

# One on One:

## The Far-Reaching Payoff of Success

AN NPES MEMBER GOES "FULL CIRCLE" TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN AFRICA

**The successful business is one that makes sufficient profit to keep investors happy while being a positive force in the world. With that definition, one can certainly do well while doing good."**

**- Fred L. Fry, Professor,  
Bradley University College of Business**

If the above statement seems altruistic at first glance, a look at the example of **Walter Dean** will provide confirmation in practical terms. For Dean, thriving in business while striving to better the human condition has become second nature.

Headquartered in the Atlanta suburb of Alpharetta, Georgia, Dean runs three companies: Billhofer USA (an NPES member firm), which offers sophisticated equipment for laminating, coating, varnishing, and other applications for printing and packaging; Dean Machinery, a full-service broker and appraiser of used equipment for printing and converting paper, film, foil, tissue and flexible packaging products; and a real estate management firm.

While Dean's trajectory to success has been many years in the making, it's been guided by a singular vision forged when he was a young man. After graduating from Davidson College in the early 1980s, he went to Africa and taught school in Khwisero, a village in western Kenya that had no electricity or running water. Being immersed in issues of life and survival for people of the region changed Dean's world view forever. The experience germinated a commitment so strong that even when a debilitating bout of malaria and typhoid hospitalized him and forced his departure, Dean vowed to return to Kenya some day – in a position of strength that would enable making a difference in the lives of the people he had come to love and respect. Two decades later, he's been making good on that commitment in a big way. We asked him to describe his recent activities on the humanitarian front.

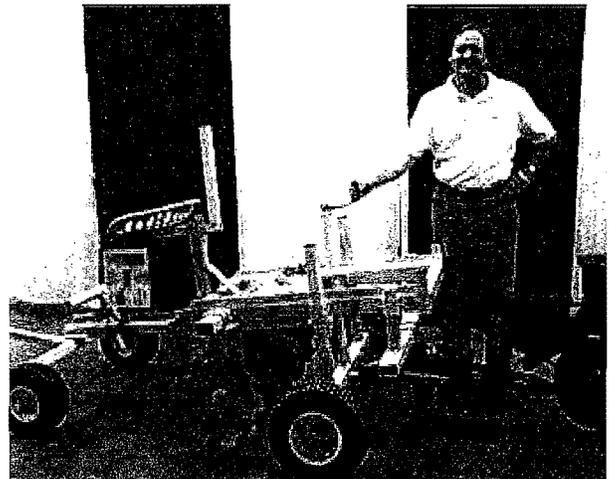
### **What made you come back to Kenya?**

I had to leave early and felt like my work was unfinished. I had gotten myself in a bad situation and was no longer effective helping the people because I got sick from drinking the water they had to drink. There are moral dilemmas you

deal with when for a little bit of money you can go into the hospital and pay your way out of a life and death situation. That was not an option for the people I lived with or the children I taught. I made a promise when I was in that hospital bed 22 years ago – I'm 44 now.

### **Who did you make the promise to?**

To myself, and to my students and the people in that area. I said when I'm better and able to help this community then I will. They are still dying today; there's a funeral every week. They don't even start counting a child as one of the family until four or five years, because too many things can kill them before they reach five. There's no clean water. These people are at the end of humanity; when you live and engage



Walter Dean displays the Plotmaster plow his company is developing to increase sustainable agriculture in developing countries.

with them, you know their names and families... you are never the same. You gain insight into what it means to be poor, and all the accompanying issues like poor health. After you've seen that, it isn't so appealing to concern yourself with the new Playstation 2 game and things we Americans concern ourselves with. We are woefully inadequate in our response to poverty in the developing world. With all the money we are spending to fight in Iraq, I'm here to tell you the biggest terrorist on earth is poverty.

### **At the same time being a successful American businessman has given you resources to come back to Khwisero and help. How else has it shaped your approach?**

You know the old adage: give a man a fish and he eats for a day; teach him to fish and he eats for a lifetime. I truly wanted to make those words reality.

There are four tenets of sustainable development in communities: food production, clean water, education, and health care. If

you give people these four basic elements, they can fish for a lifetime, sustain themselves, and be effective for helping the next community over.

As our business grew, we were able to start doing some small things. We built houses, a computer lab, put in water wells, established a girls school with dormitories. Educating girls and empowering women is absolutely critical in these developing countries. And we're not alone doing this by any means; the CDC, the Carter Center and Gates Foundation are active in the region, and CARE, which I have supported for many years. From a business perspective, I think CARE is one of the most efficient relief organizations there is. You give them a dollar, and 91 or 92 cents goes directly to programs rather than bleed off in administrative charges. Even churches are not as efficient as CARE; I've seen it firsthand.

***Give an example of the "eating for a lifetime" scenario as it relates to one of your four principles of sustainability.***

I've learned a little about machinery and design over the past 20 years. We have developed a plow that can actually disc the soil, create a furrow or row, put in seed and fertilizer, and cover it up all in one pass. It's manually driven, pulled by draft animals, and we think this design will revolutionize food production in the developing world. I'm making enough money selling Billhofer machines, so that what I want to do is create a low enough price on this unit so that it can be universally introduced into rural areas of Africa and Central America. Thanks to my associate Vincent Farley, who was formerly President Carter's advisor on Africa, we had a visit from the president of Mali and his ministers and entourage just before Christmas.

***Just a regular customer visit, eh?***

I'd say it was much different from the normal Billhofer customer visit. He came in, looked at the plow, and said, "This is exactly what my people need. This man obviously knows Africa and understands what our problem is." Since then we've had visits from the Minister of Agriculture from Nigeria, the Health Minister from Mozambique, the mayor of Dakar, Senegal. We've got agents to sell this in Zambia, Malawi, and Kenya, and will put an agent in each African country that will sell the plow. The more we get, the lower I'm going to push the price.

***It has to pay for itself from your perspective as a businessman and developer, doesn't it?***

Well, I'm never going to get the money back I put into it, but that's not the point. I'm going to eat tomorrow and so are you. I don't play golf; I want to spend my money on this. But from a user perspective it will pay for itself, and this is the beauty of the thing: they increase food production so much, the farmer can then plow a larger land mass and make the transition from subsistence to commercial. If there is coordination at the community level, they can grow crops that can be exported or sold into the marketplace at higher value. ●

## VUE/POINT® draws praise from attendees



*A printers panel at VUE/POINT featured (left to right) Steve Amiel of Strategic Content Imaging; Val DiGiacinto of The Ace Group; Jeff Rhoades of JW Reproductions; and Chuck Weminger of Democrat Printing & Lithographing.*

The 16th edition of VUE/POINT, held in Orlando, FL in April, drew strongly favorable responses from attendees for its unique combination of practical, "real world" user experiences and visions of business opportunities in the future.

VUE/POINT took place April 10-12 at the Hilton in the Walt Disney World Resort. The program included keynote and general sessions, panel discussions on technical and business topics, and evening roundtables that encouraged a free-wheeling exchange of ideas.

One attendee, Doug Klemz of Home Mountain Printing, Valparaiso, IN, commented that "Some of the Information Technology sessions have been phenomenal, covering how to streamline operations, continue automation, and use technology as a force multiplier."

This response was echoed by many other attendees, who once again found great value in the practical advice and interactivity of the panel sessions.

Panel topics ranged from "Workflow Standardization" and "Digital Asset Management" to "Solution Selling" and "Building a Business from One-to-One Marketing."

Ian Basset, Operations Director at Creda Communications in Cape Town, traveled to VUE/POINT all the way from South Africa and declared the trip well worthwhile. "Being in South Africa, we're quite far away from user groups and the like, and this is a very good opportunity to interact and network with people using the same products," he said. "Over the years, we've always gotten so much out of it."

The practical content of the sessions also got high marks from Michael Stella, President of Corner Lot Marketing, Mansfield, MA. "Here, everyone is very open to speak to," Stella said. "The real world experience you get here is very valuable, and the topics are current. The variable data printing and lists sessions I found very interesting."

Randy Fox, Market Development Manager, Jet, Downers Grove, IL, said he was attracted to VUE/POINT by "the fact that there wasn't an exhibit floor. The concept of putting industry professionals on the stage, with no preaching, no Powerpoints, was very attractive. Here, people are giving away ideas that lead to strategic thinking. Speakers have been very open."

The opening general session brought attendees a vision of the future from Larry Letteney of Blue Ocean Advisory Group, who warned, "Anything that can be done anywhere is going to move around the world to the place where it can be done most effectively." Letteney noted that for every dollar American corporations spend on printing, they spent another six dollars on related functions like fulfillment, warehousing, administrative tasks and creative development. As a result, total print-related spending is under unprecedented scrutiny.

Luncheon speaker Prof. Frank Romano of Rochester Institute of Technology agreed that "geography doesn't matter any more. Now your competition can be in another state or another country."

Romano stressed that "the opportunities today are in augmenting and not replacing print. It is no longer a case of print versus electronic. It's print and electronic, and if we don't get that straight, we're dead." ●