

DECADE ONE. NEVER DONE.

BY FELICIA FULLER

Dan Stammen
Chief Executive Officer



Wayne Nugent
Co-founder & Chief Visionary Officer

cross cultures, turning 10 is a time of transition – a rite of passage, a coming of age. Potential unfolds, resilience takes root and glimpses of the future come into focus. It’s through this prism that Wayne Nugent and Dan Stammen view the 10th anniversary of WorldVentures, born December 10, 2005. Only one-third of businesses live to see this day, and they are beyond proud. But amid all the revelry, Wayne and Dan are planning for the decades to come.

“Outside our walls, the world is undergoing transition. Just read the headlines,” Wayne says. “The solution now, as it was when we started, is to bootstrap the business the old-fashioned way – through innovation. Our DreamTrips app and DreamTrips Local initiative are a great start and just a sampling of the ingenuity among our team. They represent small victories, and as a wise man once said, small victories motivate bigger ones while helping to maintain the pace of change.”

If there’s one thing Wayne and Dan know, it’s how to meet challenges head on. When they met more than two decades ago, each had weathered the ebb and flow of network marketing and emerged as leaders in their respective organizations. With Wayne amassing a sales force of 40,000 on one shore and Dan banking five figures monthly on another, their merging tides formed the perfect storm in 2005. Together with the strategic leadership of Eddie Head and the executive team, they’ve built a vacation and entertainment club supercell unmatched in the industry.

“We make each other better – like iron sharpening iron,” Wayne explains. “It’s amazing what you can accomplish when you don’t care who gets the credit. It’s Biblical – pride cometh before the fall. If, at any point, pride started showing, it would tear us apart from the inside.”

Dan and Eddie are on the same page. The trio agrees more often than not, but it takes more than accord to build a successful business. Profit, though second to people, is the most accurate of economic barometers. From that perspective, too, the company is solid. As WorldVentures commemorates its diamond anniversary, leadership reports four consecutive years of record-setting revenue and an impressive three-year growth rate.

For six consecutive years, *Direct Selling News* magazine (DSN) has named WorldVentures among its Global 100 – an annual listing of the most influential public and private direct-selling companies in the world. The company also ranks 25 on the newly created DSN North America 50. Last fall, DreamTrips Vacation Club was honored as the Leading Travel Club in Africa, Europe and Asia for the second time in as many years. And if that weren’t enough, *Inc.* magazine listed WorldVentures among the “5,000 Fastest-Growing Private Companies in America” for 2014 and 2015.

“We’re doing well today because of what we did yesterday,” Wayne explains. “So much of that is being humble, playing as a team and caring about the person next to you.” The key to continued success, he adds, is “not to believe our own press.”

Dan echoes that sentiment: “The common denominator is we have a lot of good, sincere, humble, nice people. The people who’ve had the big egos around here, the ones who thought the world revolved around them, have not lasted.”

ROOTED IN RESILIENCE

Hard work and discipline are principles Wayne and Dan embraced early in life. As one of eight children, Dan was born to working-class parents in Sarasota, Florida, where he learned the value of a dollar at the tender age of 10.

“My parents had no money. If I wanted something, I had to go get it,” he says. “I was selling candy at 10, and then, at 12, I had a paper route with 150 papers. I got up to 300. By the time I was in ninth grade, I worked a 40-hour week at the grocery store, 2 to 10 o’clock, four days a week and all day Saturday. I paid cash for my first car.”

Similarly, Wayne grew up poor in Houston and remembers his folks collecting aluminum cans for cash and still not having enough to keep the utilities on. Though his father later found his fortune in real estate and lifted his family out of poverty, Wayne never forgot his roots.

“I still had to work,” he asserts. “That was my dad’s money, not my money. Fortunately, I grew up with the right books laying around. When you have money, don’t feel guilty about it if you earned it by working with, for and in the service of other people, and if you’re giving back to society.”

Wayne and Dan’s home-grown values, real-world experiences and self-effacing transparency endear them to the legions of WorldVentures Representatives who rely on their leadership. Reps see themselves in their stories, and it reaffirms their belief that anything is possible if they persevere.



“I used to be a construction worker before I got into network marketing ... I never got a college degree,” Dan says. “Then I got involved in one company that went from zero to 500 million in five years. Before I turned 23, I had checks for 18 to 20,000 per month.”

A rags-to-riches climb so steep is not for the faint of heart. Dan’s grit and resolve resonated with Wayne when he launched his search for a CEO to help lead WorldVentures.

OFFER OF A LIFETIME

“I had sold my network marketing business in the legal insurance arena and was flipping houses in Florida when Wayne came calling,” Dan reflects. “He and I were in another travel-oriented MLM, and the business was building rapidly. Then he called me and said he wanted to start his own company. I remember talking to my wife and saying, ‘If there’s a guy who can pull it off, he is the guy.’ Wayne knew more about network marketing travel than anyone, having been a consultant, top rep and an owner of his own company, travelling a lot himself and having a nucleus of people, a team of 40,000 he recruited into another company within 12 months.”

In a burst of revelation, Dan also said to his wife: “Wouldn’t it be cool if what he envisions is to build a company where you’re literally traveling around the world with family and friends experiencing fun, freedom and fulfillment?”

Perhaps subconsciously, Dan recalled “fun, freedom and fulfillment” was Wayne’s personal moniker. Or maybe this was an ethereal “great minds think alike” moment. Either way, the rest is history. Fun, freedom and fulfillment would become — not just a tagline — but a guiding core value and the embodiment of

the WorldVentures brand. But going back to that moment 10 years ago, Dan didn’t have to ponder Wayne’s proposal for long.

“Had it been anyone else, I would have been doing a forensic analysis to determine his threshold for spending to start the business,” Dan says with a smile. “But Wayne had done well for years. Besides, he’s like the Pied Piper of network marketing travel. People want to follow him and be around him. It was just a gut feeling that it could work. So we went to work.”

GETTING DOWN TO BUSINESS

With vision and clarity, the founding team set out to disrupt the industry and change the world in 2005 under the mantra, *Make a living ... Living!* The company did well in the first year, despite a post-9/11 economy.

To keep pace, the team needed another key player. Enter Eddie Head. The tattoo on his right arm is no random adornment. “It symbolizes strategy,” he says. Eddie blazed onto the scene in 2007, first as creative director, then chief strategy officer and, ultimately, as president, WorldVentures Holdings. Today, he is responsible for the strategic direction of the business, specifically, sales, field Rep engagement, nonprofit direction, business-to-business and business-to-customer development.

During the tough times that followed the market collapse of 2008, Eddie teamed with the field sales force and executives to fortify the brand. With consumers tightening their collective purse strings and postponing travel plans, tourism’s contribution to the world economy grew by a mere 1 percent the second half of that year. Needless to say, it was not an opportune time for business. But the WorldVentures brand endured.

“The first three or four years, there were rough times with our technology, our pay-out, personnel and a lot of things,” Dan divulges. “But I’ve always said, I think our internal team and Reps are so resilient, because the concept of succeeding in a network marketing travel community is Utopia. Every other company talks about, ‘Come join us and buy our widget to go sell our product so you can make a lot of money, create a residual income — a predictable, reoccurring revenue — and then enjoy life and travel the world.”

“We offer the opportunity to enjoy life and travel the world while you’re building a business, creating memories with loved ones and giving back. You’ve got IMD David Pietsch on video saying, ‘Can you believe it? I’ve been on 108 vacations since I joined WorldVentures! Let me repeat, 108 vacations!’ Now, what other company is doing that?”

Answer: not one.

GEARED UP TO GIVE BACK

“I know there have been some bad (network marketing) companies, and sadly, money is their god,” Wayne laments. “I don’t have a money goal; I have a creation goal. What I’m trying to create is fun, freedom and fulfillment in people’s lives. If we’re just doing more of that, I’m a happy camper. There doesn’t have to be some end financial goal.”

But there is a giving goal. After all, service to others is the bedrock of the business. Wayne created WorldVentures with an altruistic aim to help others experience the bounty he enjoyed.

“Money wasn’t the motivator anymore — my needs were met,” he says. “It was, ‘How can I have a purposeful life?’ The answer was easy, help others have the same. We’re multilevel marketing fun — ‘fun’ not as an adjective, but as a noun. The product is fun, then the opportunity creates freedom. We

know the math. If you get somebody making extra income per month, it gives them some financial breathing room. If they’ll pursue that with some consistency, and it’s fun, we can get them making more. I’ve seen this. At that point, they’re feeling abundant. So now, guess what they do? They give back. It’s in giving that we receive, but, the fact is, it’s fun to give.”

With that concept in mind, leaders established the Manifest Foundation (which later became the WorldVentures Foundation) in 2010 as the philanthropic arm of the company. The Foundation’s mission, then and now, is serving children and their communities by teaming with charitable organizations to identify needs and implement viable solutions.

“We didn’t have millions in the bank at the time,” Dan recalls. “But we said, ‘Let’s do it now. Let’s do it as we go. Let’s be different.’ I remember talking with Stuart Johnson (CEO of SUCCESS Partners) about his foundation. Eddie ran out within three weeks and had the documents formed, the Foundation set up and just took the charge.”

Dan pays homage to Eddie, President, Global Sales Jon McKillip and the President’s Advisory Council (PAC) for taking the lead.

“These guys were committed, and not when we had a lot of money. We had to defer payment sometimes, but they stepped up and bought into the vision. They were right there pooling their funds and giving back. They still are.”

Today, with volunteer support, WorldVentures Foundation raises over US\$1 million annually on behalf of its humanitarian affiliates. VolunTours and Volunteer Days, which combine community service and tourism, are the centerpiece of the Foundation’s outreach and provide a venue for Reps and DreamTrips Members to change the world as they explore it.





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If the momentum continues, Dan predicts there will come a day when, “there’s some natural disaster, and we’re 50 million members strong, and UNICEF and Red Cross say, ‘Let’s call WorldVentures.’”

ALIGNED FOR THE FUTURE

The company’s executives say WorldVentures’ success to date is largely due to the One Big Team philosophy embraced throughout the organization.

“Philosophical alignment solidifies a team in its execution and efficiency and helps us all feel so much better about the team itself,” Eddie says. “There have been times when we didn’t have the unity in our philosophies, vision and values, and it cost us. You can have great people who have disparate views of what the target is, and you end up getting off course and always wrestling with one another to define the trajectory. Where we are today is reassuring. We go to sleep at night knowing that we have an aligned team.”

Today, internal staff team up to support the success of Reps in the field. In turn, Reps team up to promote the WorldVentures brand and market its products and services. Together, internal and external teams collaborate and co-create to ensure customers have access to exceptional travel experiences.

“We’re all passing the ball to one another,” Wayne explains. “I try to play to my strengths and my natural way of thinking and being. Dan does the same, and so does Eddie. It’s not ‘I’ and ‘me’ and then everyone else. It’s the essence of we. That’s what makes it all work. I don’t think I’m better than anybody, but I don’t think anybody’s better than me.”

Eddie offers his insights: “As an executive team, we have learned the value of leveraging the talent we have within our teams. I don’t have to be the best marketing mind in the group. Dan doesn’t have to be the smartest financial mind in the conversation. Wayne doesn’t have to be the smartest technology mind in the conversation. We’ve tried to hire the very best in all of our key leadership roles and to have them do the same within their teams, to help us make better decisions and execute more fluidly and more effectively.”

From a practical perspective, Wayne adds, “We’re not launching things to the field without saying, ‘Hey, what do you think of this?’ They ultimately have to sell what we create. If we continue to work together, we will hit a billion, four billion, even 10 billion dollars (in revenue). I see a very clear path to those numbers with the reinvestments we’re able to make because of our longevity.”



Among those reinvestments are technology and product enhancements. The DreamTrips travel app debuted in May, marking WorldVentures' emergence as a technology trendsetter in the direct-selling industry. Available in English, Spanish, Simplified and Traditional Chinese, the app signals ongoing efforts to enhance customer experiences. Coupled with the March acquisition of a world-class software platform for centralized reservation management, the app is tangible evidence of the company's future focus.

Users can log on with their DreamTrips Membership credentials and then browse and book vacation packages. Other features include the option to upload and share photos on social media sites and view photos submitted by fellow members. For Independent Representatives, the app has utility as a business tool for enrolling new customers, exchanging success stories and viewing training videos, allowing them to conduct business from anywhere in the world.

"The key to success is becoming a 'mobilepreneur,' and if you have a smartphone, you have no excuse," Wayne exclaims, waving his own phone. "The old-world mentality of, 'I've got to have a boss, an office, a place to go to work and I've got to sit in traffic' is so archaic when you have this in the palm of your hand. The phone knows no distance. The Internet knows no distance. With this device, you have over a billion customers. So get after it."

To compete under the mobilepreneur push, Dan says Reps must simply use the products and tell their own stories. "If they can point and read, they'll achieve," he says. "With a smartphone or a tablet, they'll say to a prospective customer, 'Instead of telling you about the benefits, let me show you.' Then they'll go into their digital back office."

What a concept. Disruptive in its vision. Dynamic in its simplicity.

"We have it all — a fun product, the opportunity to increase freedom and the Foundation that we get a lot of fulfillment from. It's a great balance," Wayne explains. "Twenty years from now, I want this company to be celebrated around the globe for touching every aspect of people's lives — physical, spiritual, emotional, financial and intellectual. All we have to do is stick together. As Henry Ford said, 'Coming together is a start. Working together is progress. Staying together is success.'" ▼





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