 500 days in jail in Myanmar after being convicted of breaking the Official Secrets Act. Their crime: working on an investigation into the killing of 10 Rohingya Muslim men and boys by security forces and Buddhist civilians in western Myanmar's Rakhine State during an army crackdown.

While in prison, Wa Lone, 33, and Kyaw Soe Oo, 29, were awarded the Pulitzer Prize for their reporting.

A NEW ERA

Journalism has come a long way from its early days. In 1850, carrier pigeons delivered stock market prices. The first Gulf War in 1991 was considered the first real-time televised conflict. Viewers could watch live TV of missiles fired in Kuwait.

These days, journalists are dealing with another factor that their predecessors did not have: social media. It is frequently the case that we hear about attacks in conflict zones on social media. Sites such as Twitter can be gold mines of information that otherwise would be out of reach to reporters. One example is the situation in Iraq. The past several years have seen an increasing number of rocket attacks against U.S. forces in Iraq.

For a reporter like me, the first sign that something has happened is usually on Twitter and not from the U.S. military or sources in the country.

Anyone with a smartphone can essentially be a source or can post information for others to read. In fact, the first sign that al-Qaida leader Osama Bin Laden had been killed in Pakistan did not come from a major website. Instead, a local in the area tweeted about hearing helicopters near his house.

But even with this new avenue, journalists must be careful. As quickly as information proliferates online, it is just as frequently incorrect, over-exaggerated or lacking key context. Newsrooms and journalists are also dealing with pressures to publish news faster. Meanwhile, news organizations are facing financial pressures. Newspapers are increasingly looking to make money through online subscriptions as advertisements shrink. While some outlets, such as *The Washington Post*, have hired more journalists, most newsrooms are laying off reporters. COVID-19 has only accelerated that trend.

The future of journalism is not clear. It is difficult to predict what news and newsrooms will look like a decade from now. But the one thing that will not change is the need for professional reporters covering the news and informing the public.

Amid increased political polarization, the spread of social media and "fake news," and global conflicts, reporters, and the role that we play, are now more important than ever. People around the world need greater, not fewer, insights into everything from what is affecting stock markets and businesses to how their elected leaders are doing their jobs.

For that, journalism is essential. ■

Idrees Ali, BCom'13, is a Pentagon correspondent for Reuters in Washington, D.C. In 2020, he received the One to Watch Award from the Queen's University Alumni Association.



THE RISE OF THE SOCIAL ENTERPRISE



A new business model aims to change the world first, make money second. Meet two alumni making it happen.



By Wanda Praamsma


The idea of starting a company was not part of Nazaneen Qauomi's plan in life. Nor was it necessarily something Hakeem Subair figured he'd do.

But the two Smith alumni, who both immigrated to Canada in the past decade—from Afghanistan and Nigeria, respectively—knew they wanted to help people and solve persistent problems in their home countries.

This deep desire to make lives better eventually led them to Smith, where they both earned a Master of Management

Innovation and Entrepreneurship (MMIE) degree. It was at Smith that they developed the ideas that would turn into their companies, or, more specifically, their social enterprises—organizations that combine a strong social mission with a for-profit business model.

Qauomi's social enterprise is Red Gold of Afghanistan (redgoldofafghanistan.com). It empowers women in Afghanistan through the cultivation and sale of premium Afghan saffron. Subair's company, 1 Million Teachers (1millionteachers.com),



“All we knew was that there was a shortage of 69 million teachers worldwide. The region that needed them the most was sub-Saharan Africa.”

– Hakeem Subair, co-founder of 1 Million Teachers

provides essential training for teachers in sub-Saharan Africa, where there is a critical shortage of well-trained teachers.

“I had this sense that if I didn’t do this, I would regret it. I knew that it was so important. The fear of failure kept me awake at night,” says Subair, MMIE’17, who saw first-hand the problems within the education system in Nigeria. “I believed I could do this, and that all of my skills and work experience had prepared me for this work.”

Before she founded Red Gold of Afghanistan, Qauomi, MMIE’19, too, could not stop thinking of how she wanted to do something to help the people of her homeland. She was born and raised in Afghanistan but also spent several years in Pakistan after her family fled the oppressive Taliban regime. “When I was little, I really wanted to be a doctor because I thought that would be the best way to help people,” Qauomi says.

Even as a young girl she could see how Afghans struggled with poverty, poor education (no education at all for girls under the Taliban) and a lack of health care. “My father always encouraged me. We would talk together about it, with him creating this image of me in the long corridors of the hospital . . . This made me believe in myself. I wanted to work hard and be the best I could be.”

..... QAUOMI AND SUBAIR ARE TWO EXAMPLES OF AN

emerging group of entrepreneurs who are launching social enterprises rather than companies with traditional corporate or non-profit structures. Why is the social-enterprise model catching on? There are several reasons. One is simply the desire by many in business (especially younger people) to make an impact in a way that benefits people and the planet.

But there’s more: disparities in societies are growing. The COVID-19 pandemic has only made things worse, says Shari Hughson, director of the MMIE program, who has worked with both Qauomi and Subair to develop their social enterprises. “Corporate structures have not succeeded in addressing the disparities and, at the same time, non-profits are struggling and can’t survive on fundraising alone.”

Social enterprises might be an answer. “There is a huge consumer push for people and the planet to come first, and there is an inability within the current models to make it work,” Hughson adds. “Social enterprises fill the gap. They are a for-profit model, but are started for a specific social purpose. Profits are largely secondary to that social mission.”

Not everyone, of course, is made to be a social-enterprise entrepreneur. It takes a person with a certain kind of passion, persistence and drive to do it, says Hughson. Subair and Qauomi are prime examples. “They are entrepreneurs who like to push the limits, and they strongly believe they can make an impact on the world. They are passionate about the issue they want to address and can’t stop thinking about it,” she says. →



IN NIGERIA, SUBAIR WORKED IN BANKING, STEADILY

moving from entry-level positions to managerial roles. But he felt restless. He always wanted to start new projects and adventures.

When he and his wife (who had just started work after medical school) began to look for child care for their daughter, they realized how few options were available and how dire the shortage of experienced caregivers and teachers was in the country.

Instead of searching for care outside their home, they decided to start their own child-care centre and hire teachers themselves. In the beginning, a few children of friends attended, as well as their own, but the school grew quickly. Within a couple of years, they had almost 200 children. But finding and keeping teachers was a constant struggle, Subair says.

Seeking more opportunities for himself and his family, Subair moved to Canada in 2012. He studied business at the University of Windsor before enrolling in the MMIE program at Smith. Addressing the education situation in Nigeria was always in the back of his mind. For his MMIE capstone project, Subair and several fellow students developed 1 Million Teachers.

“All we knew was that there was a shortage of 69 million teachers worldwide, according to UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization). The region that needed them the most was sub-Saharan Africa,” says Subair, who co-founded 1 Million Teachers with Rizma Butt, MMIE’17, and Asma Minhas, MMIE’21. Subair is CEO and Butt is COO.

“We wanted to do something about it, try to figure out how we could increase access to teachers and, particularly, increase the quality of teachers,” Subair says.

IN KABUL, QAUOMI NEARLY DID BECOME A DOCTOR.

She completed four of seven years of medical school before her family left Afghanistan for Canada in 2014. Her Afghan medical-school credits, however, were not recognized in this country. So she decided to shift gears.

She studied biology at York University, worked at Tim Hortons part-time and cared for her father, who, soon after arriving in Canada, was diagnosed with early-onset Alzheimer’s. All the while, she kept a running list of ideas about how to help people in her home country. They included everything from starting a digital library, to developing the country’s agricultural resources, to opening a hospital.

One day, she attended a leadership conference in Guelph, Ont., which led to an idea to help women in the agricultural sector in Afghanistan. After years of war, women in the country needed support to re-enter the workforce so they could bring financial stability to their families and allow their children to go to school.

Qauomi began researching saffron, the most expensive spice in the world. She knew there was an opportunity to provide sustainable work to Afghan women through its planting, harvesting and sale. She applied to the Clinton Global Initiative and attended its annual university conference in 2017 in Boston. She then decided to develop her company while earning her MMIE degree at Smith.


She also attended the Queen’s Innovation Centre Summer Initiative (QICSI) in 2019, competing in the Dunin-Deshpande Summer Pitch Competition, which awarded Qauomi and co-founders Mustafa Ansari (MMIE’19) and Herman Kaur (MEng’19) \$10,000 in seed money to visit Afghanistan and help get Red Gold of Afghanistan started.

“Afghanistan has always been seen as a place of war,” says Qauomi, who now runs the company on her own. “I want to create a name for this country through the sale of premium

Nazaneen Qauomi is leading the social enterprise Red Gold of Afghanistan.



PHOTO | GREG BLACK PHOTOGRAPHY



saffron, which is the best in the world. It has so many different uses—as a culinary spice and tea, but also as a healing antioxidant remedy that can help women gain strength after giving birth and as an anti-depressant.”

.....
STARTING AND RUNNING A SOCIAL ENTERPRISE IS

not an easy endeavour. The hard part is the customer side of the business, says Hughson. How do you make money?

In Qauomi’s case, it’s easier since her company sells a tangible product (saffron) that customers buy. Revenue from those sales can then funnel back to Afghan women to grow the saffron, buy the necessary land and keep their business economically viable. Since Afghan saffron is a premium product, the price customers pay directly funds the social mission of Red Gold of Afghanistan—to keep Afghan women working and supporting their families.

Figuring out how to make money is a little tougher for a service social enterprise like 1 Million Teachers. Its teacher-clients don’t necessarily pay for its educational services, so it must find someone to buy those services for them.

Subair and his colleagues have found ways to make that happen. They’ve secured government contracts in certain African countries. Through this model, 1 Million Teachers has become a supplier to these countries, providing quality training to teachers. Other potential customers include schools in Canada. They can sponsor 1 Million Teachers and provide ongoing funding for the organization. One Million Teachers has also partnered with Queen’s University’s Faculty of Education, which helps develop program content and provides teacher-education expertise.

Social enterprises can take more time to reach a profitable level of operation than typical companies, says Hughson. The key is to find a sustainable business model from the outset, with the goal of continually pumping revenue into the organization to fund its social mission for the long term.

There is a trajectory Hughson described while Subair was at Smith that he feels he has loosely followed while growing 1 Million Teachers. He’s moved from uninformed optimism (being passionate and somewhat naïve in the beginning), to informed pessimism (after seeing the magnitude of the problems and project), and finally to informed optimism, where he is today.

“Even though there are challenges, there is a light at the end of the tunnel,” he says. “I think that’s the track we are on. Even though we have our doubts and fears, every day opens a new chapter, a new partnership.”

And while he, like Qauomi, may not have expected this to be the path his life would take, Subair is fully invested. He says 1 Million Teachers is a lifelong project—along with teaching and providing mentorship to other budding social entrepreneurs—that he hopes will transform the lives of students and families in Africa, and beyond. ■

CORPORATE CULTURE SHIFT

BIG COMPANIES AND NON-PROFITS ARE BORROWING FROM THE SOCIAL ENTERPRISE PLAYBOOK.

Jean-Baptiste Litrico, Distinguished Faculty Fellow of Strategy and director of the Centre for Social Impact at Smith, studies the emergence of new organizational forms. The social enterprise is of special interest because, he says, it’s a hybrid model that has the potential to drive great changes in business and society.

Through his research, Litrico has seen a shift in the non-profit sector. Due in large part to a decrease in government funding, non-profits are seeking ways to blend revenue generation with their social missions. “In the past, these organizations used to see revenue generation as separate from social impact,” he says. “Nowadays, they are trying to realize their social mission and generate revenue at the same time.”

For example, a museum might once have added a shop or café to boost revenue—an activity unconnected to the museum’s core mission. Today, however, an organization supporting families with autistic children might create new programs, available for a fee, to generate revenue and provide additional support for its beneficiaries.

On the flip side, large corporations are moving into the social-enterprise sphere. They recognize that consumers no longer want only traditional products and services. People also want companies to tackle inequalities and societal challenges that are going unaddressed, in many respects, by governments.

There are many challenges with this transition, however. It requires a huge cultural shift within a company, Litrico explains. New skills are required and there must be buy-in from employees at all levels. Measuring a firm’s social impact is also a challenging endeavour, he says.

“There are many good initiatives happening, which is really positive,” says Litrico. He cites Patagonia as an example. The apparel retailer has successfully blended social purpose into its corporate structure. But most companies have a long way to go. “You won’t see a real shift as long as the legal and financial structures within corporations remain the same. Organizations need to develop a framework to assess and manage their social impact.”



Donald Sobey
at Convocation in
May 2016, when he
received his honorary
Queen's degree.



Remembering Donald Sobey

Donald Sobey, BCom'57, LLD'16, was a great supporter of education at Smith and Queen's. Most important of all, he was a true friend to students.

Growing up, Donald Sobey spent his Saturday nights bagging potatoes and chopping cabbage in his family's grocery store in New Glasgow, N.S. But after high school, he wanted to attend university. Which one though? A family friend who'd gone to Royal Military College in Kingston suggested Queen's. It was a terrific university, the friend noted, with one of the best business schools in the country. So began a lifelong connection with Smith School of Business and Queen's University.

Sobey, who supported several major scholarships and initiatives at Smith that have benefited generations of students—both in school and beyond—died on March 24. He was 86 years old.

"Donald Sobey made a tremendous impact on Canadian business, yet he never forgot his Queen's roots," says vice-principal (advancement) Karen Bertrand, Artsci'94. "His generosity funded many scholarships and created incredible opportunities for students to flourish and succeed."

When he arrived at Queen's in 1953, Sobey was one of only two students from Atlantic Canada. Years later, he noted that Smith had prepared him for business more than he realized. And he spoke fondly of his university experience. "The move to Ontario was an eye-opener," he recalled in an interview several years ago. "And getting to know people from all over Canada was really something."

In 1998, he committed millions of dollars to ensure students from Atlantic Canada could have the same opportunity he had at Queen's. In honour of his and son Rob's, Artsci'88, Queen's experience, he created the D&R Sobey Atlantic Scholarship, which each year funds up to eight Atlantic Canadian high-school students entering the Commerce program for their four years. There have been 131 recipients, or Sobey Scholars, since then, and nearly \$6.6 million has been distributed in scholarships (up to April last year). Every year, the father and son returned to Queen's campus to host a traditional East Coast lobster supper and meet with their award recipients.

Commerce program executive director Lori Garnier, AMBA'o8, recalls her first time attending the dinner. "Meeting Don and experiencing his kindness, generosity and care toward

the students showed that the Sobey scholarship was more than its name. It was an opportunity to create a family that would support and guide those who were part of it. Don had great admiration and respect for each student, and he appreciated the opportunity to make a difference for each of them."

Students and alumni especially remember how Sobey inspired them and how much he cared about students. "Don was an incredible man whom I will remember for his authenticity and warm demeanour," says Anna Wall, BCom'16. "He created opportunities for learning, growth and friendship that could not have been achieved otherwise."

Rob Marsh, BCom'o7, adds: "If not for Don, I would not have had the chance to attend Queen's University. I often think about how that opportunity, that turning point, had such a profound impact on my life. It was because of him that I enjoyed a university experience and a life thus far beyond my wildest dreams."

Sobey also influenced Canadian business. After graduation, he returned home to Nova Scotia and joined his family's grocery business. He helped build Sobey's into one of the largest supermarket retailers in the country. In 1963, he was appointed to the board of Empire Company Limited (Sobey's parent). He became president in 1969 and chairman in 1985, retiring in 2004. Three years later, the Canadian Business Hall of Fame inducted him, and, in 2014, he was appointed to the Order of Canada.

In 2008, Sobey gave back to Smith again, establishing the Donald R. Sobey Professorship to support research by a Smith faculty member. (It's currently held by professor of international business Anthony Goerzen.) And when the pandemic hit last year, he was one of the first philanthropists to support a project led by Queen's Professor Emeritus and Nobel Prize winner Art McDonald to design an easy-to-build ventilator that can help treat COVID-19 patients. Sobey made his donation less than 24 hours after McDonald, a fellow Maritimer, called to ask for his help.

In 2016, Queen's gave Sobey an honorary degree. Afterward, he reflected on the Sobey Scholars. "I'm really proud [of them]," he said. "They are amazing young people, and you can see the country is in pretty good hands." ■

Alumni Notes

1940s

1948

Helen Bronskill, BCom, died in Kingston on Dec. 27, 2020, at the age of 92. She was predeceased by her husband of almost 50 years, Eric. Helen is survived by her children, Richard, Reginald, Kathryn, Alan and Anne; 10 grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

Harold Sellers, BCom, died on April 24, 2020. Harold was a communications professional, an avid outdoorsman and a connoisseur of music, history, current affairs and the arts. Recently of Guelph with Patricia Harwood, Harold was predeceased by his wife of 48 years, Edith, and survived by children, H. William, Mary, PHE'80, and Barbara; three grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

1949

Peter Kelley, BCom, died on April 25, 2020. Predeceased by his former wife, Doreen, Peter is survived by his significant other, Elinor Hughes; children Jocelyn and **James Kelley, MBA'86**, Artsci'80, Sc'81; and five grandchildren. Peter's son Dean, Artsci'84, died shortly after his father's passing, on June 21.

1960s

1960

Jim Petropoulos, BCom, died on Oct. 20, 2020, at the age of 82. After graduation, Jim became a chartered accountant, joining the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Ontario in 1965. He was given lifetime membership status in 2008. Jim was active in different organizations, such as Camp Olympia and the Canadian Junior Golf Association. He is survived by his sons, Stuart and David; three grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

1962

Wayne Hypponen, MBA, died on Nov. 17, 2020, in Burlington, Ont., following a lengthy battle with Lewy Body Dementia. Wayne had a kind and gentle soul and an impish sense of humour. He was proud of his Finnish heritage, and loved animals and spending time at the cottage. He is survived by his wife, Leena; children Taina, Artsci'93, Maria, Artsci'95, MA'98, and Lisa; and five grandchildren.

1965

Norm Bedford, MBA, started an international export company after graduating from Smith, first doing business in the Middle East, then in South America and finally in Southeast Asia. After 20 years of travelling, Norm took a job at

Saint Mary's College of California, where he and a colleague crafted an international business program. He recently retired and now lives with his wife, Norma, BNSc'64, on their farm in Washington state. "My thanks to Queen's for shaping my life, providing me with an excellent education, and bringing myself and Norma together."

John Drew, BCom, died on Jan. 22 at age 87. John worked in the finance industry in Toronto and New York at Baker Weeks, Dean Witter Reynolds, Midland Walwyn, and Brown Brothers Harriman. He loved jazz, reading history books, watching the Toronto Blue Jays, and a good political debate. John is survived by his wife, Merle; children Maura, Artsci'87, Clarke and Christopher; and six grandchildren.

Roland (Ron) Brabbs, MBA, BSc(Eng)'61, died on March 13, 2020, at age 84. After graduating from the Royal Military College, Ron attended Queen's, where he obtained his electrical engineering degree and MBA. After graduating, he joined General Foods and later Morrison Lamothe, where he was promoted to vice-president of the frozen-food division. Ron is survived by his wife, Jessie; son David; and two grandchildren.

Donald MacCormac, MBA, died in Charlottetown on March 2, 2020, at age 79. Donnie is survived by his brothers, Noel and Allan, and will be sadly missed by his beloved cat, Doris.

1967

Alan Clark, BCom, retired to Bracebridge, Ont. in 2006 and recently told us that in 2015 he bought a chalet in the village of Thornbury in the municipality of The Blue Mountains. During his time at Queen's, Alan was a member of the swim team. He would like to reconnect with any 1963 swim team members. alclark@live.ca



1969



Elliott Jacobson, MBA, has been elected national chair of the Canadian Liver Foundation. He had served as treasurer and vice-chair since 2011.

1970s

1970

John Robert MacKay, BCom, died on Nov. 3, 2020, of prostate cancer at age 72. John grew up in Kingston and spent most of his career in Ottawa with the federal government. John is survived by his wife, Shirley; his children, Geoff, Steph, Artsci'04, PHE'04, and Andrew; three grandchildren and three granddogs. John cherished his circle of friends from his days in Kingston and was a faithful attendee at class reunions. He even managed to make it, virtually, to his 50th reunion, which brought him immense joy.

1973

Sue Fletcher, BCom, died on Sept. 18, 2020, of cancer at age 69. After graduating, Sue became a certified management accountant. During her career, she worked both for corporations and as a consultant. Outside of work, she was a hobby stencil artist, gardener and philanthropist. Predeceased by her husband, Robert Waller, Sue is survived by her two stepchildren, Shannon and Julia; and four grandchildren.

1975

Susan Waywell, BCom, died on Oct. 6, 2020, at the age of 67. After graduation, Sue earned her designation as a chartered

accountant. She set off for Canada's North in 1979 and spent several years in Whitehorse and Yellowknife. She returned to Kingston in 1989 and joined Collins Blay & Co. (now MNP) as a partner. Sue is survived by her husband, Tom; son Steve; stepdaughters Nadine, Kristen, Marlene, Jessica, Tiffany and Marcjanna; two grandsons; nine step-grandchildren; and three step-great-grandchildren.

1976

Peter Merchant, BCom, recently celebrated his 65th birthday, officially becoming a senior citizen. He is working with a Calgary-based, not-for-profit, private-equity destination club called Destination M. With 33 destinations around the world and 145 members, Destination M, he says, "is boutique in size but a fantastic way to elevate one's travel lifestyle now that we will all soon have more time to travel." You can reach him at peter@destination-m.com.

1977

Bob Pakrul, BCom, recently retired from law practice and lives in Vancouver. After obtaining a law degree from the University of Toronto in 1980, Bob practised business law in Toronto for a few years before relocating his practice to Vancouver in 1987. Bob says he and his wife, Mary, are "slowly overcoming the technology challenges of staying in video touch with their Saskatchewan-resident grandchildren."

1978

Graham E. Jones, MBA, moved to the South Island of New Zealand in 2012. Graham taught business at the local technical institute and worked for the federal government, advising on retirement planning. He and his wife, Elle, live in Tuatapere, adjacent to Fiordland and within 100 km of four of the Great Walks. Before COVID-19, the two walked from Paris to Finisterre in Spain, following

the Camino de Santiago. "My passion still remains long-distance solo tramping," Graham writes.

1979

Andrew (Andy) Wilson, BCom, died in Kingston on Jan. 24 at age 65. After graduation, Andy became a chartered accountant and rose quickly through the ranks at the Ontario Ministry of Health, eventually becoming the director of family health teams. Andy completed almost 20 triathlons, was an avid golfer and was passionate about lacrosse. He is survived by his wife, Emma, and his sons, Brian and Mark.

1980s

1981

Mark Green, BCom, took a year off in 2018-2019 to travel with his wife, An Chi, in Asia and the Middle East. "Days featuring spontaneity and potential for adventure are the way to go from now on," he writes, sharing that he is retiring from his position as a financial management adviser at Transport Canada in May.



1983

George DeMarchi, BCom, died on April 5, 2020. He was a family man, a loyal friend, an entrepreneur and mentor, a coach and a community builder. He is survived by his wife, Nora, and two children, Alexandra and Justin.

1985

Peter Howe, BCom, tells us that after 16 years of living and working in Europe, and leading United World Colleges in Italy, the Netherlands and Wales, he and Sally will be moving closer to Canada. He is taking up the headship of Somersfield Academy in Bermuda in August 2021. “We are looking forward to being closer to family and friends in Canada and still avoiding Canadian winters!” he says.

Graham McBride, BCom, was appointed CEO of LifeLearn Animal Health in December 2020. “I’m thrilled and honoured to be part of a company—indeed, an industry—supporting the essential nature of veterinary teams and animal health services, which showed incredible resiliency and adaptability in 2020, despite enormous challenges,” Graham said.

1988



Gord Card, MBA, retired in February 2020 from the Bank of Montreal. There, he was senior vice-president and head of Ontario and Atlantic Canada in the corporate finance division. Gord and his wife plan to spend more time at their cottage in Muskoka, Ont. They also intend to travel frequently when it is safe to do so. He says he would love to hear from any classmates. gordonjcard@gmail.com

1989

Bo Meissner, MBA, became chief financial officer of Vital Farms in December 2020, after joining the company in July as executive VP of finance. Bo has more than 30 years of experience in consumer packaged goods and is charged with leading the finance organization of the pasture-raised food brand.

1990s

1990

Charles Dowdall, MBA, BCom’83, became executive director for the Prince Edward County Affordable Housing Corporation in Prince Edward County, Ont., in July 2020. Chuck tells us that he and his wife, Lauranna, moved to Kingston in 2016 and regularly enjoy walking through the Queen’s campus.

1991

Steven Major, BCom, told us that he and his wife, Jenn, Artsci’91, are the incoming chairs of the 71st Canadian Energy Executive Association board of directors, whose tenets are networking and advocacy for Canadian energy, and charitable giving. They will assume their new roles on Sept. 1.

David W. Peters, PhD, says he has written a book, *Doug Peters: Bay Street Economist on Parliament Hill*, that is now available for purchase. The book is a biography of his late father, **Douglas Peters, BCom’63**. Several chapters discuss Doug’s interesting time at Queen’s. For more info visit davidwilfridpeters.ca

Canada’s Most Powerful Women

One Smith alumna and one student made the newest list of Canada’s 100 Most Powerful Women, compiled annually by the Women’s Executive Network.

Kristi Herold, BCom’93, is the founder of Sport & Social Group Inc. Since 1996, more than a million participants have joined one of her sport leagues for adults, where the focus is on being healthy and having fun. “Success to me means leaving a legacy that has positively impacted millions of people’s physical and mental health,” she says.

Desirée Bombenon, EMBA’22, is CEO of SureCall, which designs solutions to streamline business processes. She has won numerous business leadership awards and is vice-chair of the Calgary Chamber of Commerce. She says one of her proudest moments was creating the Hero Girls program, which educates girls in underserved and developing communities through scholarships and micro-loans.



Kristi Herold (top) and Desirée Bombenon

1993

Andrew Cherwenka, BCom, has joined Vega as head of ecommerce. Andrew says Vega is “a premium, award-winning brand at the forefront of the plant-based, whole-food revolution.” He lives in Vancouver, with his wife, Afra, and their two young boys, Wolfgang and Volker. As a father of a 30-month-old and six-month-old, Andrew proudly says he rivals **John Waters, BCom’93**, and Ron Tite, PHE’93, for the “Latest-out-of-the-dad-gate award.”

Bruce Sellery, BCom, was in February named CEO at Credit Canada, a not-for-profit credit-counselling agency. Bruce is a well-known personal-finance expert and has written two bestselling personal-finance books. He sits on the Smith School of Business Advisory Board.



1994

Jamil Mawji, BCom, shares that the venture he co-founded in 2016, National Care Group (NCG), was recently ranked the third fastest-growing company in the U.K., as featured in *The Sunday Times’* Virgin Atlantic Fast Track 100 league table. Jamil says NCG is a support-service provider for people with complex needs arising from learning disabilities, mental health and acquired brain injury.

Catriona Verner, BCom, Law’99, was appointed a judge of the Superior Court of Justice of Ontario in June 2020. After law school graduation, Catriona began her practice in criminal defence work and later criminal appeals. At the time of her appointment, Catriona was with Lockyer Campbell Posner LLP, where her work was almost exclusively at the Court of Appeal for Ontario and the Supreme Court of Canada.

1995

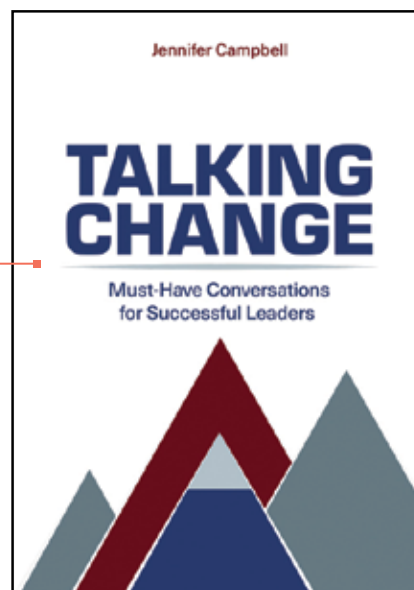
Megann Willson, MBA, says she is “having fun helping people right-size their homes in the Greater Toronto Area” as a real-estate agent for HomeLife/Realty One, and is always glad to hear from Queen’s grads to help them “move bravely.” Megann continues to run her consulting business, Panoptika (panoptika.ca). On a personal note, she’s adjusting to being a long-distance grandma to Sophie, who has moved with parents Richard and Aline to Montreal.

1997

Jennifer (Scott) Campbell, BCom, recently published *Talking Change: Must-Have Conversations for Successful Leaders*. The book is based on Jen’s many years’ experience in leading change “from the boardroom to the plant floor” and made Amazon’s bestseller ranks. Jen says that in her book, “I demystify the world of change management and outline the pivotal conversations that create successful change.” Jen runs Action Impact Movement, a coaching and consulting firm in British Columbia. actionimpactmovement.com

1999

David Lahey, EMBA, tells us that while hunkered down during the pandemic he wrote his fourth book, *From Hire to Inspire: How to Become the Best Boss*, which is now available in stores. “Glad to see some light at the end of this COVID battle with the new vaccines,” he writes.





ALUMNI NOTES

2000s

2001

Phil Connell, BCom, tells us he completed his first feature film as writer and director. It's called *Jump, Darling*. Starring Academy Award winner Cloris Leachman, in her final starring role before she died in January, and newcomer Thomas Duplessie, the film is set to release this spring. Phil has worked in both corporate and creative capacities throughout his career in the media and entertainment industry. Here, Phil is pictured with Leachman during a break from production in Prince Edward County, Ont., in June 2019.



2002

Scott Dalgleish, BCom, has been selected as chief financial officer of the Oncology Institute of Hope and Innovation, one of the largest oncology community providers in the U.S. Before this role, Scott was CFO of Providence Health Network and Providence's St. Joseph Heritage Medical Group in California.

Samuel Short, EMBA, has joined the Institute for Manufacturing at the University of Cambridge, as an industrial associate for its Education and Consultancy Services. Samuel says he works closely with the institute's

Centre for Industrial Sustainability "to accelerate the dissemination and adoption of innovative sustainable business approaches." He can be reached at sws1001@cam.ac.uk.

Faizal Hasham, EMBA, tells us that he has been living overseas since 2016 with his wife, Safeena, and their three boys: Khaleem (13), Zahaan (11) and Nashaan (2). Faizal is the founder and general manager of AQM, an air-quality consulting firm and lifestyle-product distributor, representing such brands as Plume Labs (France), Flare Audio (U.K.), Haspro (Poland) and Roybi Robot (U.S). He is currently working on an air-quality monitoring plan for Expo 2020 that takes place in Dubai this October.



2003

Ian Di Tullio, EMBA, has been promoted to chief commercial officer for South Europe at Accor, after two-and-a-half years with the company as SVP, global guest and digital experience. He's based in Paris and says the role entails oversight of commercial strategy, pricing and revenue management, digital, marketing, loyalty, sales and food and beverage operations for what he says is "one of the group's most dynamic regions."

2004

Dallan Murray, EMBA, has been named chief commercial officer of Sarepta Therapeutics Inc., a company that works in precision genetic medicine for rare diseases. Prior to this, Dallan was interim COO and, before that, VP of commercial strategy and portfolio management.

2005

Kant Trivedi, EMBA, co-founder and director of Blockfusion Technologies, Inc., has been appointed to the board of directors of Cloud Nine Education Group, a cloud-based ESL curriculum provider.



2006

Jennifer Lovrics, BCom, and **Connor Page, BCom**, welcomed a second baby boy to their family. Carter was born on May 20, 2020 weighing 8 lb 4 oz. Big brother Finnigan is very proud! Carter is a smiley, loveable little guy.

2007

Sanjiv Kalevar, BCom, has joined OpenView Venture Partners, an expansion-stage venture-capital firm, as its newest partner, after eight years with Battery Ventures. Sanjiv is working remotely from his home in Los Angeles for the remainder of the pandemic.



Colin Lynch, BCom, Artsci'07, was named one of Canada's Top 40 Under 40 for 2020. The award recognizes up-and-coming leaders. Colin is head of global real-estate investments at TD Asset Management, overseeing investments in more than 650 properties in 120 cities worldwide. Last year, he co-founded the Black Opportunity Fund, which seeks to provide investments and support to Black-owned businesses and non-profits. Also in 2020, he was elected to the boards of Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre, the Toronto Symphony Orchestra and the Toronto Investment Board. He became an adviser to Toronto-based incubator OneEleven and completed nine years of service on the Queen's Board of Trustees. This year, he was named a Trustee Emeritus. Colin lives in Toronto, where his partner, Stephanie Zhou, Artsci'14, is a physician focused on addictions.



Steven Nelson, BCom, was promoted to partner at EY Halifax, where he provides accounting and assurance services to public and private clients. Steven and his wife, Rebecca, live in Halifax with their daughters, Zoe and Grace.

Eric Simmons, BCom, was promoted to partner at EY Toronto. Eric provides accounting and assurance services to multinational clients in



energy and mining. He previously spent time with EY's professional practice group. He lives in Toronto with his wife, Danielle, and their daughter, Amelia.

2008

Alexandra Tracy, BCom, is moving to Lao PDR this year to take up the deputy country director's role for the Clinton Health Access Initiative, after six years in Geneva with the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. Alexandra recently completed an MSc in Health Economics, Policy and Management at the London School of Economics. There, she received the Brian Abel-Smith prize for best overall performance.

2009

Sana (Kazani) Bhaidani, BCom, and her husband, Shaheer, are overjoyed to share the news that baby Alyna joined their family on April 9, 2020. Big sister Nayla is already in love. They live in Markham, Ont., where Sana is a manager of strategic business partnering at Aviva Insurance and Shaheer is vice-president at SNZ Trading Inc.

Katie Sokalsky, BCom, has joined XpertSea as president and COO, and will accelerate the Canadian company's growth in Latin America and support its expansion to Southeast Asia and India.

what kind of content is most likely to raise the most donations on social media. Reach John at jpdesilva@hopefulinc.me.



Leslie Dunning, EMBA, has been elected to the board of directors of Parachute, Canada's national injury-prevention organization.



2010s

2010

John Paul de Silva, MBA, is leading the marketing efforts at the non-profit tech startup Hopeful Inc. The firm has raised \$400,000 in pre-seed funding and was recently accepted into Berkeley University's SkyDeck accelerator program. John says Hopeful has developed a platform that helps non-profits understand

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Louis Tsilivis, BCom, joined the mayor of Toronto's office as director of budget and finance in April 2020, after six years in the commercial litigation



department of the Bay Street law firm Osler, Hoskin & Harcourt. He joined the mayor's office just a week after Toronto declared a state of emergency due to COVID-19. He is tasked with managing the city's 2021 budget through the pandemic, which, he notes, "has been described by the *Toronto Star* as the most challenging in modern Toronto's history because COVID-19 impacts are costing the city \$65 million a week."

2011

Jennifer Falco, EMBA, lent her skills to the Nov. 4, 2020 Defend Democracy/Protect the Results coalition, a non-violent march and speakers' event in Portland, Ore., supporting U.S. democratic norms. "What do you do with dual MBAs? Sometimes, nothing. Instead, you look back to your undergraduate degree in theatre and literature, and volunteer to stage-manage a peaceful protest event," she says.

Arthur Liu, MBA, and **Travis Ratnam, MBA**, founders of edtech-provider Knowledgehook, partnered with the Ontario Ministry of Education in May 2020, at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, to deploy the company's remote-learning platform across all 72 school districts in the province. The platform, called Knowledgehook Open Access, helped students from grades 3 through 10 to continue their math education while at home.

Julien Heon, EMBA, has joined Haleo Clinic as vice-president of growth and customer success. Haleo is a telemedicine company that offers solutions in mental health, specifically for the treatment of insomnia. Julien says the company has an employer subscription platform and is "also open to all Canadians for walk-ins." He adds that several other Queen's grads work at Haleo: **Quentin Gay, AMBA'16**, is chief technology officer, and **Cherie La Rocque, PhD'18**, is clinical lead.

Ben Hertzman, BCom, has been appointed president of Progress Luv2Pak, a provider of premium retail and gift packaging. Ben has held a variety of roles with the business, ranging from summer intern to chief operating officer. He says he is proud that since the start of the pandemic Progress has distributed to hospitals, long-term care homes and businesses nearly 50 million medical masks under its new FiltroLife line.



Sujee Jeganathan, AMBA, is the founder and CEO of TrustClarity, working alongside classmate **Noorin Sidi, AMBA**, who is the company's director of marketing. Based in Chicago, TrustClarity creates turnkey B2B storefronts that provide companies with a simplified way to sell and buy new, refurbished and excess inventory. In November, the company closed a pre-seed funding round of US\$300,000. Sujee says his company's platform can help companies sell extra inventory that otherwise might go to landfill.



Jason Tasse, EMBA, was named president of Lee Valley Tools in January. Jason retains his previous title of chief operating officer. He is a 25-year

employee of the hardware and garden retailer and has been involved in a number of company initiatives, including leading systems implementations, strategic planning and design of Lee Valley Tools' distribution centre.

Michael Zhang, BCom, has been promoted to associate partner at IBM. Michael advises Fortune 500 companies on enterprise data



strategy, artificial intelligence and machine learning, focusing on clients in the utilities, telecom, and media and entertainment industries. Michael lives in the Boston area.

2012

Robin Daultani, MBA, has launched an online platform, Nicerr, for job seekers and career transitioners to practise mock interviews with experienced professionals. The platform also lets interviewers donate any portion of their earnings to a charity of their choice. "There's a reason why the platform is called 'Nicerr'. Check it out at nicerr.me," he says.

2013

Joze Piranian, MIB, says that after spending most of his life avoiding speaking due to a debilitating stutter, he is now a TEDx speaker and a standup comedian. Joze has performed in the Americas, Europe and the Middle East. In 2017, he was the recipient of the Inspirational Speaker of the Year award at Speaker Slam. More recently, Joze was the keynote speaker on diversity and inclusion at the HR Leaders Summit in Calgary and Toronto. He also spoke on resilience at the PRMIA Canadian Risk Forum in Montreal and the Hollywood Innovation and Technology Summit in L.A.



David Sinkinson, MBA, Artsci'11, and his brother, **Chris Sinkinson, MBA'11, Comp'02**, co-founders of AppArmor, let us know that their company made *Canadian Business'* Growth List of Canada's fastest-growing companies for 2020. AppArmor has had five-year revenue growth of 400 per cent, placing it No. 192 on the overall list and No. 30 on the software-companies list. The Toronto-based firm develops custom-branded safety apps and emergency-notification systems. Its original product, the SeQure app, is still used at Queen's, says David.

2014

Chen Liu, PhD, was appointed director of the MBA programs at Trinity Western University in Langley, B.C., in November. She joined the faculty six years ago, after earning her doctorate in finance at Smith. She was promoted to tenured associate professor in 2019. At TWU, students voted her Professor of the Year for three years in a row, from 2016 to 2018.

Jessica Lui, BCom, was the recipient of the Vision Builder Award in the Universal Women's Network's 2020 Women of Inspiration Awards, announced in November. A management consultant at Deloitte, Jessica is also founder and CEO of GPP, a social enterprise dedicated to at-risk young adults pursuing STEM careers, recognized at President Obama's Global Entrepreneurship Summit.

Jordan Speakman, AMBA, tells us that he has joined the Invest Alberta Corporation (IAC) as senior manager of investment programming. He says that the newly-created crown corporation "is dedicated to investment attraction, with a mandate to engage the world and provide high-end, tailored support to investors and major new investment projects."



2015

Yingxi Liao, BCom, married Siqi Zuo in January 2020.

Connie Lo, BCom, tells us her all-natural skin-care company, Three Ships, which was started in her apartment kitchen, can now be found in over 500 Target stores across the U.S. and on Target.com. "This is a launch we've been working on since 2019, and it's incredible to see all our hard work come to life," she writes.



2016

Sumit Madan, EMBA, has started work at Propel Holdings as the director of product management.

Rudy Shirra, BCom, has been appointed manager of corporate development and investor relations for Sylogist Ltd., a software company. Rudy first joined the company in 2014 as a summer intern. After graduating, Rudy worked as a management consultant at Monitor Deloitte before rejoining Sylogist in 2019 as manager of corporate development.

April Salas, EMBA, was appointed to the board of directors of 3Degrees, a provider of renewable energy, transportation, decarbonization and sustainability solutions. April is executive director of the Revers Center for Energy at Dartmouth College's Tuck School of Business.

Nirav Vikamshi, EMBA, says that he has moved to Toronto from the U.S., taking up a leadership role in the product-development vertical for a health-care startup. In addition to this role, Nirav offers career mentorship for IT services, technical product development and other areas. Reach Nirav at niravsv@gmail.com.

2017

Trevor Hennigar, EMBA, joined technology startup Rimot as chief operating officer. "I'm thrilled to be joining a growing company that is part of a flourishing and innovative ecosystem in Atlantic Canada," Trevor said of joining the remote-monitoring service provider.

Matthew Klar, AMBA, tells us he has joined "The Greater" as a co-founder. "The Greater" is a strategy consultancy that, Matthew says, "builds great brands by helping them do good in the world, advising on CSR, social impact and philanthropy strategies." It works with clients to donate 50 per cent of net profits to worthy causes. The consultancy launched in late 2020. Before that, Matthew was head of strategy at sports sponsorship agency MKTG Canada.

Kris Pitta, EMBA, founder and CEO of Prudent Resources LLC, says he has recently published a book, *Empowered Leadership*. The book "invites you on a self-development journey, providing an easy-to-follow road map to becoming the best leader possible." krispitta.com

Vikramjeet Singh, MMA, started the consulting company Enclave Immigration Services Inc. to help people migrate to Canada. The firm offers a full list of immigration services, including student

services, visa services, permanent residence services, citizen application and more. enclaveimmigration.ca

Eric Varin, EMBA, has been appointed VP of client success at OneDay, a video-technology and storytelling platform. Eric worked closely with OneDay as a client-partner in his previous role with Allegro Senior Living.

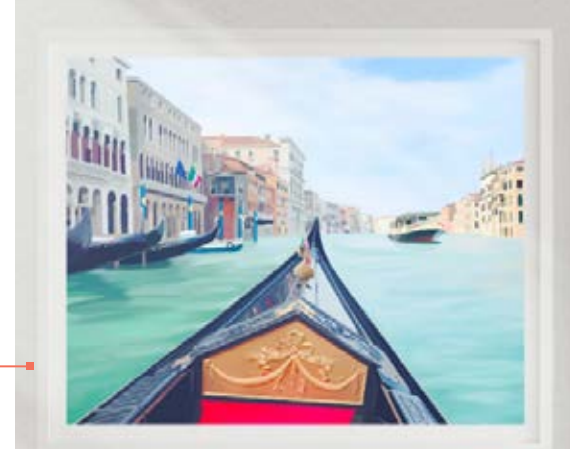
2018

Tyler Willox, EMBA, joined ISM Canada as vice-president of public sector. ISM is a subsidiary of IBM that provides technology-based solutions to business problems for the public sector. Tyler is based in Regina and says he looks forward to "bringing Saskatchewan ingenuity, work ethic and fully managed services to ISM customers across Canada."

2019

Jennifer Cabral Poejo, AMBA, has been working as the senior manager of corporate social responsibility at Manulife for over a year. Jennifer says the Certificate in Social Impact she earned at Smith "opened my eyes to a world of possibility, where giving back to the community has become my purpose." In her spare time, Jennifer sits on non-profit committees for various women's initiatives, such as Dress for Success and Women in Governance. She is also on the executive board of the Global Women's Alliance.

Christine Chen, BCom, and **Emily Liu, BCom**, have launched Wandercolors, a travel-art shop. "As friends who went on exchange together during university, we wish to enable all travel lovers to experience the feelings of nostalgia and delight tied to the special places in their lives," Christine writes. Every print is an original digital painting. Christine says alumni can shop art prints and phone cases at wandercolors.com, and stay updated on Instagram @wandercolorsart. Use the exclusive code QUEENS for 20 per cent off unframed prints, Christine says.



Beth (Corbett) Greene,

EMBAA, was among the recipients of the 2020 Women in Rail Awards

presented by *Railway Age* last fall. Beth works at Thales Canada, where she is communications manager for Thales' Urban Rail Signalling line worldwide. Education was among the award criteria, Beth says, "so I think it is very likely that the EMBA from Cornell and Queen's played a part in my receiving this award."



Olusegun Ojeyinka, MMIE, has launched Freshstart Hub, a platform that provides resources for immigrants. "The journey of a newcomer can be wonderful, terrible, exciting, frightening, enlightening, confusing, or a beautiful maze," he writes. Olusegun is also the host of the Freshstart podcast, a show exploring the stories, experiences and journeys of inspiring people in order to provide newcomers with strategies to succeed. Learn more at thefreshstarthub.com.

Julia Reiter, BCom, tells us that she started a business at the onset of the pandemic. "I used my recruitment experience to coach people through the job-application process. Rewarding!" she writes.

Neelam Sian, MMIE, was promoted to director of strategy and transformation in the technology and operations group at RBC. Neelam had been senior manager of investor relations and recently celebrated her sixth anniversary with the bank.



2020s

2020



Omar Khalid, MIB, has joined Rothmans Benson & Hedges, a subsidiary of Philip Morris International, as a business-development representative. Omar says this is his "effort to be part of the 'smoke free future' that PMI aims to achieve."

Fahad Akbar, MMA, secured a senior data-scientist job and moved to London, Ont., after earning his MMA degree. "I can't thank God enough. All this means that hard work and self-belief do work," he writes.

Brian Gihm, EMBAA, Artsci'01, BSc(Eng)'03, has joined Hatch Ltd. in Mississauga, Ont., as director for nuclear decommissioning and waste management. Hatch is an engineering and development consultancy that works around the world in sectors such as mining, energy and infrastructure.

Yama Mubtaker, MMIE, tells us he's launched an online masterclass, Certified Sustainable Business Strategist, to train the new generation of business strategists and help companies become responsible and sustainable entities.

Mario Romero, EMBAA, says that he recently moved back to Monterrey, Mexico, to take on the role of regional general manager for Rappi, a Colombian multi-vertical company that he says is "defined as the Latin American SuperApp, and one of the fastest-growing companies in the region."

Joseph Wehbe, MMAI, says his startup, Daimlas, officially launched in January after winning the MIT Lebanon Challenge in the knowledge-economy category and being named the most promising young startup in the Middle East and North Africa region at the MIT Arab Conference. "Think of Daimlas as the Shopify for AI services with the frictionless experience of Fiverr," he says. Reach Joseph at joewehbe@daimlas.com.

Karim Zaïdi, MMIE, has launched a startup called Luvmunny, which helps lower- to middle-income families raise gifts as contributions toward their education savings. "We have processed almost 50 gifts and are growing very fast," Karim says. "Fund your loved ones' futures with Luvmunny!"

Late-breaking notes

Juggy Sihota, EMBA'05, was recently recognized with two leadership awards. She was awarded the Influential Woman in Business Award by *Business in Vancouver*. She was also the recipient of the global Business Transformation award from WeQual.



Erin Zipes, BCom'00, along with nine other women who met building and scaling Shopi-

fy, recently launched Backbone Angels, an angel collective that invests in women and non-binary founders, with a focus on investments in Black, Indigenous, and women of colour-led companies. backboneangels.com



Iron Man

Connor Emeny, BCom'18, is a man on a mission. Pain isn't an option.

By Rebecca Harris

Name a sport, and Connor Emeny has likely done it: competitive hockey, cross-country, badminton, rugby, and that one year in high school when he joined the ping-pong club. "I always had the sports bug," says Emeny, from his current training ground in Vancouver. "Growing up in Toronto, I had two older brothers, and we were all very involved in sports. We would push each other to keep chasing goals and be better versions of ourselves."

In his first year at Smith, Emeny joined the Queen's triathlon team. A pivotal moment came in 2016, when Emeny's friend and fellow Queen's alumnus Ben Rudson, BSc(Eng)'17, competed in the Ironman World Championship in Hawaii. Known as one of the world's most grueling one-day competitions, Ironman consists of a 3.86-km swim, a 180.2-km bike race, followed by a 42.2-km running race. Rudson, at age 21, placed 14th in his division.

"We had competed head-to-head, and he went off and did this otherworldly feat," says Emeny, who was so inspired that he decided to complete an Ironman, too. Emeny's day came in March 2020 when he competed in New Zealand. The 24-year-old left his job at Uber to train in Auckland for six months before the race.

During the race, he had to stay strong on both the mental and physical fronts. "I had just crossed the 100-km mark on the bike, and I thought, 'this is getting pretty tough now. My legs are screaming,'" recalls Emeny. "You see people dropping out and think, 'I could easily make the decision to just call it a day. Or, I have to keep riding the pain train and push through it and get to the other side.'"

He crossed the finish line in a solid 12 hours and nine minutes. Then came the question: What next?

The answer: to become the youngest person ever to complete Ironman races on six continents. "I started thinking bigger and bolder and thought how amazing it would be to race in different countries and see more of the world," he says. He soon found out that only five people have completed an Ironman on six continents, and the youngest was 32.

Emeny aims to complete his goal in 18 months. A few races were cancelled because of COVID, so now he's eyeing a June Ironman in Subic Bay in the Philippines. "I'm staying active, staying motivated and trying to get my message out about chasing your dream," he says. "It's a bumpy road but it's a fulfilling road, and I hope that my story can inspire a few others to go after what they want to achieve." ■

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- Maintaining Motivation Through the Pandemic
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Strategy

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