

NextEra Energy Resources
**YOUNG PROFESSIONAL
OF THE YEAR**

DRIVING FORCE

Entrepreneur Charts His Own Course

By Symone C. Skrzycki



Patricio Daneri embodies risk taking.

Whether he's behind the wheel of a racecar, developing innovative technology or navigating life with his wife and four young daughters – he jumps headfirst into the unknown.

“Life goes by really quickly,” he reflects. “So, open your eyes! Many times, I've had to open my eyes and take chances. And the best chance you can take is on yourself; just go all in. If you go all in and you're intentional, it will work out.”

Daneri owns a variety of businesses. Among them is Energy Harness Corporation, which specializes in manufacturing and distributing high-quality commercial LED lighting nationwide.

Daneri helped launch Energy Harness in 2013 when he was 25 years old. Locally based in Zionsville with another smaller site in Indianapolis, its main headquarters are in Cape Coral, Florida. The sales side of the business primarily takes place in Indiana while manufacturing and R&D are the focus in Florida. Customers are primarily schools and hospitals, but the company serves an array of sectors.

“The best and easiest thing to do to save energy – and therefore save money – is to replace your lighting,” Daneri contends. “We call it low-hanging fruit. Honestly, it's been a home run because we beautify your space. We make it so much brighter, so much better



Daneri gives Indiana Secretary of State Diego Morales a tour of one of his Hoosier enterprises, Connecta Corporation, located in Indianapolis.

– (leading to) 50% or more in energy savings, which means your electric bill is going to be cut in half. No maintenance. These lights never fail. They work for decades.”

Daneri also operates Electron Charger (provides top-tier EV chargers and charging software), Connecta Corporation (manufactures precision parts for the aerospace industry) and Matteo's Ristorante Italiano in Noblesville.

How does he manage it all so successfully?

“It's all about the people,” Daneri stresses. “That's the secret. You've got to surround yourself with smarter people that are not willing to take as many risks as you. That's what you want. Everybody that I get a

chance to work with genuinely is smarter, more capable and more conservative.

“That's how I do it. I have amazing partners on all the businesses and they're literally – they're my community and an extension of what I would call my family. I'll do anything for them.”

Early life in South America

Daneri vividly recalls his childhood in Argentina.

“I grew up with two incredibly amazing parents,” he remarks. “We're very close. My mom and dad – I owe everything to them because they obviously had a tremendous influence on me. I would say definitely that's where I got 100% of my drive, if you will. I often have a tough time relating to folks that don't have as much drive and I wonder why I have more. I guess to me it's sort of like the norm – and I got it from them.”

For as long as Daneri can remember, his father longed to relocate to the United States. He realized that dream in 2002 as Daneri was on the cusp of turning 16.

“In Argentina, safety and security are very difficult to come by,” Daneri reveals. “There's a lot of crime with people stealing things (such as cars or your shoes. We had our fair share of mishaps (in that realm). I had my shoes stolen. It's like, 'That's normal.' That's just the way it is.

“Coming to the U.S. was the most grandiose experience of my life – because it is the best country on Earth,” Daneri enthuses. “And even though (there's challenges and hardships for many), if you really were to go



Daneri is rarely idle on or off the track. The avid racer gears up for a solo adventure (left) and a go-karting outing with one of his daughters.



Hard at work in his home office (left) and brainstorming with his colleagues at a Carmel coffee shop.

compare it with other (nations), you'll realize right away how lucky we are to live here."

The family first moved to Florida, where a friend of Daneri's father lived.

"I knew some English," Daneri comments. "My dad always knew eventually (moving to the U.S.) would happen, so we always learned English like kids here learn Spanish. I knew how to say 'one, two, three, four, hello, blue and red.' But it was very difficult knowing what a dime or a nickel was (for instance). I remember in the first couple of weeks (someone would say), 'Hey, you have a nickel?' I knew five cents, but not a nickel.

"I will never forget the headaches the first couple of weeks coming home from school because – it came in one ear, translated to Spanish and came out the other. You have to go all in to learn. But I was so happy. We moved to the U.S. right after 9/11. Looking back, the country was remarkably unified. For the first time, I felt this is where I'm meant to be."

Full speed ahead

Daneri's undergraduate studies brought him to Purdue University, where he earned a bachelor's of science degree in business administration and management in 2008. He graduated in three years.

"I was very focused," Daneri admits. "My parents sacrificed so much. I always felt not giving it my best would be slapping them in the face because they sacrificed everything for my sister and I."

What attracted him to Purdue?

"Purdue seemed like a fantastic choice," he says. "It had two fantastic schools for both engineering and for business. And those were my passions. I love anything mechanical: cars, watches, things that you can open up and see how they work. That's my world. It's all about machines and building things – and business clearly was (the path I wanted to take)."

Something else brought him to Indiana ... snow.

"This may sound crazy every time I say it, but I always wanted to live in a place with snow," Daneri imparts. "In Argentina, (there's) no snow. In Florida, no snow. I'm like, 'Man! I'm ready to experience

these seasons.

"Ironically, one of the first things my wife (Kelly) told me when I first met her is she loves all the seasons. I was like, okay, there's someone else that appreciates that – most people love the beach and the sun. I like all of it."

As a Purdue student, he worked at the university during the school years and at Eli Lilly and Company each summer as an intern. His stint at Purdue included coordinating career fairs for the Daniels School of Business (known then as the Krannert School of Management).

"So, I meet this small new bank – Royal United Financial Services out of Indianapolis – as I'm graduating. It was an immediate click," he declares, snapping his fingers. "To this day, the two guys that started that business are some of my favorite mentors: Craig Royal and Mike Keleher. They taught me everything I know. Without them, there's no chance that I would be where I am today."

Daneri joined Royal United in 2008 amid the Great Recession. He spent five years there, entering as a mortgage broker and departing as a vice president. At 25 years old, he was the youngest – and only – vice president who didn't establish the business.

Shifting gears

A life-changing experience prompted Daneri to pursue one of his ambitions: launching his own business.

"The first five years out of school, I was all about work, work, work, work," he notes. "I'm not joking. I probably never had a day off – not a Saturday or a Sunday. I was having so much fun. I'm loving the business. Seeing a business at my age go from 30 people to (approximately) 250 – it was exciting. I'm learning. I'm a sponge. I'm fired up.

"I'm doing great. But I'm realizing, 'Hey, I have got to figure something out. I know I don't want to work for someone else forever. I want to run my own business. And basically, the stars aligned: Kelly's pregnant with what we thought was one child (it was twins)."

A visit to his physician changed the course of his life.

"Every year I go to the doctor," Daneri recalls. "She'd say, 'Nothing's bad. But if you look at how the last four years are trending,



Born in Argentina, Daneri proudly honors his family's roots during Hispanic Heritage Month at the Indiana Statehouse (left) and alongside his children.

it's very bad.' I remember vividly her saying, 'Your cholesterol is 200, which is on the edge, but it used to be 150 and then it became 170 and 180. You've got to take care of yourself. So, I had a big sort of an epiphany.'

As a sense of "it's now or never" overtook him, Daneri embarked on a new career and established Energy Harness.

"What makes us so special is this is our brand," he asserts. "We manufacture this product. We install it and we service it if you need it. Nobody else in the world does it. It's from us to the end user. We created Energy Harness to be fully accountable from start to finish. Our pricing is second to none because there's no middleman."

Jim Combs is a part owner at Energy Harness. He reflects that Daneri holds himself and others to high expectations.

"Patricio is very demanding – in a good way. He's a great friend, great on the social skills and an amazing sales guy. He can connect and talk with anybody, but he'll also push you and expect you to give your best effort every day. That obviously has been a huge part of his success and the success of the organizations he touches."

Visionary versus integrator

In 2018, five years into his career at Energy Harness, Daneri read a book that inspired him to rethink his leadership approach.

"The book is called *Rocket Fuel*," he comments. "What that book says is you can either be what they call a visionary or an integrator, which is the person that runs the business (day to day). You can probably be both for a short while, but you really can't long term. That book opened my eyes because I'm not a great integrator. (I'm more skilled at) casting the vision. Always thinking bold. Thinking down the road five years from now (how) we want to get here. What do we need to do?"

"And then I came to realize we've got to do something really bold and different. We've had explosive growth since then."

His visionary approach allows Connecta, which he purchased nearly three years ago, to soar as well. Founded to produce radio frequency connectors for the aerospace industry in 1987, the organization manufactures small precision parts. All are no larger than 1.6 inches in diameter

"Connecta is amazing," Daneri marvels. "I almost feel like it's not mine because I'm just kind of passing it on for the next generation. I hope my children someday become involved. What this business does: We keep planes in the air. Planes cannot be in the air without our parts. They're called fly-critical parts. And that means that the quality standards are as high as they come. That's what I love is the challenge."

Recently, Connecta expanded into the private space industry, with customers such as SpaceX and Blue Origin.

Making it personal

While the work at Connecta relies on technical expertise, Daneri places an emphasis on relationship building.

Dustin Fischer, who is Connecta's general manager, appreciates how Daneri supportively springs into action if challenges arise.

"So, he never puts up a wall even when there's a problem," he shares. "It's not about the problem. It's about how do we overcome that problem. He's very much, 'Hey, I'm always available and open. I'm going to give you the resources. How do we take that to the next step?' That's so helpful. I love working for him because he doesn't put up roadblocks. He takes them down."

Relationships are at the center of Daneri's volunteer endeavors at The International School of Indiana and the 500 Festival where he serves on the board of directors for both organizations.

His commitment to "being present" in all pursuits – personal and professional – drive his dedication to institute a no cell phone policy at The International School.

"I strongly believe that (people's obsessions with cell phones) is a

big disservice to our society. Because to me, we are losing so much without realizing it. You go anywhere – to a restaurant, a coffee shop – nobody’s talking. Nobody is interacting. Everybody’s distracted by nonsense. That’s the key. If it was a genuine, ‘Hey, I’m waiting for an important phone call’ (that’s different).

“The key word in life – in my opinion – is intentionality. If you’re not intentional, life is going to pass you by. You have to be intentional for you to disconnect and be all in with your family or whatever you happen to be doing. You have to put other things aside,” he contends.

“To me, relationships are life’s currency. Relationships are everything. Money can come and go.”

Innovating in a crisis

At the onset of the pandemic, Daneri worked with Energy Harness’ engineers in Florida to create a product to purify air and kill airborne pathogens, including Covid.

“We’ve always primarily served K-12 schools,” he explains. “But it’s always been lighting related. We all came together when Covid was brand new and we said, ‘We’ve got to help our schools. What do we do?’ ”

The solution was to invent and patent the Energy Harness UV-C. “It’s not (only effective against Covid),” Daneri points out. “It’s been fascinating. We thought it was going to be something that was going to just help our schools open up again, but it’s in thousands of schools (with a new customer added the day prior to this interview).”

Combs was struck by Daneri’s resilience.

“As a business owner – and even more challenging as a small business owner – you don’t know, ‘Do we close? Do we open? There was no bailout program at the time. You’re not quite sure how you keep the doors open, how you keep your employees with an income that they can take home to their families. But man, Patricio was super poised, super definitive. We got that to market in six months.

“I was very impressed by how he handled that crisis situation at such a young age with such uncertainty about everything at the time.”

Next lap

One thing’s for sure when it comes to Daneri: He’s not slowing down.

Among his aspirations are to go back to graduate school. The first time around, he graduated from Indiana University Bloomington with a master’s degree in business administration and management in 2013.

“That was probably one of the best things I’ve ever done. Some of the best relationships I have come from that program. Matter of fact, I am looking into doing it again in the next one to two years. The key is the program has to work with my schedule. So, it cannot be full time. It has to be what they call those executive programs. I love graduate school. But absolutely, I will do it in a heartbeat. I will do it in the next few years.”

In addition, he’s committed to venturing into unknown terrain – in all realms of life. A philosophy that has served him and others well.

“One of my favorite quotes is, ‘If you want what you don’t have, you have to do what you haven’t done,’ ” he remarks. “You always have to constantly challenge your status quo.”

Congratulations to **PATRICIO DANERI**



2024 YOUNG PROFESSIONAL OF THE YEAR!

The 500 Festival proudly congratulates our board director, Patricio Daneri, on being named the 2024 Young Professional of the Year.

Patricio’s leadership, dedication, and contributions to both our organization and the Indianapolis community have been truly inspiring. We are honored to have him on our team and look forward to his continued impact.

