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## Haworth College of Business News (06/2016)

Haworth College of Business

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# Haworth College of Business News



## WISHFUL THINKING

Follow along as teams of MBA and undergraduate business students develop and execute fundraising events to support Make-a-Wish Michigan®, all while learning about community-based service learning and leadership.

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## DISRUPTIVE AWARD

Developing a virtual supply chain team enabled by patented software led to a most disruptive technology award for Industry Star, whose founder and CEO, William Crane, B.B.A.'06, says he is excited to "partner with some of the most innovative companies."

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## GOOGLE'S RE:WORK

Dr. Doug Lepisto, assistant professor of management, was one of three junior faculty selected by Google to present research at the re:Work Conference. Lepisto's presentation and research focus on creating a higher sense of purpose in organizations.

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## JUST BUSINESS

In a post from Just Business, Dean Kay Palan discusses her upcoming transition to dean of the Culverhouse College of Commerce at the University of Alabama and shares suggestions for those experiencing change at their own workplaces.

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Jay Wolcott, B.B.A. '99, learned the power of paving a path for himself and others while studying integrated supply management at WMU.

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Graduate student and entrepreneur Joshua Teo has won the second Brian Patrick Thomas Entrepreneurial Spirit Award, worth \$10,000.

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Integrated supply management student Kory Johnson knew he would be an entrepreneur. Starting Gate helped him get there.

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## Operation wish: undergraduate and MBA students work collaboratively to help wishes come true

Fifty-five students, forty-three days, six teams, two classes and one community partner—this sets the scene for an innovative undergraduate and MBA summer class pairing, in which Dr. Tim Palmer, professor of management, and Dr. Derrick McIver, assistant professor of management, have designed their courses to have overlapping meeting times and the opportunity for students to work collaboratively on fundraising projects that will benefit Make-A-Wish® Michigan.



Each student team will create a fundraising campaign that will benefit the nonprofit organization, which grants wishes to two-and-a-half to 18-year-olds who are facing life-threatening medical conditions. The organization has four main categories of wishes:

- **GO:** A child can ask to travel to a destination that will be meaningful and fun.
- **MEET:** A child can request to meet someone such as a singer, actor, director, author or other prominent social figure.
- **HAVE:** A wish kid can ask for an item such as a swimming pool or a shopping spree.
- **BE:** Kids can ask to be something—options range from superheroes to celebrities—and the experience is created around that dream.

These wishes bring hope into the life of the child and his or her family members, as they all deal with that child's serious medical condition. And the variety of wishes is as vast as children's imaginations.

Why are undergraduate and graduate courses in management taking on community fundraising projects? There are a couple of important curricular goals being achieved. "Community-based service-learning helps our students understand the powerful ability of organizations to leverage their resources to improve society," says

Palmer. “This project is a perfect fit for an undergraduate class titled ‘Business and Society.’” And for the MBA students, this is an opportunity to learn leadership and project management skills. “An experiential or active service-learning project such as this helps students develop, hone and test their team leadership skills while immersing them in an unforgettable community-based challenge,” says McIver.

The WMU professors borrowed the structure and idea for the challenge from Dr. Adam Grant, of the Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania, who developed a similar service-learning challenge with Make-A-Wish® as a partner, and has adapted it several times for his courses.

On May 16, students met with Brooke Jevicks, development director with Make-A-Wish Michigan, who presented on the organization’s mission, answered students’ key questions, and brainstormed with the teams about fundraising ideas.

Now, students are at work planning how to raise as much money as possible in 43 days to make the wishes of children in southwest Michigan come true.

We will be following the progress of the student teams throughout the summer term. Stay tuned on social media for progress updates on their fundraising initiatives.

# Disrupting the Automotive Industry



Team Photo: Left to Right Ken Nelson, Aysad Ozkan, Matt Forster, Charles Bean, Lynsey DeGraaf (WMU Alum), Tim Taylor, Eric Meldrum (WMU Alum), Ben Ludy, William Crane (WMU Alum), Tyler Davis (WMU Alum)

IndustryStar founder and CEO, William Crane, B.B.A.'06, says his company's success at a recent automotive competition demonstrates the need for the company's Supply Chain as a Service product, virtual supply chain team enabled by patent-pending software. IndustryStar earned accolades for the Most Disruptive Technology Innovation and was named the winner of the New Automotive Consumer and Business Opportunities category in the final round of competition at this year's Society of Automotive Engineers World Congress in Detroit.

Participating in the 8th Annual Global Automotive and Mobility Innovation Challenge, IndustryStar was recognized for its patent-pending supply chain software-as-a-service platform. Crane says that during the last two years IndustryStar has realized some amazing customer results in industries from automotive to consumer electronics in both NAFTA and the EU and that quantitative proven customer results were the focus of his presentation during the competition.

"We focused our presentations on our results," says Crane. "We have been able to reduce staffing costs by 50%, realize bill of material cost savings of 10-64%, and expedite programs by 33% on average across automotive vehicle and consumer wearables programs. This quantitative information resonated with the judges."

Crane says the entire company's staff, which includes three Business Bronco employees, were excited and even a bit surprised by the international reach of the competition:

“Having the ability to showcase our team’s supply chain experience and technology platform through SAE’s competition has been an amazing experience,” says Eric Meldrum, B.B.A.’11, manager of Supply Chain Solutions. “The fact that we were recognized as one of the most disruptive business models is a great honor and promises a very bright future for our team and company. What we are most excited about is the opportunity to partner with some of the most innovative companies in the world to support and grow their supply chain operations.”

Supply Chain Solutions analyst Tyler Davis, B.B.A.’13, says that “being recognized as one of the most disruptive business models in the automotive industry is a great achievement for our team. This is just another positive example that highlights our company’s unique value proposition in the marketplace.”

“Showcasing our team’s disruptive approach to supply chain and innovative software platform on such a large stage was a huge honor and has given us the opportunity to continue to expand into new spaces,” adds Supply Chain Solutions analyst Lynsey DeGraaf, B.B.A.’15.

The competition and awards are a collaboration of the MIT Alliance in Michigan, SAE International and NextEnergy. Winners earn cash prizes and in-kind services in business commercialization acceleration from the event’s sponsors.

# Setting the path

For entrepreneur Jay Wolcott, B.B.A.'99, the key to success has always been paving his own path and helping others do the same. The founder and CEO of Digital Roots has spent the majority of his time since graduation growing companies, others and his own, and helping pave the way for others' success.

Prior to launching Digital Roots, a software company focused on artificial intelligence for social analytics, Wolcott spent eight years post graduation rising in the ranks at General Motors.

“At GM, I was provided many challenging roles that led to very early management responsibilities on large global outsourcing programs,” says Wolcott, who was offered a position at the company before even starting his senior year at WMU. “I attribute this responsibility to my education in integrated supply management at WMU and to my undergraduate studies providing me with a balanced understanding of business fundamentals.”



Eight years after graduation, as one of the youngest executive level employees with global procurement responsibilities at GM, Wolcott launched Digital Roots.

“The second half of my career has been even more challenging trying to create a business from scratch,” says Wolcott. “But like anything else, I have learned a successful approach and leverage that experience to launch and manage additional businesses. To date, we now have five different companies in operation.”

Wolcott attributes his business acumen and his desire to continue growing as a business owner and professional to the faculty at the Haworth College of Business. In particular, Dr. Sime Curkovic, professor of supply chain management, had an impact on Wolcott.

“Dr. Curkovic instantly took an interest in students and the big decisions we were preparing for in regards to our careers,” he says. “I will never forget the consultation he provided about the various job offers we were receiving and the realistic perspective he brought from working in similar environments.”

Now Wolcott helps advise integrated supply management students working towards their own goals, as a part of his role on the ISM Executive Council, a group of industry executives helping to shape and advise the ISM program.

“Selfishly participating on this board also allows me to identify talent coming out of the program as well as providing face-to-face interaction with students,” says Wolcott, adding that being challenged in higher education help set the stage for tasks facing student in the business world. “The second half of my career has been even more challenging trying to create business from scratch. But like anything else, I have learned successful approach and leverage that experience to launch and manage additional businesses.”

For Wolcott, paving multiple paths to success for himself and others is all in a day's work.

# WMU entrepreneur wins annual \$10,000 Brian Patrick Thomas Award

by Alyssa Gapske  
May 17, 2016 | WMU News

KALAMAZOO, Mich.—The Western Michigan University student entrepreneur behind a new software program has won the second Brian Patrick Thomas Entrepreneurial Spirit Award.

**Joshua Teo**, a graduate student research assistant studying mechanical engineering, received the \$10,000 award for his invention Durabilika, an interactive cloud-based durability analysis software.

## About the award

The Brian Patrick Thomas Entrepreneurial Spirit award is awarded annually to a company in Starting Gate, WMU's student business accelerator, which seeks to move teams of people to a common cause with a higher social purpose. The inaugural award was given to [NeoVent](#) in 2015.

## Durabilika

Durabilika helps design engineers at manufacturing companies predict the service life of their products through cloud-based software, FatigueNet. Teo created the software while pursuing his undergraduate degree in mechanical engineering when he realized most products used to serve the same function were either extremely expensive, difficult to learn, or both. Durabilika seeks to simplify this type of software by helping users conserve time and money by using low-risk payment plan options and by making the product self-explanatory and easy-to-use.

"We are honored to receive this award," says Teo. "With this type of funding, we're able to continue to expand our research on the product, working to make it easier to access and use."

Durabilika is co-founded by **Dr. Daniel Kujawski**, professor of mechanical and aerospace engineering at WMU. The company plans to use the award to hire programmers, attend coding seminars and complete the minimum viable product.

## About Brian Thomas

Thomas is an alumnus of WMU who earned his degree in industrial marketing in 1996. He began his professional career at Forkardt Inc. in Portage and later became an account executive manager for Honda Manufacturing at global automotive giant Magna International. He joined OtterBox in 2003 and was eventually named CEO where he was responsible for leading global expansion efforts and was the chief visionary in positioning OtterBox as an innovation technology company.



During his tenure, OtterBox achieved several milestones and was consistently named one of the fastest growing and most innovative companies in the U.S. by several business organizations. Thomas received the Mid-Market CEO of the Year in 2014 by CEO Connection and was named one of the Top 100 CEOs in the country by Chief Executive Magazine. Thomas's passion for entrepreneurial thinking and social entrepreneurship sparked his desire to establish this award to support student entrepreneurs in their efforts to create enterprises that operate harmoniously with employees, communities and non-profit organizations, creating a strong synergistic benefit for all stakeholders.

Thomas is currently the co-owner and CEO of Jemez Technology. Jemez Technology is a software company focusing on real-time perimeter detection and security for the country's critical infrastructure, monuments and national security assets.

## **About Starting Gate**

Starting Gate is a student business accelerator that gives students rich and valuable resources to develop their startup companies. It is located in downtown Kalamazoo and operated by the Haworth College of Business Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation. The accelerator is open to all WMU students through a competitive application process in which students must demonstrate a promising idea for a product or service, which can be launched within a short period of time. Starting Gate provides a fast track to business launch.

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# Quality Influence: Kory Johnson

College students often struggle with choosing a major or finding what it is that they are passionate about. Through taking a variety of courses and engaging in extracurricular activities, students can develop a sense of where their talents and interests lie. Kory Johnson, however, knew from the start that he would be an entrepreneur. “It wasn't a decision to become an entrepreneur but a realization that it was what I was meant to do,” says Johnson.



However, Johnson knows firsthand that growing a business is no easy task. An entrepreneur faces many difficulties—one of which can be simply learning how to get started. Developing strategies and plans for a new business often requires the collaboration of passionate colleagues and experienced mentors. Johnson, the founder of Quality Influence, found this intersection of support at Western Michigan University's Starting Gate.

Johnson describes the culture of the Starting Gate student business accelerator as a beneficial learning environment for first-time entrepreneurs. “It's a perfect storm of mentorship, access to technology, office space and an innovative community, packed into a short time frame,” says Johnson. By utilizing the mentorship and opportunities through Starting Gate, Johnson says he has been able to sharpen his focus and his plans behind his business Quality Influence, a social media platform.

Quality Influence is targeted toward college students to seamlessly buy and sell items that students often go through quickly—including electronics, books and dorm or apartment necessities. The platform would be specifically tailored for the Millennial generation, focusing on quick transactions and a sleek design.

Since joining Starting Gate, Johnson says one of the biggest benefits for his company has been gaining insights from professionals in various fields. “I now have new perspectives I hadn't thought of, and strategies for pricing, sending cold emails, and financial modeling. With a validated business concept, I am more eager than ever to be successful,” says Johnson.

He cites the mentorship component of his Starting Gate experience as one of the most beneficial aspects for him and his business. “I feel more confident about the product and how to sell it. Each of my mentors had a slightly different opinion about the problems I presented, which enabled me to create the best strategic decisions,” he says.

In five years, with help from Starting Gate, Johnson sees his social media buying-and-selling platform being used by universities across the nation. “The main focus will be to stay innovative,” Johnson says. “I think an entrepreneur sees what's around him or her and tries to improve the situation or come up with something that will benefit everyone. Entrepreneurs recognize that they are part of something big, but they don't get lost in the shuffle. Instead, they get an urge to improve the machine, add new parts, and get it humming at a speed that others never thought it could.”