

THE **Entrepreneurs Club**

A BRIEF HISTORY

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The Entrepreneurs Club was formed in the fall of 1988. A few months earlier, Gus Hauser of Hauser Communications, Marc Nathanson of Falcon Communications and I had struck up a conversation about the common interests shared by mid-sized cable television operators. It seemed to us that the largest cable operators—such as TCI and Time Warner—had lots of corporate Washington representation, as well as views on regulatory and operating issues that didn't always match those of smaller cable guys. We knew other mid-sized operators who had most of their net worth tied up in their companies, who were taking great financial risks, but who weren't communicating with one another on a regular basis. Gus, Marc and I each called other mid-sized operators with whom we were personally acquainted and invited them to gather in a hotel room at the Western Show in Anaheim, California. Attendance was good; more than 15 of our colleagues showed up for the initial meeting. We agreed to form a club that would meet on a regular basis to talk about issues of common interest.

Little did we know that day that The Entrepreneurs Club would still be meeting 15 years later.

Of course, much has changed during those years. Among other things, Club membership has expanded to 23 members and a majority of the members have sold their cable businesses. When members began to retire from the business in the 1990s, we could have disbanded or trimmed our ranks. But by then we had become so close as friends that we decided: 'Once an Entrepreneurs Club member, always an Entrepreneurs Club member.' The Club's retirees have remained part of the group ever since. To no one's surprise, they continue to take an active interest in cable—and media issues generally—and contribute to the discussion. Also, to no one's surprise, several members who had retired have since gone back into the cable business.

Since that first organizational gathering 15 years ago, we have met at least two times a year, in full-day meetings that start in the morning, run till late afternoon and are usually topped off by dinner. Guests and speakers have ranged from Ted Turner to John F. Kennedy, Jr. . . . from John Malone to Barry Diller. Topics run the gamut, from operational issues, new technological developments, and the regulatory landscape in Washington, D.C., to the finance and banking climate, Wall Street's perspective on the industry, and other media opportunities.

Personal issues come in for their share of discussion, too: We talk about everything from charitable giving to health issues to how members are spending their time after selling their businesses. I think all members feel that the Club has been one of the most—if not *the* most—valuable and interesting cable organization of which they've been a part.

From the Club's start, I have had the privilege of chairing our meetings. Sometimes it's like herding a group of large male lions—each fabulously successful in his own right and having extraordinary experiences to share with the group. We have all become good friends as we have traveled through the ups and downs of the cable television business . . . not to mention the ups and downs of life.

I sincerely hope we'll continue to meet in the years ahead . . . in the same spirit of mutual respect and fellowship.

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A special note about *Wired to Win*:

Three Entrepreneurs Club members opted not to participate in the book project: Rocco Commisso, Bill Ingram and John Rigas. Ralph Roberts was a member of the Club when the book project was undertaken. He decided for personal reasons to resign from the Club, but graciously accepted our invitation to remain part of the book.