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Andrea and Andrew Simon – Founders of SAMC



If you are going to be an entrepreneur, you need to think

about more than one thing at a time, yet be very disciplined in your approach.

Dr. Andrea Simon, Ph.D., a cultural anthropologist, founded SAMC in 2002 to bring the unique perspective of anthropology to businesses. Prior to founding [SAMC](#), Andi held executive positions in banks and healthcare companies, including M&T Bank, Montefiore Medical Center, and St. Joseph's Regional Medical Center. An academic, as well as a businesswoman, Andrea also served as a Visiting Professor at Washington University.

Andrew Simon, a partner at SAMC, is a former executive for L'Oreal and Citicorp, who's also an accomplished entrepreneur, growing Questar Assessment, Inc. from \$0 to \$50 million in 17 years. Both have helped companies from start-ups to century-old institutions to see, think and feel in different ways, so that the companies can excel amid change.

What are you working on right now?

ANDREA: Wow. That's a tough question. We are both entrepreneurs, as well as consultants. We have lots of clients, in addition to booking speaking engagements on innovation and change. On any given day we can be working with multiple clients or speaking before CEO groups.

Where did the idea of your company come from?

ANDREW: My wife, Andi, is an anthropologist by training. She taught at the university level in multi-discipline programs. When banks began to go through deregulation and change, she was hired as a consultant and eventually became an executive vice president of a division of a bank that has a major presence on the East Coast. She then moved on to healthcare, when it began to go through change and deregulation, so there is a theme here.

Finally, after 9/11, she decided to go into her own consulting business, positioned herself as a corporate anthropologist helping companies to change, innovate and rebrand themselves.

I worked for existing companies that wished to start new units, both in healthcare and in banking. I also started a company in the K-12 assessment market that has grown into a significant player. Again, I focused on innovation and change, as well.

In 2011, I retired as Chairman of my company. Having discussed business, innovation, and company culture as part of our pillow talk over a number of years, both of us decided it would be a great cap to

our professional careers if we began to formally work together. So I joined SAMC earlier this year.

What does your day look like?

ANDREA: This might sound trite, but each day looks a little different. Last year, each one of us logged more than 100,000 air miles, so you see we are always on the go. In the past, we were generally in different locations. Now we spend a little more time together on the road. As an example, we were both in St Louis, Tallahassee and Washington, D.C. on business.

When we aren't traveling, we like to be in the gym by 6 a.m. since it's easier to get that out of the way before things begin to open up during the day. Sometimes we are collaborating on a project and some days we are working independently.

How do you bring ideas to life?

ANDREW: Andi is a Blue Ocean Strategist and both of us are Innovation Games Facilitators. We have a process for both generating ideas and bringing them to fruition. Andi also created a ChangeMap™ process that helps companies backwards plan.

What's one trend that really excites you?

ANDREW: Andi is an anthropologist. Anthropologists conduct ethnographic research to understand peoples and cultures. Corporate anthropologists are hot right now. A number of companies including Microsoft, and Intel have tons of anthropologists on their staffs to help their organizations see, feel and think differently about products and services. When we were in St Louis at Washington University, we found out that "Anthro" is the largest major in the School of Arts and Sciences. These trends bode well for the future of SAMC.

What was the worst job you ever had and what did you learn from it?

ANDREW: I worked for a large drug company running its proprietary drug unit. I was hired to start this unit and had a great time, exceeding all revenue and profit objectives. I was then asked to resign. Why? Because what determined success in that culture had a different meaning to the leadership of the drug company than it had in my mind.

Without going into greater details, the lesson learned from this experience was — before signing up, make sure you understand the culture of the organization and what defines success.

If you were to start again what would you do differently?

ANDREA: That's a tough question to answer since neither of us believes in living life backwards. However, it's tough to work for someone if you are an entrepreneur. Understand who you are, what makes you tick and find the appropriate environment — that is critical.

As an entrepreneur what is the one thing you do over and over again?

ANDREW: I think there is more than one thing that we do over and over again. We recently wrote a series of blogs on the SAMC website, entitled: "Eight things to think about when you start a new venture." If you are going to be an entrepreneur, you need to think about more than one thing at a time, yet be very disciplined in your approach.

What is the one failure you have had as an entrepreneur, and how did you overcome it?

ANDREW: Again, I am going to direct you to the blogs that we recently wrote. Our greatest failure has been dealing with underfunded projects. Without sufficient working capital, you have to take your eye off the critical element of building a business and worry about funding the business. Line up your financing ahead of time and keep a reserve for a rainy day. Nothing ever goes as planned.

What is the one business idea you are willing to give away to our readers?

ANDREW: Passion and commitment! Nothing is easy. It is too easy to quit. If you really believe in something — follow through. There are always roadblocks to the path of success. Early in my career, I was introducing a product, it was a good product but it failed. But we figured out another path to success. Someone paid me a complement by saying that I willed it to happen!

If you could change one thing in the world, what would you do and how would you go about it?

ANDREW: Today, the world both domestically and internationally is very polarized. We have no centerists. We lack tolerance of other people's values and opinions. We would both change that if we could. Unfortunately, I don't have a clue about how to change people's behavior at a macro level. I, do, however know how to do this at a micro level. SAMC does a lot of work identifying and helping to change an organization's culture — and I think we had better stick with that kind of work.

What is one book you recommend for our readers to read?

ANDREA: Since there are the two of us we are going to give you two books. Books that relate to our

business. They are: [Blue Ocean Strategy](#) by Mauborgne and Kim and [Diagnosing and Changing Organizational Culture](#) by Cameron and Quinn.

Three people we should follow on Twitter and why?

ANDREW:

- a. My wife [@andisamc](#), because she always has interesting things to say. I've known her for 44 years and she's always finding a new way to look at business and life.
- b. [Seth Meyers](#). Because we all need a laugh and he's the head writer of SNL, which continues to manage to stay on the air, despite constantly changing times.
- c. [Bloomberg Businessweek](#) – Because those editors are always on top of what's going on and their tweets make you think.

When was the last time you laughed out loud? What caused it?

ANDREW: About 10 minutes ago and I laughed at myself. Laughing at yourself is very important. No one is perfect. It is also healthy in an organization setting, since people understand that you have some human traits.

Who is your hero?

ANDREA: We have many, but one is Steve Jobs. He has transformed society. He created blue oceans before there was Blue Ocean Strategy. Jobs also understood customer experience. When you think about the Apple stores, you think about an exceptional customer experience!

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