

FALL 2012

Moravian

COLLEGE MAGAZINE

Moravian Education

A Value-Added Experience



Bob Kafafian '77 at work at The Kafafian Group.

And that has given her the courage of her convictions. "By the end of my education, I had so many interests that I found it a bit stifling to lock into one career. That's why bookselling appeals to me: It's perfect for the generalist. Even though the book business has been tremendously challenging, my staff and I have been able to adapt."

Regardless of the chosen major, students at Moravian are immersed in an atmosphere that emphasizes critical thinking, creativity, the ability to communicate orally and in writing, cultural awareness and the interdisciplinary nature of the world. These skills are transferrable to any job, vocation or avocation, anywhere, anytime, according to Carol Traupman-Carr, dean of curriculum and academic programs.

"These skills allow our graduates to excel in their jobs, redefine themselves and take on or create new challenges," she says. "Because Moravian is a small liberal arts school, faculty and administrators know our students better than those at larger public institutions, and we can help guide them more from the first day of freshman year until they cross that graduation platform four years later."

Teamwork and Leadership

A contemporary of Santoro, Bob Kafafian '77, graduated from Moravian with a degree in business and economics. While in college, he spent summers working for the Bank of Commerce in New York City. Upon graduation, he went directly into the management training program at First National State Bank of New Jersey. For the next three years, he attended evening classes at Fairleigh Dickinson University, where he earned his MBA in finance.

After five years in banking, which included a stint on Wall Street, Kafafian started a consulting business that ultimately merged with an investment banking firm in 1992. He served there as head of the financial institution's investment banking group and consulting services division. When the company was acquired by the Royal Bank of Canada in 2001, he saw an opportunity and joined with nine other shareholders to buy his division. He is now President and CEO and the majority shareholder, owning 58 percent of The Kafafian Group.

What do they have in common?

Of course there's no singular profile that describes business entrepreneurs, but according to magazines such as *Forbes*, *Entrepreneur* and *Inc.*, there are several identifiable traits they all share. Here are ten most experts agree on.

1. Think success—dream big.
2. Be passionate about what you do.
3. Focus on your strengths.
4. Never consider the possibility of failure.
5. Plan for concrete goals.
6. Work hard!
7. Constantly develop your network.
8. Be willing to learn.
9. Persevere, have faith and never give up.
10. Discipline yourself.

« My activities at Moravian—football, fraternity, volunteering in numerous groups—prepared me for leadership, managing, advising and networking. »

"My activities at Moravian—football, fraternity, volunteering in numerous groups—prepared me for leadership, managing, advising, and networking," he says, all critical components of the work he does today. Kafafian also was president of the student-run Amrhein Loan Fund, through which students lend money to students, faculty and staff of Moravian College. "Every year, there was an annual meeting and we'd prepare for and attend a dinner where we would present the performance of the fund to our single shareholder, Mr. Amrhein," Kafafian recalls. "That experience was not materially different from doing so for real shareholders and was tremendous preparation for what I do now."

Another major influence on Kafafian was John Gehman, his accounting professor and faculty advisor for the Amrhein Loan Fund. "I have a lot of respect for him. He understood what we were going to have to deal with beyond Moravian—I remember a great field trip with him during January Term to the General Accounting Office in Washington—and

Two to watch—young alumni entrepreneurs



Casey Hoffman '06 displays a mold used to create a kayak paddle at Viatek Composites LLC.

In less than six years after graduating from Moravian with Honors in physics, Casey Hoffman '06 has invented a process for manufacturing advanced composite materials, such as carbon-fiber (found in sporting equipment, wind turbine blades and state-of-the-art prosthetics, for example) and co-founded Viatek Composites, LLC, a high-tech manufacturing startup, of which he is the CEO. His invention currently is waiting for its patent to be issued, and he believes it will revolutionize the industry.

He values the math and science background he received at Moravian, calling it the "solid foundation for beginning to figure out how to solve complex problems." He built on that foundation by adding a master's degree and doctorate in mechanical engineering from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute and combined it all to apply the theory and principles learned in physics to solve real-world problems.

"My company now makes products that benefit the energy, medical and transportation markets and hopefully helps make the world a better place," he says. "When you do your own innovative research or start your own company, you quickly learn there's nobody to hold your hand, no defined structure. All you have is your own abilities and creativity to find the answers."

"My experience at Moravian prepared me to compete against top Ivy League students and succeed. But probably more importantly, it

Michelle Lala Clark '05 at work photographing a couple on their wedding day.

taught me to take pride in my work and not settle for what other people consider good enough."

An internship in Moravian's public relations office helped Michelle Lala Clark '05 hone her communications skills and determination to effectively make her visions and goals a reality—realized when she opened her self-named photography studio in Doylestown, Bucks County, in 2011.

There, she does journalistic photography, product/location shots, weddings/events and portraits. Her work has appeared in an array of magazines, including *Lehigh Valley*, *Nouveau*, and international French magazine *LaGeoGraphie*, as well as in Red Cross training materials and other print, web marketing and promotional materials.

The graphic design major cut her teeth in the real-world as a graphic designer/photographer at *Lehigh Valley Magazine* shortly after graduation. "I know for a fact getting this job had everything to do with my internship at Moravian," she says. "If I could share one piece of advice to incoming freshmen, I'd say, 'Start interning. Try a variety of internships and see where your passions lie.'"

Clark credits her Moravian internship with giving her the skills to go out on her own.

"That job helped me gain confidence in myself and my work," she says. "I had to learn to communicate effectively with people who didn't speak the same artistic lingo I did, and to make their visions come to fruition. But more importantly, it helped me realize that commercial and editorial photography are definitely my cup of tea and bring me great joy."



beyond his technical expertise," he adds. "Mr. Gehman understood networking and building business acumen. He was one of those professors with great little quips, and I've used much of his material in classes I teach today. While funny, his sayings contain a lot of wisdom."

But wisdom alone doesn't breed leadership, a critical component of successful entrepreneurship. What influence does Kafavian think his Moravian education had on his drive to the top? "Moravian allowed you to be as involved as you wanted to be. That contributed to my opportunity to experience being in a leadership position."

An Entrepreneur's Entrepreneur

Michelle Litzzenberger Trent '93 is a respected independent business advisor who, as CEO of The Trent Group, LLC, helps other entrepreneurs grow their business revenues through sales, marketing, strategic development and planning. She also owns another business, The Joyful Elephant, through which she coaches individuals to pursue a healthier life through plant-based nutrition.

Trent believes that her Moravian experience helped "develop my confidence and social and communication skills, which were the building blocks to pursuing a career as a solo entrepreneur. Because it's a small school, I was able to develop strong, lasting relationships," which are critical to the work she does today.

According to an article in *Money* magazine last month, most people end up being successful in a career they hadn't imagined. Trent cites this statistic when discussing her Moravian education and what has happened in the years since she graduated. She chose Moravian because it was close to her home and a place where she could gain an exposure to a variety of academics. She says she needed the push to explore areas beyond her comfort zone, and got it at Moravian. She also hoped to develop close friendships on campus. She was successful in all these areas.

"I have an amazing bond with several people I went to school with, that has lasted for more than 20 years. I was also able to develop good communication skills by participating in leadership roles in campus organizations. After graduation, my time on the young alumni and alumni boards also helped me develop and refine my communication skills," she says. Trent also credits the MBA she earned at Lehigh University with giving her the technical skills to run a business.

Her required study abroad, as an international business major, led her to spend her junior year in France, where she overcame homesickness and the challenges of being immersed in a different culture and language. This experience increased her confidence and communications skills, and challenged her—giving her the depth of knowledge and experience she feels is crucial to those who desire to go into business for themselves.

"I highly recommend that people who feel a calling to entrepreneurship get as much of a varied background as they can, academically, culturally and philosophically," she says. "When I look at my fellow classmates who are successful, it is not always the most intellectual, but those who developed and honed their communication and networking skills from an early age, and continue to do that today."

Dean Traupman-Carr adds, "The transformational growth



Michelle Litzzenberger Trent '93 has started two businesses. In one, she advises other entrepreneurs.

« I have an amazing bond with several people I went to school with, that has lasted for more than 20 years. I was also able to develop good communication skills by participating in leadership roles in campus organizations. »

we see from our students in four years is astonishing, and it's no surprise to me they can leave here and take on the challenges of graduate school, professional school or the workforce—and shine."

Entrepreneurs learn early to identify their strengths and focus on developing them to the highest degree, skills reinforced by Moravian's liberal arts approach of providing a rich and diverse learning experience on a relatable scale. Moravian seeks to be the strongest foundation upon which students can build a solid life, philosophy and career, whether working up through the ranks of an established business, or striking out for the top on their own. *

Mary Shaker is a Bucks County free-lance writer at DeMoresFinger.com.