FOCUS ON CONNECTIONS

The psychology of clicking

Perfecting your elevator pitch

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A mighty community

Kevin McFall, MBA /TM ’03
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As luck would have it, I spent my senior year of college abroad at Trinity College Dublin, Ireland, where my mother was born. Every Friday after my last class I would take the bus to my grandmother’s house in Kilbeggan, Co. Westmeath. I often sat next to a girl from the same town, and on one ride we made plans to meet up for a drink at a local pub. She brought along her older brother, who brought along his best friend. As it turns out, her brother’s best friend became my husband. We have been married for 11 years and have two young girls, Tara (6) and Emma (3).

In his article “The psychology of clicking” on page 6, Rom Braufman, author of Click—The Magic of Instant Connections, explains just why we click with some people but not with others. While on page 12, don’t miss “The mentor connection,” featuring five encouraging stories of mentors and mentees who have connected through UOPX Alumni Association Mentor Program.

Four Boston alumnae (page 38), made an instant and deep connection on the first day of class that has evolved into a thriving academic alliance and life-long friendships. Learn how Patricia Bean, BSB/M ’07, Carmen Davis, BSB/M ’07, Janice Tocci, BSB/M ’07, and Karen Bird, BSB/M ’06, have supported each other—at school, at home and in their professional lives. And, Kevin McFall, MBA/TM ’02, has made a career out of making connections through his work at online networking site AMightyRiver, which provides African American professionals with the opportunity to search for career opportunities with companies that value diversity (page 34). Lastly, on page 42, find out how Corey Smith, MBA ’07, leveraged his connections to go from unemployment to business owner in a mere 18 hours.

If you want to become even more connected, follow me on Twitter at www.twitter.com/uopxalumni. I will even Tweet some updates from Ireland where I will be on vacation next month with my husband and daughters. And, that friend who introduced me to my husband—she married my grandmother’s next door neighbor. Her kids are 7, 4 and 2, so I can’t wait to see how the next generation connects!

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The psychology of clicking
Quick—think of the last time you met someone new. What was that moment like? You probably tried to size up the other person, searching for something to talk about: Where are you from? What kind of work do you do? But every once in a while, this experience goes completely differently. There’s a certain intensity, familiarity and comfort from the get-go. We immediately sense that we can be ourselves around this person. Things feel right; we hit it off. Conversation flows easily, without embarrassing pauses or self-consciousness. In essence, we click.
When we hit it off with someone, we usually chalk it up to luck. We figure that something must have gone right, but we don't know what underlies this spark. Why is it that we click with some people but not with others? What are some of the little things we do in our everyday lives that make us more "clickable" with others?

In the book *Click: The Magic of Instant Connections*, we investigate recent research from the fields of psychology, communications and sociology about clicking. What researchers have found is that the phenomenon of clicking is much more powerful than most of us realize. When it comes to the workplace, one study found that teaming up with colleagues with whom we've hit it off makes us 40 percent more productive. That's because when we click with someone, we feed off of each other's energy. We allow ourselves to take more creative risks and challenge ourselves to try things from which we'd normally shy away.

In conducting their research, social scientists have uncovered specific click "ingredients" that help form and shape a click. There's even a click personality, of sorts, a trait that is associated with a higher degree of personal connections and natural networking ability. And maybe the best news about mastering the science of clicking is that it's not rocket science. It's straightforward, simple things that we can all learn to master.

**Show your vulnerable side**

Recently-retired San Jose police officer Greg Sancier's work as a hostage negotiator brought him face to face with some hardened criminals. Sancier was routinely the target of animosity and verbal abuse. But instead of getting angry or becoming defensive, Sancier opened up. "What I try to do when I talk to people," explains Sancier, "is to get very, very personal." Instead of using his authority to try to scare the suspects into submission, Sancier becomes vulnerable.

Sancier's goal is to have a heart-to-heart conversation with the person he's trying to reach. "You never know what one word or phrase will make the difference." If the suspect complains about having a hard life, Sancier might share the difficulties he experienced when his own mother died. What Sancier knows is that the more open and real he can be, the more easily he can create a connection of trust with the person with whom he is talking.

“What I try to do when I talk to people is to get very, very personal. You never know what one word or phrase will make the difference.”

— Greg Sancier, recently-retired San Jose police officer and hostage negotiator
“...when we click with someone, we feed off of each other’s energy. We allow ourselves to take more creative risks and challenge ourselves to try things from which we'd normally shy away.”

—Rom Brafman, author of *Click: The Magic of Instant Connections*

When most of us think of vulnerability, we usually think of being fragile or frail. Or we picture someone breaking down as they reveal their deepest, darkest secrets. We grow so afraid of reaching that extreme that we over-correct. Especially when it comes to business relationships, we err on the side of caution. We limit what personal information we share for fear of sharing too much.

But increasing our level of vulnerability through self-disclosure can have very powerful results. Harvard professor Youngme Moon conducted research that showed the more we open up with a person, the more feelings we develop with that person. So what does this mean in terms of business interactions and networking? We can learn from Sancier and Moon that by disclosing seemingly tangential tidbits about ourselves, we foster an atmosphere readymade for clicking. It can be recounting a meaningful childhood anecdote, sharing an interesting story that happened over the weekend, or just letting the other person know what's going on in your head, e.g., “I'm glad we're getting to know each other because I'm finding out interesting things about you.” The main point is that there doesn't have to be a reason to share; it's opening up simply for the sake of opening up that makes us vulnerable and relatable to others.

**Accentuate the similarities**

Professor Donn Byrne didn’t have much going for him as a young assistant professor—that is, until he serendipitously stumbled across a research finding that would end up becoming a classic in social psychology. What Byrne wanted to know is just how much does similarity factor in when it comes to liking? How much more do we like someone who shares the same values, attitudes and beliefs compared with a normal acquaintance? The professor asked his study participants to evaluate their peers and found that similarity plays a huge role in determining how we perceive others. In a nutshell, the more similar we are to someone else, the more we tend to like them and click with them. But what was truly surprising is that quality does not matter. It’s all about the quantity.
“By becoming present and being engaged, you’ll naturally adjust yourself to meet the other person where he or she is at.”

—Rom Brafman, author of *Click: The Magic of Instant Connections*

Here’s what I mean. Byrne found that people who believe they share the same core values—the same political stance, same religious views, same sense of what’s right and wrong—were very compatible. But participants who shared only rather superficial qualities—the same taste in music, same favorite sports team—connected just as powerfully. In other words, it didn’t matter what the similarity was about. The only thing that mattered was the number of similarities.

When you’re having a conversation with someone and you find out they were born on the same month as you or that you used to vacation in the same city or that you like the same type of food, make sure to point it out. It’s a way to build a common foundation. As Byrne himself reflected when I interviewed him, “One of my first Ph.D.’s had a birthday the same as mine and someone I knew in college also had a birthday the same as mine. And for some reason we all remember that.” As humans we’re adept at picking up on similarities, and feeling more comfortable with someone with whom we share these commonalities.
A study conducted by Bell Communications Research found that the same pattern of clicking happens at the workplace as well. We’re much more likely to hit it off with coworkers whose office is right next to us than with someone whose office is on the same floor but a bit more removed. The researchers found that collaborations fall by half with every successive unit of separation, so the chances of developing a working relationship with someone on a floor just above or just below us is just as remote as connecting with someone across the country. In these high-tech times with easy access to emails and teleconferencing, physical closeness still plays a huge role.

The big takeaway is that physical presence matters. If you have an option of attending a meeting in person or calling in, try to be there in person. And when you find someone you want to get to know better—whether at work or in your personal life—find ways to put yourself in their vicinity. Research shows that even if you do not say a single word to them, just seeing you over and over again will increase their liking of you.

Get up close and personal—literally
When Stanford researchers surveyed MIT students and asked them to name their best friends, they noticed something uncanny. Forty percent named their next-door neighbor. Only 20 percent named someone living one door down. And the likelihood of forming a connection with someone living at the end of the hall was as low as befriending someone who lived on the opposite side of campus. It makes sense, of course, that we’re more likely to hit it off with someone who lives or works close by than with someone who’s far away, but what’s surprising is the exponential drop off that happens when we move just one degree away. That is, students are half as likely to connect with someone living two doors away as they are to click with someone living right next door to them. But this proximity phenomenon is not unique to just dorm students.

try to impress others—in fact, they don’t even realize that they’re shifting their personality to adjust to others. But one thing’s for sure, what they do works.

High self-monitors are significantly more likely to get promoted at work. That’s because they manage to quickly become the center of the professional and social network. One study found that in just 18 months high self-monitors are able reach the same level of central connectivity that it takes a low self-monitor 13 years to achieve. The easiest way to raise your chameleon qualities is to become genuinely interested in those around you. By becoming present and being engaged, you’ll naturally adjust yourself to meet the other person where he or she is at.

Clicking with someone is much more than an interesting experience. The ensuing relationship is richer and brings out the best in us. As kids we’re taught how to be polite with others, but learning how to click with people is just as useful a skill and one that we’re usually not taught. 

Rom Brafman is a psychologist and co-author of Click: The Magic of Instant Connections and Sway: The Irresistible Pull of Irrational Behavior.
The mentor connection

Whether you’re a seasoned expert or an up-and-coming professional, tapping into University of Phoenix’s half-million-strong alumni network can yield great rewards.

As UOPX alumni, you have the power to transform the lives of others by sharing what you have learned along the way. The University of Phoenix Alumni Association Mentor Program provides the perfect opportunity to help students and alumni on the road to meaningful—and successful—professional lives.

"University of Phoenix is committed to supporting our students and alumni in their professional pursuits," explains Alanna Vitucci, executive director of the University of Phoenix Alumni Association. “Our Alumni Association Mentor Program provides the opportunity for our alumni and students to help each other by sharing their real-world expertise, which ultimately benefits everyone.”

At the end of 2010, more than 4,300 alumni were signed up to become mentors, with more than 5,200 students and alumni seeking their professional guidance. Once a mentor is matched with a mentee, the two begin communicating at mutually convenient times to work toward a set of goals they establish together. "Mentors provide support and encouragement to their mentees and help them determine the right path for their career aspirations," says Vitucci. “Mentors are also able to guide their mentees through any professional challenges they may face.”

Mentors provide their matches with tried-and-true approaches to networking, interviewing and résumé writing, to name a few things. “Mentors also can support student mentees through their academic journeys,” adds Vitucci.

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In 2011, the Alumni Association plans to grow the Mentor Program to reach even more up-and-coming and seasoned professionals, as well as introduce career workshops to make an even greater impact on participants of the program. Here are just a few successful mentor-mentee matches.

From unemployment to dream job

**Mentor**
Delbert (Dusty) Spear, Jr.
Master of Business Administration (MBA) ’09
Adjunct Faculty and Distance Education Technician, Ivy Tech Community College
Louisville, Kentucky

**Mentee**
Sonya Joseph
Bachelor of Science in Business with a Concentration in Management (BSB/M) ’09
Student: pursuing Master of Business Administration (MBA)
Call Center Trainer, Sysco Corp.
Houston, Texas

**Their story**
When Sonya found herself unexpectedly unemployed, her mentoring relationship with Dusty took on new meaning. When Dusty found out about Joseph’s job loss, “I knew some compassion was required,” he says. Sonya leaned on Dusty for emotional support while he reminded her that there was life outside of unemployment. When Sonya landed a big job interview, he was there to help guide her through the entire process since she hadn’t been on an interview in several years.

**Dusty’s take**
“Sonya nailed the first interview. However, for the second one, she needed to make a presentation on adult learning. I called upon my experience as an adult learner, and we worked, talked and revised before she presented. I am proud to say that she landed that job, and I was never happier! She has blessed me with the confidence that despite a tough situation, we can achieve a solution when we work together.”

**Sonya’s take**
“Dusty would say to me, ‘Until you get the offer, your job is to convince employers that you are right for the position.’ I give him kudos for helping me land my dream job by making me believe in myself. I had the skills and background for the job, but he gave me the extra confidence to help me seal the deal.”

“I called upon my experience as an adult learner, and we worked, talked and revised before she presented.”
—Mentor, Delbert (Dusty) Spear, Jr.
Real estate connection

**Mentor**
Cindy Hill  
Master of Business Administration (MBA) ’08  
Vice President of Facilities Management, Jones Lang LaSalle  
Mason, Ohio

**Mentee**
Samantha Anderson  
Bachelor of Science in Management (BSM) ’10  
Assistant Property Manager, ProLogis  
Atlanta, Georgia

**Their story**
Cindy has been mentoring on her own for years and jumped at the chance to help students and alumni through the University’s official mentor program. A few months ago, Cindy and Samantha were paired as mentor and mentee because they both work in the real estate industry. So far, they have established career goals for Samantha, set their priorities and created an action plan. With Cindy’s help, Samantha already has begun to identify professional industry associations to join so she can expand her professional network. She also is implementing ideas at her place of business that Cindy shared from her on-the-job experience. Because their mentoring relationship is ongoing, Samantha and Cindy continue to work together to ensure they are staying on track to reach their goals.

**Cindy’s take**
“Every time I offer valuable advice to Samantha based on my skills and experience, I end up building my own confidence and self-esteem as well—a win-win!”

**Samantha’s take**
“Cindy has been extremely helpful in assisting me with my aspirations, which will provide me with a competitive edge in our dynamic industry.”

Staying on task

**Mentor**
Claudia Dresser  
Master of Arts in Education/Adult Education and Training (MAED/AET) ’10  
Literacy Coordinator, Kauai Community School for Adults  
Kalaheo, Hawaii

**Mentee**
Gwendolyn Palmer  
Student: pursuing an Associate of Arts in Human Services Management (AAHSM)  
Currently seeking employment  
Madera, California

**Their story**
When Gwendolyn was matched with Claudia, she feared her issues were so big that Claudia would reconsider being her mentor. “I had many personal and physical problems that interfered with my academic progress,” explains Gwendolyn. “However, Claudia was up for the challenge and was excited to dive in.” One of Gwendolyn’s biggest obstacles was her tendency to procrastinate. Claudia, a teacher, was well-equipped to help Gwendolyn create a schedule to keep her on track with her studies. “Now I have weekly goals and a proven system that works effectively. I also have time to enjoy the weekend without the added pressure of completing assignments.”

**Claudia’s take**
“My connection with Gwen has allowed me to fulfill my personal needs as a teacher,” she says. “Through mentoring, I have honed my decision-making skills and have reinforced my ability to solve problems quickly based on experience, logic and intuition.”

**Gwendolyn’s take**
“This has been a life-changing experience for me,” she says. “In the beginning [of my degree program], I felt all alone and overwhelmed about starting school again so late in life. I needed direction and guidance to help pull me through. I recommend this program to everyone—it could be the deciding factor between failure and success.”
Open for discussion

Mentor
Rachelle Muller
Master of Business Administration with a Concentration in Accounting (MBA/ACC) ’10
Owner, RAM Bookkeeping Services
Valparaiso, Indiana

Mentee
Stephanie Kelley-Boatwright
Student: pursuing a Bachelor of Science in Business with a Concentration in Accounting (BSB/ACC)
Currently seeking employment
Charleston, South Carolina

Their story
Rachelle had never thought of herself as mentor material. “I was always kind of a passive person and never wanted to be in charge,” she says, “but over the last 10 years, I have come to realize that I can lead.” Case in point: her pairing with Stephanie. “It has given me a chance to see just how well I can help someone with my knowledge and expertise,” Rachelle says. The two take pride in their open and honest relationship where they can discuss the real-life challenges of juggling school, career and family.

Rachelle’s take
“Stephanie knows that she can ask me anything. We not only talk about school, but also about personal issues and how she can better herself in the accounting function.”

Stephanie’s take
“My mentoring relationship with Rachelle has encouraged accountability in order to reach the ultimate goal of earning my degree. Knowing that I can do anything is important, but seeing someone other than a relative care about it really counts.”

“My connection with Jennifer has helped me realize how important it is just to be there for students who are unsure of how to proceed in school.”
—Mentee, Jennifer Darnell
Motivation to persevere

Mentor
Sandra E. Holmes
Bachelor of Science in Business Management (BSB/M) ’09
Student: pursuing a Master of Management/Human Resources Management (MM/HRM)
Payroll Specialist, Eastern Shipbuilding Group
Panama City, Florida

Mentee
Jennifer Darnell
Student: pursuing Bachelor of Science in Business with a concentration in Human Resource Management
Administrative Assistant, Children’s Hospital Central California
Madera, California

Their story
Sandra was driven to become a mentor when she saw fellow classmates struggle during her bachelor’s degree program. As soon as she graduated, she signed up for the University of Phoenix Alumni Association Mentor Program. Jennifer is her second mentee, and the two connect at least once a month to help Jennifer navigate any career challenges she is facing. “Sometimes mentees don’t need a solution,” stresses Sandra. “They just need an ear. Through advice that I have offered, Jennifer has been able to make decisions that she felt were difficult.”

Sandra’s take
“My connection with Jennifer has helped me realize how important it is just to be there for students who are unsure of how to proceed in school. I have known for some time that I want to teach at the post-secondary level, and this mentoring connection has helped me know I am on the right path.”

Jennifer’s take
“I would definitely recommend the mentor program to other students and alumni. Sandra has guided me through some confusing times when I returned to college. Without her, I might have been so overwhelmed that I might would given up.”

Be the one who makes a difference

You have the power to help someone transform their career and their life. It’s easy. Just join the University of Phoenix Alumni Association Mentor Program, and you can share your professional experiences with an up-and-coming student or alumni. We’ll help you find the perfect fit for you and your mentee. Here’s how to make the connection.

1. Determine your available time. Mentors can commit to a one-time conversation, weekly contact or monthly meetings.

2. Choose your preferred method of communication with your mentee. You can meet face-to-face, communicate via email or speak on the telephone.

3. Complete the online mentor interest form. It only takes a few minutes to fill out this brief form that provides the Alumni Association with the information they need to match you with the right student for your experience.

4. Wait for your student or alumni match. Matches are made based on areas of expertise and specific needs. The number of students and alumni requesting a mentor varies at any given time, so it may take several weeks before you are paired with a match.

5. Review your mentoring toolkit. You will receive this after you are matched with a student. This toolkit provides tips on how to get to know your mentee, how to develop a personalized mentoring agreement and how to set and formalize your mentoring goals.

6. Enjoy the opportunity to lend a helping hand to someone at such an exciting time in their lives.

For more information, visit alumni.phoenix.edu and click “Get Involved.”
The power of connections
Many inventions originally begin with a singular use in mind, but connections made from the existing invention lead to multiple uses and commercialization. According to Dr. Kotorov, chief innovation officer at Information Builders, “...innovation follows what economists call a punctuated equilibrium model, otherwise known as the occurrence of a unique, very novel idea, e.g., the telephone or the Internet, followed by a rapid process of adaptation, imitation and proliferation of similar or related ideas.”

Learning to see connections
Several factors contribute to making the connections that lead to “the next big idea.” In general, invention and innovation:

• **Involve a long process of research and discovery.**
  Inventions and innovations are not usually a matter of happenstance, luck or serendipity, even though they may appear to be at first glance. This is because onlookers see “what happened next” and typically interpret it as a lucky consequence rather than as a logical outcome of a long process. “That omits the fact that the inventor had spent years doing scientific research in the field,” says Dr. Kotorov. “Hence the precise idea—the solution—can occur at a particular instance, but it is actually the result of many hours of research and knowledge gathering.”
• **Come in increments.**

  “So many people think ideas have to be big and radical, and sometimes they are, but more often the best ideas are small ones,” says Carl Frappaolo, innovation expert and director of knowledge management at FSG, a nonprofit consulting firm specializing in strategy, evaluation and research. “There’s a reason for the old adage ‘the best idea since sliced bread.’ Slicing bread wasn’t an invention. People were already slicing bread in their homes. No, it was a small, seemingly inconsequential innovation for the convenience of customers and it led to big profits and big changes for the baking industry. That’s why people compare really great inventions to the mere act of slicing bread—because that was a really good idea.”

• **Require a team effort.**

  In most companies, large organizations and government departments, it’s someone’s job to innovate and invent—usually, it’s several people’s jobs. So, are these innovation groups made of specialists or creatives from a given discipline? No, actually they aren’t. Typically they are people from different departments within—and sometimes even from without—the company or organization. By gathering people with different responsibilities, concerns and interests, the ideas are far more likely to be diverse and the connections made between seemingly unrelated things and events are far more likely to occur.

  “So many people think ideas have to be big and radical, and sometimes they are, but more often the best ideas are small ones.”

  —Carl Frappaolo, innovation expert and director of knowledge management at FSG

  *continued on page 22*
Through a series of unique connections, new inventions are often borne, either accidentally or out of necessity. Here are some examples of how connections can lead to breakthrough ideas.

Adapting technology for multiple uses
The laser pointer was originally created to use to point to items during presentations to engage an audience. The laser pointer had a second patented use as a cat toy to entertain and engage our feline companions. “Later, someone else made the connection between the laser pointer and its possible relevance to optic systems that would be needed to photocopy and scan,” says Dr. Rado Kotorov, chief innovation officer at Information Builders. This is the typical path of innovation—connections are made from an existing invention to multiple uses and commercialization.

Specialized study
In a specific field of study, connections also lead to advancements within that particular field. A microbiologist or oncologist would be more likely to discover a cure for cancer than a layperson. Finding the cure is a matter of discovering the connections between behaviors—be that of the person, a virus, a human cell or all three. The research process itself depends on scientists making related and even seemingly unrelated connections.

Personal connection
The rough-terrain wheelchair was invented by a college student who simply wanted his paraplegic father to be able to get around over non-paved areas. While the young man did not specialize in the disease, he was personally connected to the problem he set out to solve.

Making mistakes
Post-it notes were invented after a “failed” attempt by scientist Spencer Silver to make a specific glue. It took another scientist at 3M, Arthur Fry, to see the connection between the weak glue and his need to keep markers in his church hymnal while he sang in the choir. The result of that connection is the now famous Post-it note.

The joy of serendipity
“There are a few cases, where people with acute ability to synthesize can come up with inventions that are completely serendipitous,” says Dr. Kotorov. “The inventor of Velcro stumbled upon a plant that stuck to his pants. As he hated zippers, the plant accident provided an idea for a nature-like alternative to the zipper.”
“A big part of mastering your own ability to innovate or invent is the ability to see trends. You must ... see what’s happening inside and outside your sphere of existence and influence so you can begin to see connections.”

—Dan Keldsen, president of Information Architected

• Take several tries.

“Brainstorming sessions are usually the first step," says Dan Keldsen, president of Information Architected, a boutique consultancy focused on the intelligent use of content, knowledge and processes to drive innovation. "That's where you collect as many ideas as possible without stopping to judge their worth. The point is to let ideas free flow." The result is a hodge-podge of idea fragments, Keldsen says, where the group can examine them, find connections and select which ideas to pursue. "Edison created 10,000 variations of the light bulb, but only one made sense to commercially re-create."

• Come from limber minds.

There are a variety of tools that aid brainstorming groups and people looking to hone their innovation skills. The most popular is the Force Fit exercise where participants are handed two random things from a box and asked to find the connections between the two. This forces the mind to look at the objects differently. Participants are also asked to rephrase an issue in as many ways as they can think of in order to reset their perspectives. There are a variety of tools that accomplish similar objectives in breaking the mind free of its thinking rut.

“A big part of mastering your own ability to innovate or invent is the ability to see trends. You must ... see what's happening inside and outside your sphere of existence and influence so you can begin to see connections,” says Keldsen.

Indeed, there are four specific traits that highly-skilled innovators and inventors possess. According to Dr. Kotorov, they are: 1) broad interdisciplinary knowledge or education; 2) strong ability to synthesize; 3) natural curiosity; and 4) perseverance.

“The broader the knowledge an individual has, the more associations he or she can make and the better at synthesis he or she will be,” Kotorov says. “Curiosity keeps an inventor open to new ideas and new associations, and perseverance helps him or her carry through the obstacles.”

Pam Baker is a writer and journalist based in Georgia.
When pondering the value of connections to inventions, consider the GPS, which is now widely available to consumers in everything from cars to cell phones. GPS came to be because of the invention of atomic clocks by physicists and the seemingly unrelated invention of satellites by NASA, the U.S. military and private contractors. GPS specifically uses satellites in space to calculate someone’s precise position in three-dimensional space. Accuracy in calculating someone’s position hinges on a very precise measurement of time, which can only be achieved with an atomic clock. The National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) developed the atomic clock, which is located in Boulder, Colorado, and is the ultimate standard for setting clocks from wristwatches to cable boxes and cell phones. It is also the benchmark for coordinating high-speed voice and data transmissions and for controlling spacecraft. Further, it is critical to measuring the amount of time it takes for signals to travel from GPS satellites to each ship, plane, train, car, cell phone and hiker-locator on the planet. However, the inventors of the atomic clock were not trying to build a GPS system; they were merely looking for a means to more precisely measure time.

It was the military that was trying to build a GPS system, although they didn’t really know that at the time. Military specialists in several of the Armed Forces were seeking better ways to navigate in order to move personnel, equipment and even to fire missiles regardless of weather or terrain. The military was making significant progress using two satellites and radio signals. But it wasn’t until all these players came together, those perfecting the measurement of time and those perfecting signals and satellites, that GPS could be invented. The radio signals were traded for electromagnetic signals, the satellite configuration was changed from two to four to get a three-dimensional positioning, and the atomic clock measurement added the extreme accuracy. Because the military needs a positioning system that can serve large numbers of users and different devices, it was easy to innovate the system to include widespread consumer use.

Now, we have a 24-satellite constellation orbiting the earth that uses electromagnetic signals that are measured by an atomic clock on earth for a three-dimensional position fix. Both the inventions and the innovations were centered on the connection between physical position, time and a body in space.

The connections these inventors made changed an ordinary situation into an extraordinary result.
your career |

Tweet your way to a NEW JOB

Gaining wider support from career industry professionals, recruiters and human resource specialists worldwide, Twitter is revolutionizing how people hunt for jobs in today’s economy. The numerous advantages to using Twitter in a job search include allowing you to research companies and organizations, uncover little-known job leads, connect with recruiters and employers and learn up-to-the-minute news about the industries and employers that interest you.

Susan Britton Whitcomb, co-author of The Twitter Job Search Guide, explains: “In the past, you had to go through a maze of gatekeepers to get to the cloistered person in charge of hiring decisions. Now you can have access to them with the click of a Follow button. The ability to level the playing field—placing you nearly peer-to-peer with influencers, leaders and hiring authorities—is extremely powerful.”

And that’s not all. “Using Twitter you can find insight, encouragement, connections, job leads and company insider information in bite-sized messages of 140 characters or less,” co-author Chandlee Bryan adds. “You can also get advice from some of the world’s most respected career experts on everything from starting your search to negotiating salary. It’s like fishing for trout at a pond that’s been stocked in advance.”

It’s important to note, however, that your activities on Twitter won’t pay off until you’ve invested some time learning how to use it best. Those new to the social networking site often complain that Twitter is too overwhelming, time-consuming and intimidating to be a useful tool in their job search campaign.

That’s why Bryan has developed a blueprint to help job seekers ease into the Twitter experience. “It takes some time to gain momentum on Twitter,” Bryan explains. “I recommend phasing into your plan. Doing so, you’ll find that your network will grow, your relationships will deepen, your job search will become more productive and you’ll just have more fun.”
Bryan outlines her four-week blueprint for easing into the Twitterverse:

**WEEK ONE: Twitter boot camp**
- Allow yourself time for a learning curve.
- Create your account, claim your username and design your background.
- Set goals for your job search: How do you want to use Twitter? As a source of job leads, for company research, to expand your network?
- Write your Twitter bio. This should identify what makes you unique and tell readers what you want. You may also want to mention a special achievement or unusual accomplishment.
- Write 10 to 12 tweets offline. Then, tweet one or two of them each time you log in.
- Follow 15 people you know who won't be judging your account.

**WEEK TWO: Lurking and cultural immersion**
- Search for hashtags and industries of interest to you. (Example of a hashtag: #greenjobs)
- Actively begin following people you don't know in your field.
- Observe posts of others and how they use hashtags.
- Subscribe to job feeds. “A feed is Web content from a source such as Twitter that can be delivered to your cell phone, email or a designated Web page you set up. You can subscribe to a feed with services like Feedreader.com or Google.com/reader,” Bryan explains. “Feeds enable you to actively review new content on a relevant topic without having to search for it on your own; once you’ve established a feed, the information will be delivered to you automatically. Feeds can help you optimize your time in conducting employer research, monitoring trends in your field and finding job openings.”
- Subscribe to Twitter lists. According to Bryan, “Lists enable you to organize users into groups. Through lists, you can view tweets from users you don’t follow. If you don’t want updates from hundreds of users in your stream, creating or subscribing to lists by subject area is a great way to optimize your time on Twitter.”

“Using Twitter you can find insight, encouragement, connections, job leads and insider information in messages of 140 characters or less.”
—Chandlee Bryan, co-author of The Twitter Job Search Guide

“You used to go through a maze of gatekeepers to get to the person in charge of hiring. Now you can get to them by clicking a Follow button.”
—Susan Britton Whitcomb, co-author of The Twitter Job Search Guide
“Phase into your plan. You’ll find your network will grow, relationships will deepen, and job search will be more productive. You’ll have more fun.”
—Chandlee Bryan, co-author of The Twitter Job Search Guide

WEEK THREE: Full throttle
• Ask engaging questions that start conversations.
• Retweet others.
• Tweet blog posts and other items of interest that align with your brand or career goals (save space by shortening URLs in your links).
• Don’t forget the 75/25 rule: Approximately 75 percent of content should be professional and 25 percent can be personal.

WEEK FOUR AND BEYOND: Onward, in 15 minutes a day
• Expand your reputation, including creating lists.
• Revise retweets to include your own opinion.
• Incorporate both online and offline content for tweeting (from attending association meetings and workshops to sharing Google News alerts or blog comments).

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UOPX Alumni Twitter
Follow the Alumni Association’s Executive Director Alanna Vitucci on Twitter to get the latest Association news, career events, alumni highlights and industry news.
www.twitter.com/uopxalumni
Whether you’re job hunting via Twitter now or plan to in the future, there are some key guidelines to keep in mind. Co-authors Susan Britton Whitcomb, Chandlee Bryan and Deb Dib of *The Twitter Job Search Guide* offer the following advice for writing high-impact tweets and succeeding in the Twittersphere:

1. "Active participation is essential," Bryan says. "If you build a community, help will come. Job seekers who get the most out of Twitter use it to expand their networks and achieve a sense of community. They not only ask for help, but also engage with others."

2. "Be upfront about interests and career objectives," Whitcomb stresses. "We talked to several job seekers who searched for new positions after being laid off. While their individual approaches varied in terms of when and how they chose to advertise their availability, a common theme emerged: Successful job seekers were specific about what they wanted. They let others know their skills, strengths and preferred job function."

3. "Acknowledge that the job search is a relationship-building process—not an ‘I-need-a-job’ transaction," Dib says. "The job search is like dating; it takes time to build a relationship. If you ask for a long-term commitment the first time you meet someone, chances are good that you will be disappointed. And so it is with Twitter—building a strong network that can generate job leads takes time. You may find job listings overnight, but it takes time to grow connections with hiring managers and influencers."

4. "Be transparent in expressing appreciation and progress," Bryan advises. "While some job searches require confidentiality, many of the job seekers we spoke with used a very transparent approach. This included posting regular updates on the status of their job search, as well as shout-outs to individuals who had helped them."

5. "Be clear about your brand," Dib says. "Successful job seekers have a distinct brand that helps their networking contacts and prospective employers get a quick picture of who they are, how they work and how their talents would bring value to the table."
Perfecting your elevator pitch

It’s a question we have all been asked: “What do you do?” For most of us, the canned response we give includes mentioning our job title and where we work, but not much else. Whether you have a job or are looking for one, being able to answer this question effectively is more important than you might think.
Perhaps you have heard of the 30-second elevator pitch—a brief opportunity to present the benefits and uniqueness of your services in the time it takes to ride an elevator. Really, elevator speeches can be used anywhere and at any time in any brief social situation.

The objective of a 30-second speech is to provide your audience (whoever is listening) a clear and memorable snapshot of you.

Consider the following:

- You want to connect with people you can help and who can also help you.
- We all have a network of friends, family and work associates, and they all have their own network. If you formally or informally communicate in a meaningful way who you are, and what you do or can do, you can link this web of networks to connect with people you need to know and people who need to know you.

Alina Sanchez, managing partner of Spire Associates says, “We are all multi-dimensional humans with rich talents. We connect with so many people at work, school and in social settings—sometimes just for brief moments.” She suggests we ask ourselves: “How do we best connect [with people] in a meaningful way? How do we convey who we are?”

If you’ve never developed a 30-second elevator speech, it can be harder than you think, but don’t let that stop you. “What if you knew by writing your pitch, you would reap the rewards of clarifying what is truly important to you?” asks Sanchez.

If you are having trouble getting started, Sanchez suggests you answer the following questions: Who am I? What am I passionate about? Tap your inner strengths by remembering what you were doing the last time you felt: in ‘the zone’; completely content; on fire; unstoppable; most proud; joyful; and most creative. You may even need to go back to your favorite childhood memories to find your true self.

Follow these steps to create a stand-out elevator pitch:

1. **Write it down.**
   To get started, write down your aspirations and dreams. Write down your talents and skills that have practical or economic value. Convey who you are. “Just start writing and wait to edit after you get enough content down,” Sanchez says.

2. **Refine your pitch.**
   Take time to edit, refine and distill your ideas. The message needs to be clear so that it can be conveyed to someone else correctly (think the “Telephone” game). The message needs to be memorable so that you are top of mind when someone else has an opportunity to network for you. Then, make sure to include what value you can bring to the table, specifically what benefits or solutions you can provide.

3. **Practice.**
   As strange as it may feel when you do it, practice your speech and time it. If you can’t say everything you want to say in 30 seconds, decide what the most important things you want to get across to the other person are and leave out the rest. This exercise is a great way to clarify who you are, what you do and what your goals are. Then, practice in front of friends and family and get their feedback. “The more you practice and refine your elevator pitch, the easier it will get. Know that it will evolve,” Sanchez says.

4. **Be enthusiastic and smile.**
   Now that you have done the hard work of creating your 30-second speech, you must sell it in a truly genuine and positive way. Make eye contact and smile. Use a comfortable pace, tone and volume when speaking. Your body language should convey openness and confidence. Your enthusiasm and passion will do as much to sell your strengths as what you actually say. Remember, even if you aren’t actively looking for a job, developing and strengthening your network will help create and expand opportunities in the future. You never know when that 30-second elevator pitch will work for you—most likely when you least expect it.

“What if you knew by writing your pitch, you would [clarify] what is truly important to you?”

—Alina Sanchez, managing partner, Spire Associates
Career networking with a purpose
Networking is often the key to landing your dream job. However, networking isn’t about mindlessly glad-handing at mixers, hoping you’ll serendipitously run into your big break. And, it isn’t about chatting aimlessly on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and other social media sites. “Career networking without a purpose is just socializing,” says Tim Tyrell-Smith, founder of Tim’s Strategy, a blog on ideas for job search and career development. If you want to walk away richly employed, keep your purpose in mind, map out a plan and network strategically.

**Networking is work**
The first step is to approach networking itself as a job. That means strategically choosing where and when to network and then actually showing up for work.

“The job seeker can’t check a box marked ‘industry networking event’ and then decide not to attend a second or third such event that week because they don’t have to,” says Marcia Finberg, MBA, MA, co-captain of a job support group called Tempe Career Network and board member at the Keogh Foundation. Missing an event is akin to missing a day of work, and the consequences can feel harsh if you miss that golden opportunity simply because you stayed home.
Your plan must include appearing in person on a regular basis if you want to seal the deal. But, it must also include nurturing relationships online.

"Getting a job is selling," says Robert Pease, vice president of Marketing at Gist. "You need to build a list of targets, turn them into prospects and work to close (get a job). You don’t close every sale and you won’t get every job, but if you build a pipeline you will not be in an 'all or nothing' situation." In other words, if you don’t land the exact job you aimed for, the odds are good you’ll get a job that is very similar and maybe even better, but you have to aim for a specific type of job in order to end up anywhere near the target.

Start with a plan
Think about it this way: meetings, mixers, events and social media are all tools. You need a strategy so you’ll know the best way to use them.

"To attempt to network in real life or via social media platforms without at least a basic tactical plan is like arriving at the job interview without knowing who you are interviewing with, what the company does or how you will answer questions."
—Julia Zunich, president of Z Group PR
Your strategy should not be overly broad, like “find a job,” but specifically focused on the type of job you really want. After that, it’s relatively easy to figure out where you need to look to find the people you need to meet to get that job. A simple Google and social media search can reveal industry associations and events that you’ll likely want to attend as well as particular information on key people you’ll want to meet in-person and friend or follow online.

“One should first try to do online research on key people they want to meet at the event—assuming they can get a list—through social media such as LinkedIn, Twitter, blogs and company or personal websites,” says Arden Clise, owner of Clise Etiquette and an etiquette columnist for the Puget Sound Business Journal. “That way you will have information about the person that will make conversation and building rapport easier.”

Synchronize your networking activities
The key to networking is to manage your public persona, both online and offline, in such a way that it is consistently appealing online or offline, your persona should be polished, discrete and professional, but also engaging and warm.

That is not to say that you can—or should—handle all the forms of networking in the exact same way, however.

“While you want to coordinate your efforts, the two campaigns (online and offline) are quite different,” explains Steven Robbins, CEO of JobTacToe.com and host of the Get-it-Done Guy, an iTunes top-20 business podcast.

“In a social media campaign, you are building a reputation through your content and your interaction. You are essentially training people to become your salesforce, spread the message of you and be on the lookout for good fits,” he says. “With in-person networking, you’re your own salesperson. You have the opportunity to gather information about specific people and help them understand exactly how you can be part of their professional future. Those are very different initiatives.”

Pam Baker is a writer and journalist based in Georgia.
A mighty community

Kevin McFall, MBA/TM ’02
Chief Community Officer (CCO), AMightyRiver
A river is a timeless force, nourishing everything in its path while connecting individuals and communities. Kevin McFall, Master of Business Administration with a Concentration in Technology Management (MBA/TM) ’02, is working to replicate the power of a grand waterway through his work at AMightyRiver.

In his role as chief community officer (CCO) at this professional networking website, he strives to provide African American professionals—and people of all nationalities and backgrounds—with the opportunity to network and search for career opportunities with companies that value diversity.

Carving out a community
AMightyRiver’s mission is to serve as the premier resource for connecting aspiring and accomplished African American people in an online community experience that supports their professional and personal goals. “We don’t have an interest in replacing the mainstream networking sites, but it is a fact that there are cultural and ethnic nuances that aren’t addressed or served anywhere else,” says McFall. “There was an opportunity to create a platform that took this into consideration.”
What makes AMightyRiver stand out from its mainstream counterparts, in addition to its focus on the African American community, is its more open approach to networking. “We’re different from other sites like Facebook and LinkedIn, which require you to have common attributes associated with another person before you can connect,” McFall explains. “AMightyRiver allows you to browse profiles before making a request to see if there are any synergies. This approach facilitates a greater number of potential connections.”

Creating valuable connections
As CCO, one of McFall’s primary responsibilities is to build relationships that support AMightyRiver’s mission. “This process includes collaborating with professional associations that have offerings for this affinity group of African Americans,” he says. “These groups are usually career focused, but some are community service organizations.” In addition, AMightyRiver has strong ties to African American fraternities and sororities. “These groups are traditionally associated with the undergraduate experience, but in the black community they are lifelong commitments,” adds McFall.

AMightyRiver also has a mentoring feature, where users with a high level of experience can partner with others who are working to advance their careers. “We empower our membership to say, ‘I want to help someone else along the way because I have been fortunate enough to have found my ideal role,’” says McFall. “We facilitate that relationship by providing a series of alerts, chat rooms and collaboration opportunities.”
AMightyRiver offers its members career-related seminars and a searchable job bank. It also has formed partnerships with like-minded organizations—such as Monster.com and iHispano.com—to provide a broader range of career professional opportunities to users in this tough job market. “The greatest demand over the past year hasn’t been finding the ideal career, but rather simply finding a job,” says McFall. “We are starting to see opportunities emerge again, though. It’s slow, but the incremental additions to our job listings are very encouraging.”

Prepared for anything
McFall credits his University of Phoenix education with grooming him for success in his current role as CCO, including the marketing, organizational development, financial and economic analysis, operational and technology management, and project management methods he learned along the way. “These skills help me make informed and well-analyzed decisions, lead with confidence and ensure that AMightyRiver’s offerings provide value to the marketplace,” he says.

Although McFall is enjoying his role at AMightyRiver, this self-proclaimed serial entrepreneur hopes to one day create a new venture or be part of another founding team. For now, he is content focusing on the altruistic mission of AMightyRiver. “We are proud of what we are building to try to help this community that has been at somewhat of an disadvantage in the past,” he affirms, “and we are hoping to amass even more success stories.”

Get connected
Online networking sites have become standard among those seeking to make professional—and personal—connections. Today, there’s something for everyone, whether you’re looking for the standard or something more specialized.

Here’s a sampling of what’s out there:

**Mainstream:**
- **LinkedIn:** www.linkedin.com
- **Spoke:** www.spoke.com
- **Xing:** www.xing.com
- **Ryze:** www.ryze.com
- **UOPX Alumni Association Facebook:** www.facebook.com/uopxalumni

**Diversity-based:**
- **AMightyRiver:** www.amightyriver.com
- **Minority Professional Networking:** www.minorityprofessionalnetwork.com
- **iHispano:** www.ihispano.com
- **Women Empower:** www.womenempower.com/index.htm
For better or for worse, a first impression can leave an indelible mark on the beholder. Lucky for University of Phoenix classmates Patricia Bean, Bachelor of Science in Business Management (BSB/M) '07, Carmen Davis, BSB/M '07, Janice Tocci, BSB/M '07 and Karen Bird, BSB/M '06, their initial encounter planted the seeds of an advantageous academic partnership—and a deep and lasting friendship.

An instant connection

The four met on the first day of their classes at the University of Phoenix Greater Boston Campus in Braintree, Massachusetts. As an icebreaker, the instructor asked the students to stand up and introduce themselves to the group in 30 seconds. At that moment, Bean, Davis, Tocci and Bird felt an instant connection. "It was a magical moment," says Bean.

Bird agrees. "When the instructor asked us to pick teammates, Patty, Carmen, Jan and I looked at each other and decided to become a team," she says. "It was an amazing connection that we immediately felt that night."

"It was obvious that we were all meant to be together, and for four years we were never separated," Tocci adds.

In addition to the logistical convenience of living near one another, Bean attributes their instant chemistry to the warmth of their smiles when they looked at each other. "We shared a sense of humor and sensitivity," she explains. Davis contends...
that the group’s shared sensibility helped them immediately relate to one another. “We all have the same work ethic and commitment to not let anyone down,” she says. “The women in this group are kind-hearted and strong-willed, and such a combination is a force.”

**Down to business**
With their personal connection established, Bean, Davis, Tocci and Bird decided to lay a solid foundation for their working relationship. “One of the primary things we did was write our charter statement and stick with it,” says Bird. “We firmly believed in our objectives, and if we had a problem with a teammate’s work ethic or responsiveness, we immediately addressed it.”

At the beginning of their coursework, the group met weekly and spoke on the phone or emailed every day. After six months, they were working so well together they managed their projects via a constant stream of emails. “By the end of a class, we could finish each other’s sentences,” says Bean with a laugh. “Having that flow with each other was key.” For Davis, that kind of team dynamic energized her. “These women helped me to understand the value of a team effort and working together,” she says. “The women on this team were serious about producing excellence.”

Bean, Davis, Tocci and Bird helped keep each other motivated despite the stresses of careers, family life and school. “There were times when we each had personal issues, and we knew we could turn to each other if we needed to,” says Bean. “We pulled each other up by our bootstraps.”

Tocci concurs. “We each had our highs and lows in life during this time, and we made sure that we took care of one another and supported each other—at school, at home or in our business lives,” she says.

**The payoff**
During more than three years of classes, these women helped each other remain committed to their shared goal: earning their degrees. “We all kept our eyes on the prize,” says Bean. Their hard work has paid off. Bean is a sales executive with a human resources benefits company, Davis owns a documentation service company with her husband, Tocci is a manager in the healthcare industry and Bird has held top-level positions in the information technology industry.

They all credit their University of Phoenix education with helping them succeed. “I don’t believe I could have accomplished my rise in my career without the business management knowledge I learned during my course study,” affirms Bird. Tocci feels the same way. “Furthering my education has helped me to strengthen and grow in my field, and now I have even more confidence in my role,” she says.

Wherever their lives—and careers—may take them, one thing is certain: Bean, Davis, Tocci and Bird are forever connected. A few years after earning their degrees, they remain in frequent contact and make a point to get together as often as possible. In fact, the four reunited at the 2010 University of Phoenix Boston Homecoming and have plans to get together in the spring. In the meantime, each knows the others are always only a phone call away. “No matter how long we are apart, it is just like we have spoken to each other yesterday,” says Bird. “The four of us continue to support each other in our personal lives, and we maintain a strong connection with each other.”

Davis agrees. “All I have to do is think of any one of them, and I smile,” she says. “They are my friends for life.”

**A community connection**
Patty Bean believes in strong connections—in her career, her personal life and her community. She finds the time to stay actively involved in efforts that are close to her.

Her volunteer work spans several other areas of interest, which is why she was honored at the University of Phoenix 2010 Boston Homecoming as a Community Service Award Winner, a moment she shared with dear friends and former classmates Carmen Davis, Karen Bird and Janice Tocci.
Connecting businesses with their customers is the crux of what Thomas Castleberry, Master of Business Administration, (MBA) ’10, does. As the executive vice president and chief operations officer for SkyWire Media Inc., he is part of a growing enterprise that uses mobile technology to give other companies a sweeping view of how consumers are spending their money. Simply put, SkyWire Media develops integrated marketing applications that allow its clients to reach their customers via text messaging on their mobile phones.

This two-way technology also enables SkyWire Media’s clients to track what their customers did with any discounts or promotions they received from them. “Our clients are looking for more efficient ways to report, qualify and quantify the marketing programs they are spending money on,” elaborates Castleberry. “Our service gives them a complete view of their marketing campaigns so they are able to see the cause and effect of their efforts.”

Founded in 2005, Las Vegas-based SkyWire Media initially offered mobile marketing content to realtors looking to move beyond paper flyers and for-sale signs. Later, the company expanded to provide its offerings to hospitality service providers, such as casinos, resorts and restaurants, among others.
“Our clients are looking for more efficient ways to report, qualify and quantify the marketing programs they are spending money on. Our service gives them a complete view of their marketing campaigns so they are able to see the cause and effect of their efforts.”
—Thomas Castleberry, MBA ’10

The power of connections
Castleberry is no stranger to using technology to support businesses in the hospitality industry and beyond. Prior to joining SkyWire Media in 2010, he worked as a general manager at a publicly-traded enterprise application company and owned his own consultancy. One day, he was having lunch with Shawn Harris, Associate of Arts in Business (AAB) ’08, a former competitor and fellow alum who also is the CEO of SkyWire Media. “Shawn said, ‘You have all this experience and your University of Phoenix MBA. We need someone of your caliber at SkyWire Media,’” remembers Castleberry. “He said, ‘How about I acquire your business and you come over to SkyWire?’”

Harris is happy to have his former rival on his team at SkyWire Media. “I always respected Thomas as a competitor and knew of his skills and accomplishments,” he says. “Once we got to know each other, I realized that he is an incredible individual, which is why I asked him to be my COO.”

For Castleberry, the job opportunity was an ideal way to use his skills and experience to help take a growing company public, which has been the goal of SkyWire Media from the start. “We expect our initial public offering to occur within 12 to 18 months,” Castleberry explains. Because of his experience in this realm, he was poised to come in and set up internal controls and processes required for this endeavor while growing overall sales and reducing costs along the way. And Castleberry’s master’s degree has been a boon to SkyWire Media as the team works to bring the company to the next level. “My MBA has helped prepare me not just for the next stage of the company, but also to come in today and build a strong framework to run SkyWire Media properly.”

An evolving technology
A strong business structure is critical for technology companies like SkyWire Media that are working to stay ahead of the competition. Castleberry and Harris believe their innovative and customizable technology gives SkyWire Media the edge. “Sending messages to cell phones has been around for a long time,” says Castleberry. “Part of what makes us unique is how we capture data to give our customers a 360-degree view of their customers.”

Harris adds, “We were at the forefront of the mobile marketing trend in the United States when I founded SkyWire Media in late 2005.” He contends that what separates his company from the competition is that they designed their offerings to interface with other systems their customers use, such as point-of-sale software and customer-loyalty programs. “We can interact with our clients and exchange data back and forth to build a database into a precise engine,” he says. “This enables our clients to target their marketing efforts and give their customers exactly what they want to receive.”

The sky's the limit
While SkyWire Media is enjoying the success of its mobile marketing programs, it has plans to enhance some of its existing products, such as its email capabilities and iPhone application. As SkyWire Media’s offerings expand, so will its staff. “We now have 11 employees, which is double what we had four months ago,” says Castleberry. “We anticipate bringing on five more people in the next 30 days.”

Castleberry is excited about his role in growing SkyWire Media now and into the future. “It is such a compelling story,” he says, “and I really wanted to be a part of it.”
When Corey Smith, Master of Business Administration (MBA) '07, lost his job in 2007, a serendipitous connection led him down the road to successful entrepreneurship. A mere 18 hours after getting laid off, Smith founded Tribute Media Inc., a Web consulting company that has grown to 11 employees in just three years during one of the toughest economic climates in U.S. history.

Bringing together clients and their customers
Today, Smith is in the business of helping his clients connect with their customers on the Internet. Tribute Media is a Web consulting firm that goes beyond just building websites. “We always start by asking our clients, ‘What do you want your website to do?’” says Smith. He and his team work to help their clients create a permanent, relevant presence on the Web that aligns with their goals. Its areas of expertise include lead generation, search engine ranking, content development and more, to help clients achieve their desired results.

“According to [online media company and information provider] SitePoint, 95 percent of website traffic comes from the first page of search results,” explains Smith. “We help put our clients where their customers are looking for them.”

An opportune connection
While Tribute Media has been around for three years, it is unlikely that Smith would have started the company had it not been for a well-timed phone call from a friend for whom he had done some freelance work. “He called me out of the blue the day I was
"Those who are successful today can be successful in any environment. Those who are not successful today, but were before in a good market, were simply lucky."
—Corey Smith, MBA '07

Corey Smith's Foundational Marketing Approach

This customer-focused mindset has contributed to Tribute Media's success. The company gets close to 80 percent of its business through referrals, with the balance coming from Smith's networking efforts in the local business community, proving the impact connections can have on a business despite a difficult economy. "Those who are successful today can be successful in any environment," affirms Smith. "Those who are not successful today, but were before in a good market, were simply lucky."

What's next for Smith and Tribute Media? "I want to continue to grow this business," he says, but this entrepreneur has other ideas in the works, too. "I currently have two other businesses, and I am slated to start five more next year." Although he knows not all new endeavors will thrive, he sees himself as a winner no matter what happens. "I love trying new things," he says, "but I also love failing because it gives me another opportunity to succeed."
Published by alumni

Success Simplified
By J.R. Atkins

J.R. Atkins, Masters in Business Management (MBA) ’06, co-wrote Success Simplified along with authors Stephen Covey, Dr. Tony Alessandra and Patricia Fripp in an effort to educate current and future business leaders who are trying to take their businesses to another level. As a social media speaker and consultant, Atkins found many business owners have the same questions about social media, so he decided to write a book.

Atkins’ portion of the book is called “The Big 5 of Social Media” and details how LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, blogging and video can be used by businesses for marketing and customer service. “My hope is that readers are informed and inspired enough to take action and use social media in their organizations,” Atkins says. “I hope the readers of Success Simplified will be open to connect online, by phone and in person to discuss the ideas I put forth about social media and business.”

To learn more, go to http://bit.ly/successssimplified

Imprinted Souls
By Daniele Lanzarotta

Daniele Lanzarotta, Bachelor of Science in Business with a Concentration in Finance (BSB/F) ’07, has published her first fiction book, Imprinted Souls, a young adult series about vampires. Lanzarotta enjoyed reading paranormal fiction and wanted to create something of her own that would also promote teen literacy.

Imprinted Souls is the story of a girl named Lexi who is in a deep estate of depression caused by the death of her boyfriend and soulmate Matt. Constant dreams about Matt make it impossible for her to forget him. In an attempt to get her mind off things, her parents send her to Italy for the summer, and that is where she meets Tyler. Tyler ends up being the only one with a chance to bring her back to life, to forget Matt, but because of who he is, she is in a great deal of danger.

Imprinted Souls is the first in a five book series. For more information, visit www.danielelanzarotta.com.
Recognition

Arizona
Phoenix

Amie Waldemer, Master of Business Administration (MBA) ’10, was promoted to associate director of admissions for the Arizona School of Health Sciences, a division of A.T. Still University.

California
San Jose

Carolyn DeLeon, Doctor of Management in Organizational Leadership (DM) ’07, was inducted into Cambridge Who’s Who because of her leadership, dedication and excellence in strategic organizational management. Dr. DeLeon serves as vice president of human resources and organizational development at Good Samaritan Hospital.

Florida
Orlando

Tarsha Jacobs, Master of Business Administration (MBA) ’01, was elected president of the board of directors for the Florida Institute of Certified Public Accountants Central Florida Chapter. Jacobs is audit manager of BKHM CPA, a strategic accounting firm.

Illinois
Channahon

Rick Spatafore, Bachelor of Science in Information Technology (BSIT) ’09, was hired as manager of information technology for Morris Hospital & Healthcare Centers. He is responsible for managing strategic IT planning and operational and capital budgeting.

North Carolina
Pleasant Garden

Nichole Oster, Bachelor of Science in Business with a Concentration in Management (BSB/M) ’08, used what she learned in the classroom to secure a position in Malt-O Meal’s Lean/Six Sigma program and was promoted to a line manager.

Tennessee
Murfreesboro

Joshua Hauskins, Bachelor of Science in Information Technology (BSIT) ’09, was highlighted in Control Engineering as one of 19 young professionals who are excelling in the field of engineering. Hauskins is a controls and maintenance engineer for Nissan.

Texas
Houston

DeBorah Thigpen, Master of Arts in Organizational Management (MAOM) ’05, is currently pursuing her Doctor of Management degree and was invited to present her dissertation findings and speak at the 12th Annual Black Issues Conference at Bowling Green State University.

Nevada
Las Vegas

Pam Myers, Masters of Business Administration with a Concentration in Marketing (MBA/MKT) ’05, was hired as account executive for the pet marketing division of MassMedia Corporate Communications. Myers manages both local and national pet client accounts with day-to-day account activities, including implementing strategic marketing and public relations tactics, advertising activities and online marketing.
Facebook poll

Do you use social media for professional networking?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YES</th>
<th>73%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NO</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Results of those who responded

March poll question:

**How have you reinvented yourself and your career?**

Take our monthly Facebook poll by clicking on the new “Polls” tab on the Alumni Association Facebook page. Upcoming poll topics include environmental issues, health, global trends and entrepreneurship.

[www.facebook.com/uopxalumni](http://www.facebook.com/uopxalumni)
The University of Phoenix Alumni Association congratulates the 30 recipients of the 2010 Paying It Forward® scholarships. The recipients will be awarded full-tuition scholarships to a UOPX bachelor’s program of their choice. The Paying It Forward Scholarship program was created in 2006 to celebrate the University’s 30th anniversary and to provide continued access to higher education.

The Alumni Association would like to thank the 20 alumni volunteers who took the time to evaluate the hundreds of nominations for the Paying It Forward scholarships.

For more information, visit the Paying It Forward website at www.alumni.phoenix.edu/get-involved/scholarships.aspx.

The 2011 applications will be accepted beginning in the fall. To the right is a list of the alumni nominators and the scholarship recipients.
**2010 UOPX Academic Annual Report**

In December, University of Phoenix published its third Academic Annual Report. The 2010 report revealed University of Phoenix students rate their experience as high as or higher than students at universities around the nation. The report also contains updates on how University of Phoenix students are doing compared to their contemporaries in the areas of Information Literacy and Academic Progression. In general, the results of this year’s comparisons are similar to those reported in the past two Academic Annual Reports. Here are a few highlights of the report. To view the entire report, go to [www.phoenix.edu/academicannualreport](http://www.phoenix.edu/academicannualreport).

### National Survey of Student Engagement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NSSE Questions that relate to UOPX Learning Goals</th>
<th>UOPX FY 2009 n = 781</th>
<th>Master’s Universities and Colleges n = 68,066</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acquiring a broad general education</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acquiring job- or work-related knowledge and skills</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing a personal code of values and ethics</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thinking critically and analytically</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analyzing quantitative problems</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solving complex real-world problems</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing clearly and effectively</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking clearly and effectively</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using computing and information technology</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working effectively with others</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### UOPX Student Satisfaction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>End-of-Course Survey</th>
<th>09/2009 to 04/2010</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Faculty Effectiveness</td>
<td>92.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum Effectiveness</td>
<td>92.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Services</td>
<td>94.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Aid Services</td>
<td>89.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: University of Phoenix Student End-of-Course Surveys

### Standardized Assessment of Information Literacy Skills: 2010 Freshmen vs. Seniors

Source: SAILS

*Master’s Universities and Colleges include institutions offering baccalaureate through graduate degree programs.*
School of Business introduces PhoenixConnect℠

Now, the more than 140,000 students and faculty affiliated with University of Phoenix’s School of Business can meet, connect and share information with each other outside the classroom environment. PhoenixConnect is an online community where students and faculty—and eventually alumni—from the School of Business can connect on all things academic, professional and extracurricular.

Jorge Camargo, senior product manager at University of Phoenix, contends that the University’s students are ripe for an online networking tool. “We know that our students understand the paradigm of social networking and how it benefits collaboration,” he explains. “PhoenixConnect brings this paradigm into the academic world.”

PhoenixConnect’s user-centric design features include:

- a customizable profile that users can personalize to their specific academic and professional interests, goals and backgrounds;
- academic and professional networking with peers, classmates, faculty and alumni worldwide;
- the ability to connect with people with similar backgrounds and interests and find mentors and other personal support systems;
- tools for collaboration and discussion with a vast global community through forums and user-generated blogs;
- Recent Activity Feed, a personalized real-time feed that delivers content that users follow, as well as the most recent activity across all of PhoenixConnect and all the activity coming from your group of friends;
- Similar People recommendation widget displaying people who might be interested in connecting with others based on like attributes or groups of friends.

“PhoenixConnect also encourages user-generated content,” says Camargo, “and it features customizable privacy settings so students and faculty can feel comfortable interacting with it.”

Adds Dr. Bill Pepicello, University of Phoenix president, “With PhoenixConnect, our students now can enjoy the benefits and flexibility of an online degree program or campus classes while also making important social and professional connections to enhance their learning process and career opportunities. PhoenixConnect is an excellent addition to today’s ever-shifting learning environment, allowing members of our global community to be valuable educational resources to one another.”

In the coming year, the University plans to make PhoenixConnect available to its entire network, which is currently comprised of more than 470,000 students, 32,000 faculty members and 600,000 alumni.
Small campus with big heart
Volunteers from the campus in Jackson, Mississippi donated their time to the Jackson Metro Chapter of Habitat for Humanity. The group painted the entire interior of a home, as well as exterior shutters and doors.

Campus adopts family
The Jackson Campus adopted a local family for the holidays. The campus provided gifts including skateboards, movies, an iPod, games, dolls and books for the family of seven.

Helping ease hunger
Chicagoland Campuses collected more than 8,000 food items for the Greater Chicago Food Depository, a nonprofit food distribution and training center that aims to put an end to hunger and give back to those in need.

Harvesting meals
Lenexa Learning Center gave a helping hand to the Kansas City Harvesters. The team was assigned to Back Snack, a program that allows parents to pay $100 a year for their child’s meals throughout every weekend of the school year. The team packed more than 1,100 meals for children of the greater Kansas City area.

That’s a wrap
The Indianapolis Campus teamed up with United Way to spread some holiday cheer. The Campus adopted a family of four through the organization, and then donated 50 gifts, which were all wrapped by campus volunteers.
School gets visit from St. Nick
The North Florida Campus participated in “A Visit with St. Nick,” a sponsorship with HandsOn Jacksonville that allowed the campus to go into an at-risk school and provide books and presents to children. Each year, campus staff members go into each classroom and read the story of St. Nick to promote the importance of giving back around the holidays.

Louisville Campus dares to care
The Louisville Campus was proud to choose the DARE to CARE organization to help make a difference in the community this holiday season. Several staff members got together to organize a food drive and contribute to families in need.

Slam dunk for Kansas City
Employees from the Kansas City Campus volunteered their time for a Special Olympics basketball tournament. Volunteers helped keep score and assisted the organization with various event needs.

Distributing gifts to families
Thirty-five employees in South Carolina volunteered with The Salvation Army during the holiday season at locations in Columbia and Greenville. They assisted with sorting donations and distributing gifts to families in need.

Operation holiday cheer
The Kansas City Campus and Lenexa Learning Center collected and donated more than 200 toys for underprivileged children and teenagers in the area. With the help of Operation Breakthrough's Christmas Toy drive, more than 800 children received a holiday gift this year.

Giving for the holidays
The Detroit Campus did a lot of giving this holiday season. Employees supported Matrix Human Service, Gleaner's Food Bank and Detroit Rescue Mission Ministries by donating clothing and shoes.

Charlotte gets charitable for the holidays
Employees from the Charlotte Campus donated their time to charitable organizations in Charlotte, Asheville and Greensboro. They volunteered for The Salvation Army and also for the Men’s Shelter of Charlotte. The campus also sponsored students and their siblings from partner school, Reid Park Elementary.

Reading for service
In honor of Martin Luther King Day, the 2011 National Day of Service, volunteers from the Indianapolis Campus visited a nearby elementary school to read multiple stories to all four first grade classes.

Volunteers from the Indianapolis Campus read to students at local elementary school.

Volunteers in South Carolina are busy while volunteering for The Salvation Army.

Kansas City employees show their team spirit by volunteering for Special Olympics event.

St. Nick stops for a picture during his visit to an at-risk school.

St. Nick stops for a picture during his visit to an at-risk school.

Employees from the Charlotte Campus smile while volunteering for The Salvation Army.

Volunteers from the Indianapolis Campus read to students at local elementary school.

Volunteers in South Carolina are busy while volunteering for The Salvation Army.

Kansas City employees show their team spirit by volunteering for Special Olympics event.

Volunteers from the Indianapolis Campus read to students at local elementary school.

Volunteers in South Carolina are busy while volunteering for The Salvation Army.

St. Nick stops for a picture during his visit to an at-risk school.
community relations

Toying around
University of Phoenix employees from the Southeast Online department, based in Phoenix, Arizona, teamed up to donate more than 15,000 toys to East Valley Marine Detachment 1296 Toys for Tots. The toys were towed away in three packed trucks and distributed to children throughout Arizona.

Donating books and food
The Institute for Professional Development (IPD), a subsidiary of parent company Apollo Group, donated six large boxes of new children’s books to the Boys & Girls Clubs of Metropolitan Phoenix. IPD employees also collected several boxes of food to donate to St. Mary’s Food Bank Alliance in Phoenix.

An army of angels
The holidays were a little brighter for hundreds of people in the Phoenix Metro area this year. As part of its annual tradition, the University adopted hundreds of Salvation Army Angels. The program allows employees to provide gifts for children and seniors in the community who may not otherwise receive gifts during the holiday season.
Tackling literacy
University of Phoenix Southwest region teamed up with the Dallas Cowboys and the Dallas Independent School district to promote literacy. "Read. Play. Win!" encouraged students to read books with prizes including tickets to a Dallas Cowboys game.

Reading is a home run at Chase Field
University of Phoenix took part in the Winter Classic holiday event hosted by the Arizona Diamondbacks. Children from the Phoenix Metro area enjoyed a day of games, reading and crafts with players and executives from the Arizona Diamondbacks, as well as University of Phoenix volunteers. The Phoenix Campus and Online Division also donated hundreds of books and more than 2,000 school supplies.

Honoring heroes in the classroom
The Arizona Cardinals and University of Phoenix partnered together for the "Heroes in the Classroom" program. Twenty-four educators were honored over the course of eight weeks at Arizona Cardinals home games for their excellence in teaching.
February

4 Charlotte Campus
Phoenix at the Finn
6 p.m. to 8 p.m.
210 East Trade Street
Charlotte, NC
http://phoenixatthefinn.eventbrite.com

5 Western Washington Campus
Alumni Appreciation Night at Seattle Thunderbirds Hockey Game
5 p.m. to 10 p.m.
Showare Center
625 James Street
Kent, WA
http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/M5V6RXW

7 Utah Campus
Conversations that Promote: Growing Careers Workshop
5:45 p.m. to 9 p.m.
St. George Learning Center
965 East 700 South
St George, UT
http://growingcareersstgeorge.eventbrite.com

Wichita Campus
Conversations that Promote: Growing Careers Workshop
5:45 p.m. to 9 p.m.
Wichita Campus
3020 N. Cypress Drive
Wichita, KS
http://growingcareerswichita.eventbrite.com

8 Utah Campus
Conversations that Promote: Growing Careers Workshop
5:45 p.m. to 9 p.m.
Pleasant Grove Learning Center
2174 West Grove Parkway
Pleasant Grove, UT
http://growingcareerspleasangrove.eventbrite.com

Kansas City Campus
Diversity with Lewis Diuguid
4:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.
Kansas City Campus
901 W. 104th Street, Suite 200, Room 201
Kansas City, MO

Colorado Campus
Conversations that Promote: Growing Careers Workshop
5:45 p.m. to 9 p.m.
Colorado Campus
10004 Park Meadows Drive
Lone Tree, CO
http://growingcareerslonetree.eventbrite.com

Des Moines Campus
Conversations that Promote: Growing Careers Workshop
5:45 p.m. to 9 p.m.
Cedar Rapids Student Resource Center
3276 Queen Court SW, Suite 203
Cedar Rapids, IA
http://growingcareerscedarrapids.eventbrite.com

9 Utah Campus
Conversations that Promote: Growing Careers Workshop
5:45 p.m. to 9 p.m.
Taylorsville Learning Center
4393 South Riverboat Road
Salt Lake City, UT
http://growingcareerstaylorsville.eventbrite.com

Las Vegas Campus
Conversations that Promote: Growing Careers Workshop
5:45 p.m. to 9 p.m.
Northwest Learning Center
7951 Deer Springs Way, Suite 150
Las Vegas, NV
http://growingcareerslasvegas.eventbrite.com

Southern Colorado Campus
Conversations that Promote: Growing Careers Workshop
5:45 p.m. to 9 p.m.
Southern Colorado Campus
5725 Mark Dabling Boulevard
Colorado Springs, CO
http://growingcareerscoloradosprings.eventbrite.com

Northern Nevada Campus
Conversations that Promote: Growing Careers Workshop
5:45 p.m. to 9 p.m.
Northern Nevada Campus
10345 Professional Circle, Suite 200
Reno, NV
http://growingcareersreno.eventbrite.com
Idaho Campus
Conversations that Promote: Growing Careers Workshop
5:45 p.m. to 9 p.m.
Idaho Campus
1422 South Tech Lane
Meridian, ID
http://growingcareersmeridian.eventbrite.com

Wyoming Campus
Conversations that Promote: Growing Careers Workshop
5:45 p.m. to 9 p.m.
Fort Collins Learning Center
2720 Council Tree Avenue, Suite 200
Fort Collins, CO
http://growingcareersfortcollins.eventbrite.com

Omaha Campus
Conversations that Promote: Growing Careers Workshop
5:45 p.m. to 9 p.m.
Omaha Campus
13321 California Street, Suite 200
Omaha, NE
http://growingcareersomaha.eventbrite.com

Colorado Campus
Conversations that Promote: Growing Careers Workshop
5:45 p.m. to 9 p.m.
Turnpike Learning Center
8700 Turnpike Drive
Westminster, CO
http://growingcareerswestminster.eventbrite.com

Las Vegas Campus
Conversations that Promote: Growing Careers Workshop
5:45 p.m. to 9 p.m.
Henderson Learning Center
7777 Eastgate Road
Henderson, NV
http://growingcareershenderson.eventbrite.com

Des Moines Campus
Conversations that Promote: Growing Careers Workshop
5:45 p.m. to 9 p.m.
Des Moines Campus
6600 Westown Parkway
West Des Moines, IA
http://growingcareersdesmoines.eventbrite.com

Southern California Campus
Transcending New Boundaries
9 a.m. to 12 p.m.
Gardena Learning Center
1515 W. 190th Street, Suite 200
Gardena, CA
http://uopxgardenanewyou.eventbrite.com

Sacramento Valley Campus
Make 2011 Your Best Year Ever!
6 p.m. to 9 p.m.
Lathrop Learning Center
17000 South Harlan Road
Lathrop, CA
http://nickmontoya.eventbrite.com

March

Southern California Campus
L.A. Kings Game & Pre-game Mixer
6 p.m. to 10 p.m.
Nokia Plaza and Staples Center
800 West Olympic Blvd
Los Angeles, CA

Gary Hamel speaks at School of Business open house
Gary Hamel, an influential business thinker, speaker and author of *Leading the Revolution* and *Competing for the Future* and *The Future of Management* will speak at the University of Phoenix School of Business open house events at 106 campus locations across the country Feb. 28 to March 4, via video lecture. Alumni are invited to attend these complimentary events and participate in a faculty-led discussion with fellow alumni, students and guests in attendance. Go to www.phoenix.edu/fitforthefuture for more information and to register for your local event.
Connect with fellow alumni

facebook.com/uopxalumni
twitter.com/uopxalumni
linkd.in/uopxalumni