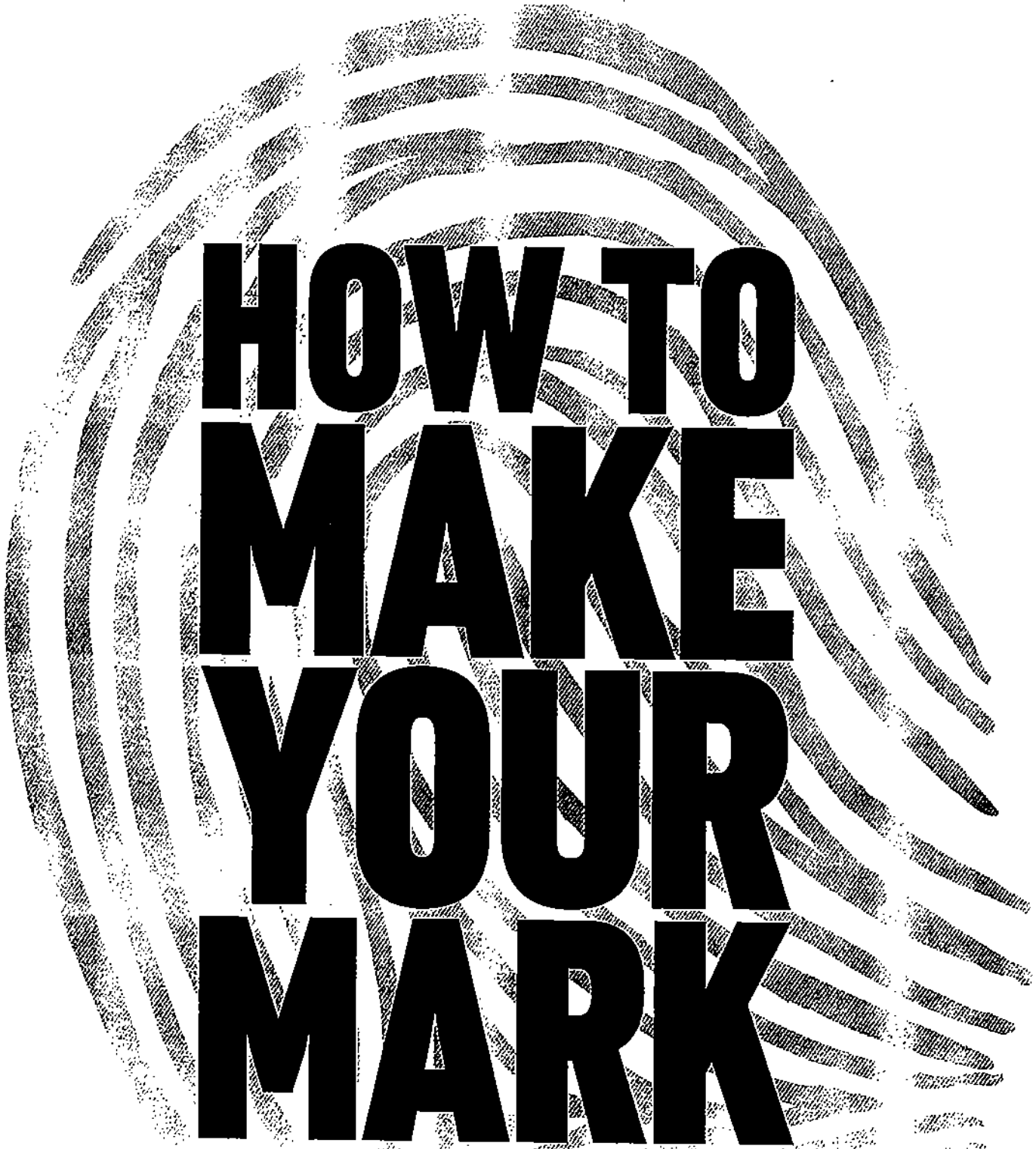


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# HOW TO MAKE YOUR MARK

THERE HAS NEVER BEEN A BETTER TIME FOR ONE PERSON, WITH BRAINS AND COMMITMENT,  
TO HAVE A HUGE IMPACT ON A COMPANY, ON AN INDUSTRY—EVEN ON THE WORLD.  
BUT HOW DO YOU MARSHAL THE RESOURCES, THE ENERGY, AND THE ALLIES YOU NEED TO HAVE THAT KIND OF EFFECT?  
HERE ARE LESSONS FROM THREE IMPACT PLAYERS WHO HAVE FIGURED OUT HOW TO MAKE A LIVING—  
AND MAKE A DIFFERENCE.

BY CHERYL DAHLE ILLUSTRATIONS BY WARD SUTTON

**"ALL THESE YEARS, I'VE BEEN SELLING PRODUCTS.  
MAYBE IT'S TIME  
TO SELL THE IDEA THAT WE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE"**

—LYNNE FRANKS (RIGHT)

**WE ALL HAVE DIFFERENT APPROACHES TO**

measuring our worth at work. Some of us tally success in dollars or promotions. Others count the problems that they've wrestled to the ground or the high-profile projects that they've led across the finish line. For others still, it's about the best team they can build or the coolest technologies they can invent. But sooner or later, in one way or another, most of us will look back on our work life and wonder, "What is my legacy? What bit of workplace graffiti did I leave behind that says, 'I was here'?"

The good news is that there has never been a better time to think big about the kind of impact you can have. "The nature of business has changed," declares John Hamm, 40, managing director of operations at Internet Capital Group (ICG), a B2B holding company that has invested hundreds of millions of dollars in entrepreneurs who are looking to make their mark in e-commerce. "It used to be that making your mark meant climbing a career ladder. It was a lot more political; it wasn't as entrepreneurial. It's not that people today are more ambitious. It's just that they can express their ambitions more openly. People get to take a shot, and that's exciting. Incidentally, that has inspired a lot of incompetent people to take a shot as well." (See "Marked for Greatness?" page 224.)

Ultimately, making your mark means making a contribution—to your company, to your professional field, to your coworkers, even to the world—by making the best use of your talents. This story is about three people from very different walks of life, in very different stages of their lives. But they have each figured out how to make their mark. The first, a PR guru turned social evangelist, aims to mass-market a new brand of feminism by creating a multimedia business juggernaut. The second is an ordinary man doing extraordinary things to help find a cure for multiple sclerosis. And the third is an inventor who understood early on the real potential of the Web and influenced the evolution of the dotcom economy. Their triumphs, setbacks, and struggles—and the lessons that they've learned along the way—reveal some of what's required to go beyond making a living and to make a difference.

**LYNNE FRANKS: ABSOLUTELY DETERMINED**

The soundstage at Channel 2 is awash in color—Grecian pillars sponge-painted in peach and salmon, violet-blue backdrops with splashes of green foliage and amber flowers. It has the upscale and fussed-over look of an interior designer's loft—not your typical TV-talk-show set of beige chairs and matching

carpeting. Lynne Franks, 52, the show's host, waits offstage for cue while the studio audience chats restlessly. She is radiant in a peach-colored, floor-length silk skirt, tunic, and frilly shawl—perfect antisuit, a conscious rejection of any corporate uniform.

Nearly three years of work has led Franks to this moment on a national platform from which to share her ideas about women in business. In the next four hours, she will tape a TV special to be aired on public television throughout the United States this spring. She will talk about her life as a British-born entrepreneur who founded what would become a world-renowned PR agency at her kitchen table when she was in her twenties, as well as about her second career as a world traveler and an ardent spokeswoman for women's issues. And she'll talk about the conclusion that she has drawn from these experiences: Women work differently from men, and to embrace those differences is to embrace an agenda of change for the workplace and for women.

Her goal is to mass-market her own brand of feminism—and in the process, to make her mark on the world.

Franks laid out her agenda in a recent best-selling book, *The SEED Handbook: The Feminine Way to Create Business* (Tarcher/Putnam, 2000), a blueprint for women entrepreneurs who want to start businesses that are values-driven, community-minded, and family-friendly. The book was the inspiration for this TV special, as well as for a plethora of multimedia and product ventures now being developed under the SEED (Sustainable Enterprise and Empowerment Dynamics) brand name, including a Web site with regular radio and video broadcasts, merchandise such as stationery and luggage, and live events and workshops.

"SEED is the Coca-Cola of women's empowerment as far as concerned," Franks says. "If I can go into supermarkets or department stores and talk to groups of women about how they can take control of their lives, whether that's through eating healthy or starting their own businesses and finding unique ways to run them, then that's very, very exciting and different. I've been to too many conferences where the same crowds of people sit around the same tables talk about the same stuff. But the question is, How do you market a new way of thinking in a way that makes women feel safe without making men feel threatened?" (See "Network Effects," page 220.)

The producer cues the applause. Franks takes a deep breath and steps into the spotlight. Actually, Franks has spent much of her life in the spotlight—but as a star maker, not as a star herself. At age 21, when she grew bored of writing articles for fashion magazines, she founded a PR company that would later become legend:



**"I'D RATHER DO SOMETHING INTERESTING,  
SOLVE AN INTERESTING PROBLEM,  
THAN DO SOMETHING BORING AND GET RICH."**

—LOUIS MONIER (LEFT)

Lynne Franks PR was the agency of choice for the trendiest fashion and entertainment personalities. The company helped launch Tommy Hilfiger, the Spice Girls, and Swatch in the UK, and Franks was the brains behind London Fashion Week. She became famous for the raucous parties that she threw, where all of the glitterati were guaranteed to show. Meanwhile, she allowed the business to push her into a cycle of 20-hour days and endless partying. Her trendy, high-stress life became the inspiration for a British cult-television show called *Absolutely Fabulous!*—a satire that strayed significantly from the facts of Franks's life, though it captured her frenetic pace.

In 1991, burned out by her high-profile, punishing lifestyle, as well as by the struggle of raising two children and rescuing a disintegrating marriage, Franks stepped back. From the outside, she appeared to have everything: wealth, fame, power, a thriving business. But she felt hollow. Where was the meaning in her work? What was she passionate about? How could she make time for the things that mattered? "There was a point when I realized that I had everything I had always wanted," Franks explains. "I had a big house, money in the bank, a huge company, and a wonderful family. But I would just run from meeting to meeting, to events, to lunch, to more meetings. I'd forgotten what it was like to be a human *being* because I was too busy being a human *doing*."

So Franks sold her business and spent five years on a spiritual journey around the world. During that time, she organized What Women Want, a musical and cultural festival featuring Sinéad O'Connor and Chrissie Hynde; fronted a women's radio station in the UK; and went on a spiritual trek that included Native American sweat lodges in Washington State, a holy mountain in India, and sacred Celtic sites in Ireland. She also did publicity for nonprofit events and met with women entrepreneurs. After five years of traveling and chronicling her voyage in her autobiography, *Absolutely Now!* (Overlook Press, 1998), Franks felt that she had finally found her calling—the way that she was intended to make her mark.

Franks's idea began to germinate when she moved to southern California in 1998 and started to work on a manifesto. The statistics that she uncovered during her research bolstered her belief that she was onto something big: There were 9.1 million women-owned businesses in the United States alone, growing at a rate of 6% per year for the past 8 years. And she learned that women-owned businesses employed 35% more people in the United States than all of the *Fortune* 500 companies employed worldwide.

Her book, which has sold more than 50,000 copies in the United States and the UK alone and which has been printed so far in three

languages, is a wide-ranging guide to running a business and living healthily. Advice about financial statements is shuffled in with sample meditations and exercises to relieve back strain. Franks discusses gearing up emotionally and building a network. Laced among the pages of full-color illustrations are workbook exercises prodding readers to list activities that "light up" their souls or ways that they can make their enterprises more environmentally sound. Ultimately, the book reflects Franks's omnivorous embrace of several major trends: the boom in women-owned businesses, the mounting interest in creating companies that shoulder social (as well as shareholder) responsibilities, the increasing importance of "feminine" skills in the workplace, and the search for a healthy integration of life and work.

Franks's prediction of where those trends will lead is truly visionary. She imagines a global network of women entrepreneurs who are actively pursuing their dreams, mentoring other women, and changing the role of business in communities all over the world. She imagines business expertise and encouragement being available to women of all income levels. She sees a consulting practice that helps companies stop losing high-performing women to entrepreneurship by making their environments more women-friendly. She sees a SEED music label for female artists—an inspirational soundtrack for women-owned businesses. She imagines a flourishing for-profit business that will allow her to channel her energy—and that of her SEED network—into helping women in poor nations become entrepreneurs.

"This is not about me," Franks says. "It's about delivering a message to women and men about the positive ways in which we can change our lives by working with our communities. All these years, I've been selling products. Maybe it's time to sell the idea that we can make a difference."

As studio-audience members file in to take their seats for the PBS taping, music begins to play over the soundstage speakers. It's the SEED theme song, written for Franks by singer Leina Marquez, her friend and personal trainer. Marquez's voice carries clear and bright across the room:

*Today is my day,  
a brand-new beginning.  
The future will blossom magnificently,  
'cause I'm planting...  
a seed.*

A catchy dance beat kicks in, and the chorus joins, sounding like a gospel choir. In the mostly female audience, shoulders rock and

**"I THINK THAT'S ONE THING THAT THE BIKE RIDE AND THE SWIM HAVE BEEN ABLE TO GIVE PEOPLE—HOPE THAT THERE ARE PEOPLE OUT THERE TRYING TO FIND A CURE."**

—NICK IRONS (RIGHT)

heads nod. The few people who have heard the song before are mouthing the words or singing along. The young man in the back feeding the script to the TelePrompTer rolls his eyes. "That song is sooo cheesy," he says. "I guess it's marketable, though."

His dismissal is harsh, and it suggests some of the challenges that Franks's idea will face. Not everyone will "get it." Some will condemn her for "selling out" by trying to mass-market SEED. Only time will tell if SEED becomes the Coca-Cola of women-owned businesses—omnipresent and powerful—or irrelevant and laughable like the macarena.

Even Franks has no idea how things will turn out. But she is certain that, win or lose in this bet that she's made, she will not confuse making her mark with making a life. "In the past two years, I've been able to write a best-selling book and launch the beginnings of a very successful multimedia-business brand that will help many people transform their lives in a positive way. And I've done all of that without feeling those same emotional highs and lows that I felt when I was achieving things in the 1980s," she says. "I don't have the sense that the business is me anymore. I care deeply and passionately about it, but I've gotten beyond the point where what I do is who I am. Work is a very important part of people, but we are bigger than what we do."

### **NICK IRONS: ORDINARY GUY, EXTRAORDINARY JOURNEY**

The day got off to a rough start for Nick Irons. He almost missed a 6 AM phone interview with an East Coast radio station because his alarm didn't go off. By chance, his brother and quasi-press manager, Andy, woke up moments before the interview was to start. He shook Irons awake and tossed a cell-phone to him for what was one of the 28-year-old's decidedly groggier interviews. Two hours later, in the lobby of rock station KISW 99.9 in Seattle, Irons arrives for his second interview of the day looking only slightly more alert.

He's there to talk to morning-show deejays Spike and Bob about his current project—a five-month, 10,000-mile bike tour of the United States to raise money for multiple-sclerosis research. For 20 years, Irons's father, John, has had the disease, a progressive nerve disorder that robs people of control of their muscles. For four years, Nick Irons has been working full time at raising money to find a cure. He has established his own nonprofit, Going the Distance for MS Research Inc., and has raised \$700,000. The bike ride is just his most recent effort. His two-day stop in Seattle is the longest break he's

taken since he started the tour three months ago in Washington, DC. So far, he has cycled more than 5,000 miles, pedaling for up to six hours a day, six days a week. It has been a grueling trip.

The producer takes Irons back to the studio to join Spike and Bob. Andy listens in on the receptionist's radio in the lobby. After they welcome Irons to the show, Spike and Bob tell him that they have "something special" planned for his visit. It seems that the other guest on today's show is a woman named Lauren who is in the running for a skin magazine's Girl Next Door award. Spike and Bob have challenged listeners to call in and give Lauren their best pickup lines. If she likes the line, the guy gets a disposable camera with nude pictures of her inside of it. And they're shooting the photos in the studio—now. Lauren takes off her shirt, and there's a moment of stunned silence after the deejays ask Irons to do the honors with the disposable camera.

Back in the lobby, Andy's jaw drops, "You gotta be kidding me!" he says. "This can't be happening." Andy watches the clock as callers ring in to woo Lauren, and the rush-hour audience slips away. It's nearly 10 AM before the deejays interview Irons. They mention the Going the Distance Web site, but given the timing, the interview is not likely to bring the results that the Ironses had anticipated.

Nick Irons leaves the studio baffled but grinning. Pausing at the elevators, he turns to Andy and starts to laugh. "That was really weird." Andy brandishes Lauren's complimentary publicity photo, which reads, "To Nick: I'm sooo impressed by the work you do! Good luck on the rest of your ride! XOXO, Lauren." Her jean shorts are around her ankles, and her bare derriere is turned toward the camera. "What makes you say that?" Andy asks sarcastically.

This is not the first time that Irons has encountered surprises along his trek. Despite scrupulous planning, his endeavor is by its very nature chaotic. He starts each day not knowing exactly how many miles he'll go, where he'll sleep that night, or how his route will change in response to traffic or construction. But it is his ability to cope with uncertainty, to commit to a goal without knowing how it will be achieved, that has allowed Irons to make his mark. An idealist to the core, he simply believed that he could do the nearly impossible—for no better reason than he decided that he would. For Irons, making his mark was about taking a leap of faith.

"When I set out with this goal of helping my dad, I had no idea what it was going to entail," he says. "I just came up with the idea and worried about the rest later. Dreams aren't exactly clear sometimes. But I was just committed to the idea."

That dream first occurred to Irons on a trip home to visit his

parents five years ago. As he flew from LA to DC, he looked out the airplane window and wondered what it would be like to swim the Mississippi River. A competitive swimmer in college, he found the idea intriguing. When he arrived home, he saw that his dad was using a cane for the first time to cope with his MS. Irons instinctively wanted to help but felt powerless. The two thoughts collided on his return trip as he began to develop a plan for his first fund-raiser—swimming more than 1,550 miles of the Mississippi River, from Minneapolis to Baton Rouge. About a year and a half passed before he stepped into the murky waters of the river, watched by a crowd of news reporters and TV cameras. It was a family project: His brother Andy preceded him in an inflatable boat; his mother, Connie, helped arrange for escort boats and press coverage; his brother John had designed a Web site to promote the swim; and his dad called ahead to hotels in small towns along the river to ask for free lodging. Four months after he began the swim, Irons arrived in Baton Rouge on his dad's birthday. Along the way, he'd garnered coverage from CNN, *Good Morning America*, and *People* magazine. He'd raised more than \$200,000 from corporate sponsors and people he'd met during the trip. None of which surprised his family one bit.

"The idea shocked me, but I never doubted from the moment he told us that he wanted to do the swim that he would do it," says his mother. "He was incredibly determined."

But others did doubt that he'd finish, and that surprised Irons. "There were so many people who told me, 'You'll never finish,'" he says. "Even when I was 50 miles from the end, someone told me that I wasn't going to make it. I'm thinking, Listen, I made it 1,500 miles. Why wouldn't I make the last 50? But the most common question all the way was, 'Are you going to make it?'"

"I felt that I wasn't going to start if I wasn't going to finish," he continues. "Of course I was going to make it. If I left the possibility open that I wasn't going to make it, then the first day that my shoulder started hurting, or the first time that we were having problems getting escort boats, it would have been too easy to give up."

The physical test of the swim and the bike ride was not the only obstacle that Irons faced. He also had to deal with the politics that come along with full-time fund-raising and nonprofit work. For the swim, Irons got little support from the National Multiple Sclerosis Society. "When Nick said that he wanted to do something special for people with MS, I thought that was great," says General Mike Dugan, the society's national president and CEO. "Then when he said that he wanted to swim the Mississippi, I smiled and thought, There's no way this guy will make it. But after he did it and came back the next

time with the idea for the bike tour, there was no smiling."

After the swim, the National Multiple Sclerosis Society Irons to its national conference and was much more help the bike tour in connecting his family to local chapters th sponsoring biking events. But the society is a loosely or volunteer organization with a financial structure that discourages chapters from helping "competing" fund-raisers: Each chapter to raise enough funds to support itself and is also required 28% of what it raises to the national headquarters.

The chapters also don't have a convenient way to share information, so Irons often found that when he contacted local chapters for help, they had never heard of him. "It's just inexcusable that no one affiliated with chapters along Nick's route knew what he was doing," says John Guandolo, who rode three legs of the trip with Irons and who also does part-time fund-raising for the society. "There isn't a sense of team where when one of us wins, we all win. Everyone is so busy scrapping for survival that the message gets lost."

For his part, Irons just took the help that he was given and moved forward. But he also made it part of his agenda to raise awareness among MS patients of their role in the fund-raising process. His ability to persuade people to become part of his vision is unclear, but much more so because he is not a particularly charismatic or eloquent speaker. He is plainspoken, but his words are heard, and his story is compelling.

"The great thing about Nick is that he's a regular guy, and people can relate to that," says Lt. Colonel Oliver L. North, who hosts a national radio show and has interviewed Irons about his swim and his bike ride. "He's just an ordinary guy doing something extraordinary."

People along Irons's bike tour have responded in kind. In July, when Irons passed through Deming, New Mexico, a local rancher organized a livestock auction as a fund-raiser. A bank in the area had a three-week-old calf to the auction and asked that the proceeds from its sale go to Irons. Irons stood in the ring holding the calf as bids came in. It sold for \$375. Then the person who bought the calf returned it to the auction to be sold again. And so did the next person. The calf was auctioned 16 times, raising more than \$6,000.

In Cedar Rapids, Iowa, locals organized a black-tie fund-raiser and persuaded one company to buy out the seats at a minor-league hockey team's Cedar Rapids Kernals game. The money went to Irons. The local hockey team also got in on the action, organizing a "skate-along" event.

When Irons finished the bike tour in late August, he had already raised more than \$500,000 toward his goal of \$3 million. Since then, he has been fund-raising in earnest, speaking to the public about

journey. He knows that ultimately, \$3 million toward researching a cure for MS is only a drop in the bucket. But his real impact and mark on the world won't be measured in dollars.

To Irons, the real effect of his contribution is more subtle. "Among MS patients, there really was no hope out there that a cure was on the way. I've been able to draw people's attention to the medications and research out there. I think that's one thing that the bike ride and the swim have been able to give people—hope that there are people out there trying to find a cure."

Shortly before Irons hit Seattle during the bike tour, he received an email from a woman his own age who had been diagnosed with MS two years earlier. She had read that pregnancy often worsens MS and had decided for that reason not to have children. She also did not want to burden her children with her illness. Then she read about Irons in *USA Today*. "She said that she thought about what a caring relationship I must have with my dad to do this and that if we had been able to find so much good despite his illness, then that was worth the risk for her," says Irons. "She changed her mind." Irons smiles his regular-guy grin: "I'd do it all over again just for that one person."

### **LOUIS MONIER:** SUCCESS AT WHAT PRICE?

Louis Monier and his wife live in a modest three-bedroom home in a suburb just off of famed Sand Hill Road in Silicon Valley. But even with northern California's soaring real-estate prices, the house could not be mistaken for that of a dotcom millionaire. By now, Monier's wife, Evelyne Monjoin, is used to the puzzled glances of her guests when she greets them at the door. "People who are familiar with Louis's background assume that by inventing AltaVista, he got very rich," she says, laughing good-naturedly. "That's not the case at all."

It's one of the ironic twists of the world of Net companies that fortune is not necessarily linked to achievement. There are plenty of dotcom-ers who flipped companies based on bad ideas and even worse technologies who are parking their brand-new Porsches in garages on Half Moon Bay. And then there are people like Louis Monier—one of the architects of the Web as we know it today, co-creator and guardian of one of the Internet's best-known brand names, and owner of a three-year-old Acura. But don't feel sorry for him; he certainly doesn't.

From Monier's perspective, AltaVista was perhaps the project of a lifetime—a satisfying moment when an inspiration became a

technology that affected people's lives. Even if Internet history day records AltaVista as one of the Web's biggest missed opportunities, Monier will not regret the five years that he spent nurturing his invention and protecting it from the ineptitude of the company that owned it. His commitment to the technology, and to his team, allowed him to make his mark in ways that were more important to him than cashing in.

"I had a very strong sense of ownership and responsibility for what I saw as my baby, my creation," says Monier, 44. "I am a researcher at heart, and what I care about most is solving problems. With AltaVista, I was able to see my experiment all the way to the end. I suppose I could have just taken one of the offers and joined another search engine or portal, and I would have been a lot richer today. It probably would have been less painful—and less interesting—than sticking with AltaVista. But I don't think I would have learned as much."

Monier, a soft-spoken, teddy bear of a guy with unruly black hair, grew up in a small town in France, where he dreamed of becoming an astronomer. After earning his doctorate in mathematics and computer science, he came to the United States in 1980 to do research at Carnegie Mellon University. Three years later, he went to work at the renowned Xerox PARC. He spent six years there building experimental tools to design silicon chips before joining Digital Equipment Corp.'s (DEC) research lab in Palo Alto, where his mandate was to "invent the future."

He dabbled in chip research for a few more years and then turned his attention to the fledgling Internet. The DEC lab was home to some of the earliest Net heads, and after poking around the Web with his colleagues, Monier recognized the need for a search engine that could move faster to catalog the burgeoning online content. In the spring of 1995, he put himself through a two-week crash course on the Internet, pestering researchers to teach him what they knew.

By summer of that year, he had a working version of what he called a "crawler," or "spider." Instead of fetching pages one at a time, as traditional search engines did, his search engine, dubbed "Scooter," could query for thousands of pages at once—and not tie up Web servers while doing it. His prototype was a thousand times faster than any other search engine at the time. He coupled it with another researcher's index system, and AltaVista was born.

He put the new engine up internally at DEC, and the response was immediate. "Through word of mouth, this thing just went crazy," he says. "I started getting a huge amount of feedback internally from people saying, 'I've never seen anything like that.' Salespeople were

telling me, 'It's a competitive advantage. I can find everything about everything.' That gave me the incentive to put on a suit, fly to the East Coast, and ask for some money to do the real thing—which meant getting one of those big servers and putting my idea on the Web."

Monier got his hardware. He set the launch date for December 15, 1995, and the day before, 200,000 people visited the site—even though he hadn't announced the Web address. "This thing just exploded," Monier says. "We had traffic going up day by day. We had press coverage. We had analyst coverage. We never spent a penny. We saturated the machine in a matter of days, so we had to order new processors, memory, and everything else. Before Christmas, we were saying, 'We've got to do something to get a second machine.'"

For Monier, this stretch of time went by in a blur of adrenaline. He was riding a creative high and learning more each day about Internet users. He was both inventor and customer-service desk, and he thrived on the contact that he had with real people who emailed or called to say that AltaVista had helped them locate a long-lost cousin or a childhood friend. Of course, not all of the feedback that he got was positive. There was the phone call from a military agency demanding to know how he got access to its classified Web server. (As it turned out, a sloppy supplier had publicly listed the link on its site.)

There was also a late-night call from a panicked man in Canada who'd realized that some postings that he'd made on a discussion forum for gays had been indexed by AltaVista. He was frantic at the thought that some of his coworkers might find the index and out him. "I felt awful," Monier says. "There's much more understanding now about the public nature of the Web. But back then, it was not so clear, and people didn't realize that such a powerful technology was searching the whole Web. I didn't want to hurt anybody. So I spent a good chunk of the night writing a program that would make some pages disappear from the index."

Monier wound up developing a bond with his users that led him to fight ardently against on-site advertisements and non-user-centric changes. He began to think of himself not as just a researcher and a technical person, but also as an advocate.

That December was the beginning of four very long years for Monier. He worked six days a week from 9 AM to midnight, answering emails, tweaking the search engine, and improving the technology. "It went on and on and on," says his wife, Monjoin. "I didn't want him to get off the project because I understood what it meant to him. At the same time, I could see the stress that he was going through because of the lack of support."

Meanwhile, executives within DEC mulled over what to do about

the overnight success of an emerging business that none of them understood. And Monier was learning that his role as an advocate for users carried little weight in business discussions. "I couldn't influence AltaVista's future," he says. "I could throw all of the most amazing technology on it, but I couldn't make a basic business decision. I was not empowered to do that. Looking back, I see that the chances of success were really slight, smaller than I realized at the time. DEC was not exactly a stronghold of Internet luminaries."

Jumping into the IPO mania of the time, DEC decided to spin off AltaVista as a separate company with Ilene Lang, a recruit from Lotus, at the helm. Lang picked several other pieces of Internet-based DEC software and grouped it all under the AltaVista brand name. From Monier's perspective, it was a way for bad software to get a free ride on the brand that he'd built—a claim that he says was borne out in the fact that the search engine generated the largest share of the division's revenues but required only a fraction of the staff of the other products. Lang defends the strategy and counters that AltaVista produced just about a third of the division's revenues.

By this time, most of Monier's energy was used up fighting over advertising, user specs, and vision—so much so that when engineer Eric Billingsley joined the AltaVista team in 1996 as a Webmaster for one of the software sites, he was warned that Monier was a "scary guy" whom he should try to avoid. But when Billingsley met Monier and heard his take on what AltaVista's strategy should be, he thought that Monier was the only one talking sense. He joined Monier as a technical caretaker for the search engine.

In the summer of 1997, DEC pulled the plug on the planned IPO and brought AltaVista back into the company fold, in part, Lang says, as a last-ditch effort to save the business by turning it into an "Internet-solutions company." Frustrated by the move, Lang left DEC and later joined a startup.

"When we were brought back into Digital, we were never given a status," Monier says. "I didn't even know what to put on my business card. Was it the AltaVista Division? Group? Soon-to-be spin-off? Everything was totally fuzzy. Nobody at DEC really understood what we were doing. But they were afraid to kill it, because it seemed to get a lot of publicity. Doing nothing was definitely a multibillion-dollar mistake."

Both Monier and Billingsley fell into a holding pattern, hoping that something good would happen with the site and periodically getting excited about rumors and apparent progress only to be disappointed again. "We spent three and a half years waiting for the next six months," Billingsley says.



# NETWORK EFFECTS

THE GALLERY IS STIFLING. THE LAST RAYS OF AFTERNOON SUN ARE BEATING through the windows of the converted townhouse in San Francisco's South of Market neighborhood, and the guests at the SEED reception are fanning themselves with invitations. Lynne Franks is fluttering amid the crowd like a hummingbird, alighting here and there for brief conversations before flying off to the next person. She is typically up-to-the-minute fashionable in a purple silk skirt with embroidered trim that is drawing envious glances from the twenty-something women.

Welcome to networking, Lynne Franks style. It is a distinctly feminine model, more about connection and inclusion than deals and impressions. Before the night is over, Franks will have recruited a writer to work on SEED radio, met several potential content partners for her Web site, introduced three recent transplants to the Bay area to one another, and given out multiple restaurant suggestions. Her ability to link friends to one another as well as to herself accounts for the strength, breadth, and warmth of her network.

That ability is not surprising given her public-relations background. After all, every "spinmeister" has a great Rolodex. But what is surprising is that there is no spin. In Franks's conversations, as well as in her work and books, there is a bold vulnerability. She is aspirational, to be sure, but also trendy to a fault—likely one moment to tout the marvels and morals of organic-cotton clothing and the next to fawn over the latest Louis Vuitton handbag. Her willingness to confess, share, and laugh at it all establishes an instant intimacy and a ring of truth that people—especially women—respond to readily. Call it the "Oprah effect."

That ability to link people from disparate parts of her world has resulted in some unique partnerships. Two years ago, Franks stumbled upon a World Bank project that had organized a knitting group made up of Bosnian and Serbian women. Despite their cultural differences, the women's common pastime united them and offered them a chance to support their families. Franks took samples of the knitting to several designers she knew in the United States and in the UK. As a result, some of the world's trendiest designers are sending patterns to the women and commissioning work. Before Franks connected the group, it was bringing in about \$2,000 per month. Now its revenues are in the hundreds of thousands per month.

"Can you imagine what kind of difference we could make if we had millions of women and men looking for opportunities to connect people in the same way?" Franks asks. She's building the network to make that happen.

In January 1998, DEC was bought by Compaq, and Monier once again entertained hopes that the sale would get AltaVista the attention that he felt it deserved. But those hopes died when Compaq announced that its strategy would be to make the AltaVista site into a portal to compete with Yahoo! "I thought that was silly," Monier says. "The world did not need another Yahoo! This is like running behind the fastest guy in the world, and he's got two seconds on you. Why? Do something else. Claim that speed is nothing. Say that it's all about strength, and then go lift weights."

Monier left, and more than half of his team followed. Sixteen people, including Billingsley, tracked him down and signed on for his next project: building the security and infrastructure for Bigvine.com, a pre-IPO startup that's setting up a barter economy.

Monier spent a year at Bigvine and then left in June 2000 to take a much-needed sabbatical. His theory on the futility of competing with Yahoo! was eventually proven in September when AltaVista, now owned by CMGI, announced plans to abandon the portal race and laid off more than 200 people. Although Monier was disappointed that AltaVista never became what it might have as a business, he sees now that the context of the big, slow company would never have allowed him to make a mark of a different sort. "In my dark moments, I think that I should have just taken one of the offers I got from other search engines or portals and become one of those dotcom millionaires," he says. "But no, it doesn't stick. I'd rather do something interesting, solve an interesting problem, than do something boring and get rich."

Despite AltaVista's lost business opportunities, most followers of Internet history recognize that the search engine's effect on the Web was profound. "It revolutionized who looked at the Internet," Billingsley says. "Before AltaVista, the Net was primarily used by people at research institutions. But once people realized how much deep information was out there and that they had access to it, the Net audience broadened."

For his part, Monier is content to be known for his role in developing the site—a status that guarantees him a continuous stream of opportunities from venture capitalists to regain that lost chance to strike it rich with a startup. "I don't mind being known as the founder or creator of AltaVista. That's a pretty good thing," Monier says. "If in 20 years I'm known *only* as that, I'll be a little disappointed. So I've got a couple of years to do something better." \*

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