



Have the courage to be successful

Tony Golobic/GreatAmerica Leasing

By Ruth Paarman

“I always wanted to build an organization that would be so good that it would have no competition,” says Tony Golobic, chairman, president and CEO of GreatAmerica Leasing Corp. “In other words, the standards for excellence are so high that everyone else is not in the same business.”

And so, after 27 years of working in the corporate world and never quite being able to do what he believed would drive his employer to the next level of success, Mr. Golobic took the plunge and started his own business in 1992.

“Some people never make this jump because they are too comfortable,” notes Mr. Golobic. “You need to want success badly enough — you need to have some strong will and you need to have the courage to be successful.”

The CPA and University of Chicago MBA worked in Chicago for 17 years, serving as senior vice president of Mellon Financial Services. He arrived in Cedar Rapids to be president of LeaseAmerica Corp., which was acquired by GE Capital. Mr. Golobic then took the role of general manager for GE Capital Office Technology Financial Services before starting GreatAmerica Leasing Corp.

Mr. Golobic believes passion, resilience and self-respect are key personality traits of entrepreneurs.

“All those traits make you strong,” he says. “You have to believe to get you through periods of doubt and adversity.”

Other good qualities include:

“Having a strong personality and possessing some leadership abilities. Being a caring person — caring not only about your self and your family, but also about employees, customers and community.”

Mr. Golobic identifies two general camps of entrepreneurs.

“A huge majority of entrepreneurs fall into the category where they want to start a business, sell it and make a lot of money,” he says. “Others, like me, build an organization that is differentiated from others, something to be proud of and that will last long after I am not here anymore. That’s really what motivated me.”

Challenges for entrepreneurs are many, but he indicated that during the initial startup phase, stress is plentiful and it must be managed.

“I think the greatest stress comes from the fact that employees and their families depend on the success of the company you’re starting,” he says.

To cope with personal stress, Mr. Golobic gets physical, running three to four times per week. What else mitigates stress?

“Fun — if you allow laughter and create fun things at work,” he says.

“I think the big reason for our success is that I believe in our people and creating an environment where employees feel involved and responsible for our success,” he adds.

“Choosing the right people and believing in them is probably the biggest lesson I learned,” Mr. Golobic noted of his experience with GreatAmerica Leasing Corp.

He is matter-of-fact in doling out advice to potential business owners.

“I believe this: It doesn’t take a rocket scientist to be successful in business. Just follow the basic principles of business,” he says. “Have the genuine interest of customers and employees and suppliers in your mind. If you do that and have a well-thought-out business plan and sufficient financial resources, you will do well.”

Also, be passionate. “If you’re not passionate, you are going to have a lot harder time,” he says.

If Mr. Golobic has any regrets, it would be that he didn’t start his entrepreneurial journey sooner.

“I wish I would have done this earlier in my life, but I probably wasn’t ready.” He says that one day, he just knew it was time. “All of the sudden, I said, ‘Let’s do it.’”

Mr. Golobic seems clearly driven to proceed on his chosen path. “[I plan on] continuously building this organization and possibly starting other organizations. I plan to work until I die.”

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— *Tony Golobic*

