



## Entrepreneurial Wisdom from Dr. Robert Frash., Jr.

How many college professors have combined successful academic and entrepreneurial careers?

Dr. Robert Frash Jr., Hospitality and Tourism Management Assistant Professor, must work while he sleeps. He's found time to create and manage four award winning restaurants, earn numerous degrees, publish hospitality industry case studies and assessments, and present his research at prestigious Hospitality and Tourism Conferences throughout the United States.

From 1989 to 2000, Dr. Frash created four restaurants in Indiana. "All were original concepts of my and my co-owners design," he enthuses. "Rick's Cafe Americain in Indianapolis was lauded as Best Downtown Restaurant by Indianapolis Monthly in 1991. The Eller House Restaurant in Fishers, Indiana, won a 1992 Four Tine Award from The Indianapolis Star. And The Blue Heron and Carrigan Crossing Restaurants in Indianapolis had joint average annual sales of \$6 million."

"There is nothing more rewarding," Dr. Frash says, "than standing back after a \$30,000 Saturday shift and knowing that your ideas for a great evening of dining were shared by your guests."

After fourteen successful years, where Dr. Frash served as Limited Partner, Chief Operating Officer, General Partner, and Executive Chef, he began to realize "the larger my operations became, the more separated I became from my guests. I spent more and more time in an office. I missed the interpersonal contact."

There were also major disappointments along the way.

"I had a bookkeeper embezzle some \$60,000 in a restaurant I owned, due to my past shortsightedness of accounting. Knowledge of accounting is an absolute mandate in the business world."

In 2000, Dr. Frash joined the Associate Faculty at the School of Physical Education, Department of Tourism, Convention and Events Management, at Indiana University and Purdue University in Indianapolis. From that institution in 1997, he had earned an Associate of Science, Hospitality Management. From Purdue in West Lafayette in 1999, he had earned a Bachelor of Science, Restaurant, Hotel, Institutional and Tourism Management. In 2001, he received a Master of Arts, Adult and Community Education from Ball State University in Muncie; then in 2004, he was awarded Doctor of Philosophy, Hospitality and Tourism Management, conferred by Purdue University. He served as Graduate Instructor in Purdue's Department of Hospitality and Tourism Management, from 2002-2004, teaching courses that included "Advanced Foodservice Management" and "Quantity Food Production and Service."

Which of his many awards and degrees are most meaningful?

"Other than being a father," Dr. Frash says, "finishing my undergraduate degree is my proudest achievement; not that the Ph.D. was easy. It took me almost 22 years, part time, while owning and operating all those restaurants concurrently."



Dr. Frash has also found time for scholarly research: "Social loafing dynamics in team-based learning" was well received at the 2004 I-CHRIE Annual Conference & Exposition in Philadelphia; and published in "Journal of Teaching in Travel and Tourism" in 2004. "Facilitating team-based learning" was presented online, at the International Hospitality and Tourism Virtual Conference in 2004.

In August 2005, Dr. Frash joined the College of Charleston as Hospitality and Tourism Management Assistant Professor. Students are enjoying all his courses, such as "Restaurant Entrepreneurship: Concept to Opening" and "Principles and Practice of Hospitality and Tourism Management."

"When I was in foodservice fulltime," Dr. Frash recalls, "I worked round the clock nearly everyday. Now I am as active, but it isn't really work anymore. My job at College of Charleston is my dream job. I am blessed to be living it."

How would he characterize his HTM students?

"Bright. Committed. It may be the class size, the liberal arts platform, and/or Charleston's rich hospitality culture. Whatever the reason, students here are deeply involved in the teaching and learning process. In education, I have been able to rekindle my passion for people."

What's the best advice he received as an entrepreneur?

"Way back when I was a GM for TGI Fridays," remembers Dr. Frash, "I earned the company's Gold Star award for having the best quarterly sales and profits. As a result, I spent a few days on President Dan Scoggins' 40 foot yacht in Bar Harbor, Maine. After a day of sailing and chardonnay, he looked me straight in the eye, grabbed me by the collar, and told me if I did nothing else: Listen to his guests. Well, they became MY guests when I opened my own place. Those words still resonate with me today."

Now that Dr. Frash has made Charleston his new home, would he consider opening a restaurant?

"If the right young, eager, and talented student came along, and was interested in a start-up...Well, it would be tempting. Once an entrepreneur, always an entrepreneur."

HTM students: your golden opportunity might be right in your classroom.

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