

# Ivey Entrepreneur

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## David Wright, HBA '83 A Champion of Ivey Entrepreneurship

*On September 13, 2018, we lost a dear friend in David Wright, HBA '83. During the past 15 years, Wright was an integral part of Ivey Entrepreneurship, and served in multiple roles, including chairing the Advisory Council for over a decade. At Ivey's 2018 Homecoming celebration, Wright was recognized posthumously with the Distinguished Service Award.*



"The world is small and the road is long," was the motto that shaped much of David Wright's outlook on life.

It highlighted the importance of developing strong, authentic relationships, not knowing when and where you will run into the same people again.

Wright's commitment to relationships defined his personal and professional life. From his love of family, lifelong friendships, and an unmistakable passion for entrepreneurship, Wright wasn't a man of half-measures.

### **Lifelong bonds at university**

Wright's undergraduate years at Western University coincided with those of his sister, Karen Wright, MBA '84, who was completing her MBA at the Ivey Business School. She was able to reuse some of his textbooks and joked that they were in very good condition due to rare use.

His time at university was not only influential in charting his career but it was there, at Sydenham Hall, he forged lifelong friendships that survived graduation, marriage, kids and multiple career changes.

Wright was the great communicator and it was his efforts that kept everyone together, according to best friend Barry Katzman.

continued on next page

## InstituteBuzz



InstituteBuzz

By **Eric A. Morse**

Ron and Nancy Clark Chair in Entrepreneurship

Special Advisor to the President and Director of Entrepreneurship

Executive Director, Pierre L. Morissette Institute for Entrepreneurship

**This fall season has been typified by great strides and great losses for our team at Ivey Entrepreneurship.**

In November, we joined our partners across Western University in celebrating Global Entrepreneurship Week. We had a number of speaker events, workshops as well as a startup showcase, to inspire and inform the university and local community about the great things Western entrepreneurs are doing. Next year, we will plan for more events and even greater involvement from departments across Western. A highlight of the week was our TED-style talks where we heard stories and life lessons from a diverse set of entrepreneurs. A special thanks to Sam Sebastian (CEO, Pelmorex Corp), Stephanie Ciccarelli, (Founder and Chief Brand Officer, Voices.com), Kevin Sullivan (Co-founder, GMP Securities), Shannon Kamins (Founder, Booch Organic Kombucha), Jenessa Olson, MSc'18 (Co-founder, STMNT) and Liana Louzon, (CEO, Rocking Vibe) for their transparency, and their inspiring words.

We also concluded another session of our New Venture Project, where we had over 200 HBA and MBA students pitch their final presentations. It's an experience that often influences their career trajectory, and we hope the validation of their ideas leads them on an entrepreneurial path.

Lastly, we said goodbye to two treasured friends of entrepreneurship at Ivey. David Wright was a stalwart of Ivey Entrepreneurship, having served the board for 15 years, most of them as Chair. Dave also served as an Entrepreneur-in-Residence and gave of his time freely to nascent Ivey Entrepreneurs. We also lost our dear friend, Paul Woolford, who was a partner and friend in growing our Quantumshift™ program for high growth entrepreneurs across Canada. His loss is felt by all of us and the hundreds of Quantumshift™ alum he knew so well.

As we continue to move forward as an institute and a community, I am forever thankful for knowing Dave and Paul. Their efforts, and the efforts of so many of you, are reflected in how far Ivey Entrepreneurship has come over the past decade.



“Dave did the whole thing himself, he paid for it himself, he charted his career by himself. His father-in-law, David Vice, and a few other people helped guide him. He’d be the first to tell you that every great entrepreneur has to do a lot of it on their own, to self-motivate and self-direct, and he had that in spades.”

**Barry Katzman**, BA '83, President and CEO at Tidal Health Solutions

Together, Wright and Katzman won the Spirit Award for the best residence and threw what could be termed as the party of the decade at their 1097 Richmond Street residence.

“It was the first ever party that closed the street and it became a thing in the 80s... We knew right away that we could work well together and joked about it forever,” said Katzman.

Wright also treasured his years at Ivey and would go on to serve in multiple capacities to give back to the school and the entrepreneurship program.

#### **Accountant to entrepreneur**

With both his parents in small business, Wright was frequently exposed to entrepreneurship growing up. From working in his father’s bicycle store to the summer ventures with his cottage friends, Wright was always eager to pursue an opportunity.

Wright graduated into a tough job market, recalls his sister, and he pursued accounting as an opportunity for additional training and making contacts. He joined an accounting firm that would later become part of KPMG and then spent eight years at Nortel Canada.

“I would never envision Dave lasting too long in a large corporate environment, he would more often than not be smarter than his boss,” said Katzman. In 1994, Wright joined Microsoft when it was on top of the world. The relationships he made at the company would lay the foundation for his later success as an entrepreneur.

With the bursting of the dot-com bubble in the late 90s, Wright was restructured out of Microsoft. He was hired as President of a Toronto-based software company, Sage Information Consultants, where he grew the company to be acquired by Envoy Communications.

A confluence of political and economic factors derailed Envoy’s U.S. expansion, leading Wright, Paul Estabrooks and Kevin Walker to form Agora Consulting Partners Inc. in 2002.

“Agora was about helping other businesses be successful and it made complete sense with his nature,” said Karen about the 16 year old company.

“Dave did the whole thing himself, he paid for it himself, he charted his career by himself. His father-in-law, David Vice, and a few other people helped guide him. He’d be the first to tell you that every great entrepreneur has to do a lot of it on their own, to self-motivate and self-direct, and he had that in spades.” – Barry Katzman, BA '83, President and CEO at Tidal Health Solutions

#### **Tooting the horn for entrepreneurship**

With the success of Agora, Wright was eager to help students and alums take the same plunge and discover their entrepreneurial capacity.

In 2003, he joined the Ivey Entrepreneurship Advisory Council, where he took on the role of Chair from David Anyon, MBA '97 in 2009.

One of his key tasks was to recruit and onboard key members into the council, which complemented his commitment to relationships. He was eager to create a community that challenged each other, and were passionate to see entrepreneurship grow across Ivey and Canada.

Wright also worked on the ground level, volunteering on student initiatives and programs like the New Venture Project, where he served as an Entrepreneur-in-Residence. He loved seeing the enthusiasm and hope imbued by the younger generation. Former students will often tell you about the authenticity that came through his thoughtful and caring advice.

“It didn’t matter who you were, he made everyone feel important,” said Karen, whether you were white collar, blue collar, an executive or a student.

Wright’s long tenure at the council never dulled his enthusiasm, and he will forever be remembered as a stalwart of

entrepreneurship at Ivey, said Eric Morse, Executive Director of the Pierre L. Morrisette Institute for Entrepreneurship.

“Dave’s character was admired by all who met him, particularly his positive, ‘can-do’ attitude and willingness to always put others before himself. His many efforts over the past decade are reflected in the tremendous growth and success of entrepreneurship at the Ivey Business School.”

#### **Leaving a culture**

That sense of commitment carried through to other parts of Wright’s life.

“When he decided to jump into something, he went all in,” said Katzman, who recalls Wright reading three books on windsurfing prior to taking up the sport.

“He brought the same thing to fatherhood, the same thing to being a husband,” said Katzman.

Wright was intensely loyal to his family. He coached kid’s basketball and shared his love for music with his daughters, for whom he wanted to open every opportunity, said Karen.

Estabrooks remembers the early days of Agora when Wright took time off to attend school plays and other activities. “It created a culture in our company and I get it now,” says Estabrooks, who now has four kids of his own.

It was often tested when employees took off for school events in the midst of major projects and Wright would remind the team, “It is the culture we created and the culture holds... this is what we wanted,” recalls Estabrooks.

“At the celebration of his life, his kids spoke about all the events he came to, and they now hold that memory. Did he miss a client meeting or a conference because of it? Yeah, maybe. But what matters more now?” said Estabrooks.

Wright’s immortal line, ‘the road is long’ continues to permeate Agora’s culture and attitude towards customers, says Estabrooks.

“His presence is always there, and it’s not going to go away.”

# Ian Haase, MBA '10 – Getting back on the saddle with Motif

## ENTRENEURPROFILE



For eight years, **Ian Haase, MBA '10**, had the best of both worlds. He had the excitement of engaging with young entrepreneurs on a daily basis, with the added bonus of a secure job. So what inspired Haase to get back in the saddle with a cannabis company named Motif?

With the legalization of recreational cannabis, Haase has sat through numerous pitches seeking to score big in the new market, but Motif caught his eye.

He was impressed with the founding team, and thought their business model had merit. After a few months of working closely with Motif in a mentorship capacity, Haase decided to make the leap to join them fulltime in 2018.

### Motif's unique play

Motif co-founder Mario Naric (pictured right) was working at Imperial Oil when a confluence of circumstances helped lead him to a unique opportunity within the cannabis industry; one that aligned perfectly with his skillset as a chemical (process) engineer.

Health Canada set up a number of licenses to regulate the industry, such as cultivation, processing and retail licenses. Motif is one of the few applicants for a standard processing license.

"We noticed that the first hundred licenses to be granted were almost entirely for cultivation, as that is the starting point to enter the industry" said Haase. By focusing on the extraction of oil from cannabis, Motif can tap into the consumer demand that is moving away from the actual flower, said Haase.

Extracting cannabis oil is a complex process. With significant capital costs, a lack of skilled extraction experts, and additional government licensing timelines, extraction might not be a viable option for those concentrating on cultivation.

"Our model exists to make their lives easier. We have the equipment and process dialed in, and maintaining high utilization rates will

ensure that we are able to extract oil from cannabis cheaper than the cultivators could achieve with an in-house solution."

### Taking a second dip

Haase's first foray into entrepreneurship was a tech startup in 2003, stemming from his MSc research on infectious disease transmission. The company came to an abrupt end with the 2008 financial crisis, and there was always a feeling of 'unfinished business.'

That feeling came to the fore as Haase turned 40 this year.

"My version of a midlife crisis isn't a sports car, its jumping back into another startup... it has been almost 10 years since I was in this world and it just felt like the right time (to get back in)."

This time around, he feels more prepared. With a formal business education at Ivey, and eight years spent mentoring hundreds of ventures across multiple industries, Haase has amassed his own library of real-world cases.

"I think if you operate in this world you have to walk the walk. I have been mentoring so many young people, encouraging them to pursue their passion while they are young. It feels like the right time to step back into the startup world and lead by example."

### Motif's road ahead

As they wait on the approval of their license, Haase sees government regulation as one of their biggest challenges. There's still a lack of clarity on how things will shape up for the industry.

For example, businesses in the cannabis industry still struggle to access traditional financing for equipment through major banks or lending agencies.

With the legalization of concentrated products (for the recreational market) nearly a year away, he feels Motif has plenty of runway to prepare themselves.

During the next few months, Haase and Naric will be raising capital to purchase equipment and build out their facility in Aylmer, Ontario. They will also be signing up licensed cultivators for oil processing services, and are hoping to start hiring early next year.

Additionally, Motif is looking to invest heavily in R&D, citing the unique research opportunity they have with Canada being the first G7 country to legalize cannabis.

Making use of the government funding available, Motif is working with Lambton College, Fanshawe College and the University of Guelph to unlock intellectual property in improving extraction efficiency, vaporizer hardware, as well as the process of emulsifying cannabinoid oils for specific products.

In an industry that is going to commoditize, margins will get smaller, possessing in-house IP will give Motif a sustainable, competitive advantage, according to Haase.

Trying to predict who makes it and who doesn't is a humbling job and Haase knows that better than most. If passion and experience are any indicators, Motif seems well positioned to beat the odds.

# IGNITING THE PASSION FOR ENTREPRENEURSHIP AT WESTERN



Each year, thousands of students and entrepreneurs in 170 countries gather to celebrate Global Entrepreneurship Week. In 2018, with the growth of entrepreneurship initiatives across Western University, it was the perfect opportunity for us to join this celebration with speaker events, workshops and a startup showcase. The Lightning Round on November 15, 2018 brought together entrepreneurs working in corporate, startup, and social enterprises with a variety of educational backgrounds.



**Jonathan McCain**, HBA '07 (right) and CEO of Andover Capital and Northstar Scaffold talks with Dave Simpson of Ivey's Entrepreneurship Institute.

## Here are some inspiring highlights from the evening:

"Big shots are little shots that keep shooting" is a piece of advice from his father during Sam Sebastian's days as a top university tennis player. It is a quote that continued to shape his journey with Google and now leading Pelmorex Corp. Sam Sebastian, Pelmorex Media Inc., and formerly Vice President, Google and Managing Director, Google Canada.

"Know yourself, feed yourself, connect yourself," said Stephanie Ciccarelli of Voices.com (Western Bachelor of Music), as she broke down the essentials of being a successful entrepreneur.

Shannon Kamins started brewing Kombucha at home, a fermented tea that she describes as her canvas to express herself. Today, she produces more than 4,000 litres of Kombucha a week. Shannon Kamins, Booch Organic Kombucha, Western Bachelor of Health Sciences.

"Don't get caught in thinking your mousetrap is better. Build the business and execute well," said Kevin Sullivan, GMP Securities, who has worked with thousands of startups during the last 20 years. He holds a Western Bachelor of Arts (Social Science) and Western LLB.

"Run your own race, work all the way to the finish line and know why you are doing what you are doing," said Jenessa Olson of STMNT, a social entrepreneur tackling the negative impact of fast fashion. She holds a Western Bachelor of Arts (Political Science) and an MSc in International Business from Ivey.

"You are unique and significant, just like the crystals I work with," said Liana Louzon of Rocking Vibe, who encouraged students to embrace who they are and the unique qualities and gifts they bring to the table. Louzon has a Bachelor of Arts in Kinesiology.



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