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Anthony Sandberg

58 / Founder & President, OCSC Sailing / Berkeley, California

Rebecca Spagnuolo

Using a borrowed phone and a borrowed boat, Anthony Sandberg started OCSC Sailing in 1979. Today, OCSC is the largest single-location sailing school in the country, with a 10,000 square foot facility on the San Francisco Bay, 80 employees, and \$3 million in annual revenue. Consistently ranked in the top 100 companies to work for in the Bay Area, OCSC also donates 2-3% of its net sales to environmental protection groups worldwide.



MY ASPIRIATION: I'm looking out of my office window right now at San Francisco Bay, and other than the four boats we have going out today, it's totally empty. This is, without a doubt—and I've sailed everywhere in the world one can sail—this is the single best spot for recreational sailing on Earth. And it is unused and undiscovered. My aspiration is to have this bay covered with sailboats. I'd like to see American kids sailing, and certainly around the Bay.

MY INSPIRATION: What inspires me most is what a beautiful world this is. I travel all over the place—this year alone I'll be in Mexico, Peru, Greece, Argentina, and on an expedition to go ice climbing in Antarctica. So what inspires me is that somehow I got to play in this lifetime. It's just celebrating life.

WHY I'M A SUCCESS: I feel personally successful because, first of all, I have lots and lots of friends. In terms of my value system, a big house and a more expensive car isn't the reward. It's friendship, community, and activity with people. Having great extended family and lots of different pockets of interest where I belong and where I'm welcome around the world feels successful to me.

HOW I DID IT: I had lots of different options. I had played a lot and traveled on different adventures, and one day my dad said to me, "You know, someday you're going to be fat and bald. You're not going to get the job just because you walk in the door. Just pick something and really excel at it, and be the person that hires rather than the person that gets hired. Be the leader." I went out to the coast and spent two weeks living by myself on the shore in a lean-to just trying to dig down and find what was going to make me happy. And I came up with the fact that I loved the sport of sailing and it needed to be reinvented.

So I borrowed a boat and took out newspaper and yellow page ads, and started teaching. I started with a distinctive boat, a challenging boat to sail—not just a boat that pushes water. And I just took exquisite care of my clients. I gave them more time than they ever paid for. When you get more than you thought you'd paid for, and it feels like a bonus and that you've been personally cared for, you tell your friends. My father had restaurants and he never advertised. He'd say, "If the food's not good enough for them to come back and bring their friends, I don't deserve to be in business." And he did just fine.

I also chose a partner. My business partner, Rich, who's the CEO, loves to keep things ordered and put together. Two of me would be crazy—neither of us would ever be at the office! But having Rich give refinement and definition and consistency to what we choose to do together makes all the difference. I needed that partnership. Somebody else might have all of those skills under one cranium, but I don't.

WHAT I'VE LEARNED: You want to moderate your growth. This year we're on schedule to have 20% growth, and we've said that's enough, so we're holding it out that level. You have to know your limits, because it has to be fun. Also, your employees are your most valuable asset. When I think about my company, the first thing I think about is my staff, then I think about my client. Because I know that if I put the client first, they're not going to be served by an employee that doesn't enjoy what he's doing. If you feel good in the morning, you do a good job.

WHAT I KNOW: I just read recently that the younger generation imagines that success is fame and fortune. But maturity has taught us that real success, in terms of value, comes from gratitude and generosity.

WHAT'S NEXT: I love travel. I would love to inspire people to go out and very respectfully enjoy and explore this world, which I think makes them advocates for saving it. In the next five years my partner and I have agreed that what we'd like to do is grow the people within the company to run it themselves, so both of us can give about 25% of our time to nonprofit groups.




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