

Leaders Share Advice

By Charlee Beasor

‘Be the Best,’ ‘Assemble a Good Team’ Among Top Tips

What’s the best piece of advice you’ve been given? It could be fashion related: *Don’t wear white after Labor Day.* Maybe it’s something to do with raising children: *If you tell your kids “no,” and they scream for a few minutes, it won’t scar them for life.*

With all this life guidance floating around, anyone that has ever contemplated starting a business is sure to have received their fair share of suggestions. It’s one the questions BizVoice® asked leaders from six of the 2013 Indiana Companies to Watch honorees: “What’s the best business advice you’ve received?”

We also wanted to know: “What’s the best part of doing business in Indiana?” And: “What’s the biggest obstacle you’ve faced and how did you overcome it?”

Read on to discover how these second-stage growth companies from all around Indiana, in a variety of industries, have ascended to where they are today.

Tyson Onsite

Brent Claymon, principal; Founded: 1967 (purchased by new owners in 2012); Employees: 41
Brothers and business partners Brent and Matthew Claymon own Indianapolis-based Tyson Onsite. The company provides mobile offices, office buildings, classrooms and storage solutions.

Emerging Threats

Ken Gramley, CEO; Founded: 2010; Employees: 17
Ken Gramley was an entrepreneur-in-residence with Elevate Ventures before joining Lafayette’s Emerging Threats (founded by chief technology officer Matt Jonkman). The company provides threat intelligence to companies to protect networks from malware and malicious information.

Net Irrigate, LLC

Edward DeSalle, general manager, majority owner; Founded: 2006; Employees: 8
Edward DeSalle leads Bloomington-based Net Irrigate, a manufacturer of wireless agricultural monitoring technology. The technology alerts farmers of costly events, including copper wire theft on irrigation systems.

netlogx, LLC

Audrey Taylor, owner; Founded: 1998; Employees: 42
Audrey Taylor and her husband Nick came to Indianapolis from England in the 1990s. The Taylors created netlogx, which provides information risk management, consulting and data warehousing services.

Nexxt Spine, LLC

Andrew Elsbury, president; Founded: 2009; Employees: 15
Nexxt Spine President Andrew Elsbury runs the Noblesville-based company that designs, manufactures and sells spinal implants.

Phoenix Data Corporation

Carol Curran, president and CEO; Founded: 2001; Employees: 70
Carol Curran leads Phoenix Data Corporation, which is a multi-faceted document management company that runs document centers, mail centers and call centers. The company also has an engineering component, including software for electronic warfare.



Net Irrigate manufactures wireless agricultural monitoring technology. Company leader Edward DeSalle notes that because of the company’s equipment, more than 20 people in Indiana have been apprehended for stealing copper from irrigation systems.

Q. What's the best business advice you've received?

"I received this advice a long time ago and it is, 'If you want to grow your company to be a big business, you have to act like one now.' ... We're a small company now, but we are acting like a big one and being professional about how we do things."

- Brent Claymon, Tyson Onsite

"Make sure you build a team with the right people. The right people make all the difference in the world; a good team communicates well and challenges each other, challenges each other's assumptions. All of that helps define the strategy to make sure you're on the right path. It's imperative to have a good team to begin with."

- Ken Gramley, Emerging Threats

"There are a couple: the first is that you have to follow truth no matter how unsettling or humiliating the facts may be. You must always recognize truth, even in life, but when you're managing a business it becomes particularly important. You can't pretend certain problems aren't there."

"The second piece of advice is around debt. And that debt, when you're starting a business, it's a tool. Often debt comes with such negative connotations. It can really be an excellent tool to get our company to where it needs to be at a very low cost to capital."

"The next one – don't be a slave to your business. Find people to run the machine. Find talented people and pay them what they're worth to keep the company going."

- Edward DeSalle, Net Irrigate

Audrey: "It came from my mom, who never ran a business, but it's, 'What doesn't kill you makes you stronger.' I think that's the only way to be in a business. ... That resilience to every stage the business goes through presents a new set of challenges and rising to those challenges, you don't really get the chance to sit back and drink tea and go, 'This is great. This is exactly how I want it to

stay,' because it doesn't work like that."

Nick: "You have to believe with your heart, but you've always got to lead with your head. My other best advice is – Audrey basically told me in her very normal, very down-to-earth straightforward way, she said, 'You know, if we're going to do this, we might as well be the best.' It stuck with me after all this time, 15-plus years. We need to be the best. But you have to work at it."

- Audrey and Nick Taylor, netlogx

"I would say if you're starting a new business, you better know at least two out of the three key components: how to design it, how to make it and how to sell it. If you're going to go into a new business and take advantage, you better know two out of three. In Nexxt Spine, we know how to design, know how to make it and now we're learning how to sell it."

- Andrew Elsbury, Nexxt Spine

"Stay in your core competencies and don't expand from it."

- Carol Curran, Phoenix Data Corporation



netlogx founders Audrey and Nick Taylor moved to Indianapolis from England in the 1990s and have created 50 jobs here since the information risk management and consulting company started.

Q. What's the best part about doing business in Indiana?

"Indiana is, from my experience, a great place to do business for many reasons: one is the relatively stable economic climate here. Things change, but the lows and the highs seem to balance; there aren't huge swings in either direction.

"I've experienced that it's a really friendly business environment compared to many of our neighboring states. For example, Indiana uses user-friendly technology to assist, from business registrations to submittals of tax forms. And that might seem rather simplistic, but you'd be amazed when you're trying to register your business, or even just remit sales tax, how complicated some municipalities or cities or states make it."

- Brent Claymon, Tyson Onsite

"There's a very tightknit, supportive, entrepreneurial infrastructure here. With TechPoint, Elevate Ventures, all of those are great resources. And the school system provides some great young-level talent. ... It's a very business-friendly environment. A number of technology start-ups have done well in Indiana. I think the country



Nexxt Spine manufactures and sells spinal implants. President Andrew Elsbury (right) mentions the "solid infrastructure of medical device companies" in Indiana is one of the best things about locating in the state.

is going to wake up one day and be surprised how strong Indiana really is."

- Ken Gramley, Emerging Threats

"I have two: One is the venture capital tax credit program makes this state a fantastic place to do business. It has undoubtedly helped with two fundraising rounds that I did. It made the deals much more enticing and I applaud the IEDC for putting that in place.

"The second: the schools and our bright graduates. We work with students from all those programs and hired full-time people out of there and there is a heck of a lot of talented people in this state. We should do more things to keep them here. I constantly come across top-quality students."

- Edward DeSalle, Net Irrigate

Audrey: "The people. The people here are just truly welcoming, friendly, open and honest and hardworking. There is truly a Midwestern value that has embraced us from the very first time we got here. It's home and we love being here."

Nick: "The big thing for me is that 20 years ago, it was a different place. Today, I see innovation happening in Indiana and it's absolutely palpable."

- Audrey and Nick Taylor, netlogx

"I would say it's the solid infrastructure of medical device companies here, which means both skilled employees familiar with the orthopedic industry, and vendors, suppliers and other leaders that I can talk to who do similar things."

- Andrew Elsbury, Nexxt Spine

"The people – they are good to work with and ready to have new technologies. They're ecstatic about learning a new process with everything. They like the idea of finding different ways to do things that cost less and are more expandable for their business."

- Carol Curran, Phoenix Data Corporation

Q. What's the biggest obstacle in business you've faced and how did you overcome it?

"One of the biggest obstacles has been the loss of the largest customer of the company. And essentially they canceled their lease agreement with us on a very large modular classroom project. We spent several weeks trying to negotiate a settlement agreement and finally did come to one that was fair, but one that was daunting to us.

"We had the product back; it was very customized. We had to figure out what we were going to do next. We spent many months trying to market the equipment and came across a customer that wasn't looking for exactly what we had, but we could customize the equipment. But it met their needs better than what we were anticipating."

- Brent Claymon, Tyson Onsite

"It was quite challenging raising money for Covelight Systems (acquired by Radware) after the telecom bubble popped. We were the first IT company to get a first round of funding in over two years in Research Triangle Park (North Carolina), and it required a lot of patience and diligence to find an investor team ready to join with us in that economic environment."

- Ken Gramley, Emerging Threats

"The biggest one for us was figuring out how to scale effectively in agriculture. Ag is tough because it's so spread out. We needed to utilize a dealer network to really scale up without dramatically increasing the costs of the company. Developing that dealer network takes time and relationship building. We overcame it really slowly and gradually, building the dealer network and listening to what they wanted, not just what the end users wanted, but what the distributors wanted as well."

- Edward DeSalle, Net Irrigate

Audrey: "I struggled with what kind of leader I wanted to be and being the most effective leader. It goes back to the size of the organization. I like to be

proactive, I like to be part of a team and that works at a certain size, but now it doesn't work as well. I'm working on my leadership skills, and the bottom line is learning to say no."

Nick: "Our customers were asking us to do all this project work and so we needed to hire. Then it dawned on me what happens when you hire: You hire them, their families, their mortgages, everything that goes along with their little ones. I couldn't sleep. I was waking up and one night, Audrey said, 'What is the matter with you?' I said, 'This is scaring me to death.' That's when she said to me, 'Well, we must be the best at it.' "

- Audrey and Nick Taylor, netlogx

"Just like all start-ups, the biggest thing is attracting top employees to high-risk start-ups. When you try to get somebody to join your company when you're just starting up, there's high risk. To overcome it, you really have to sell your vision, help them understand what it is we're trying to do, how we're different than other companies in the orthopedic space, try to sell it and sell it to people that can understand the long term. The first couple of years are hard, but here's what we can do after you get past the start-up phase."

- Andrew Elsbury, Nexxt Spine

"I think the biggest obstacle in running a business is having the cash flow to keep it running and keep new business coming in. Banks, nor anyone else, loaned to women-owned businesses (at the time). I was turned down by some 29 banks and vendors and everything else. I cashed my insurance policies in, sold stocks, did one job at a time. I didn't take several jobs at a time. That was probably the hardest thing we did – all my money we put into it. The banks all want me now. But that was the thing, having the cash flow and having money to live on and so forth."

- Carol Curran, Phoenix Data Corporation