



TriVita, Inc.

2. Barry Borthistle



Interview conducted on April 15, 2008
by Ryan Baggio

Biographical Information: **Barry Borthistle**

Description	Company
Dates of Involvement	1999 to 2006, 2006 to Present
Title	President & Co-Founder, Independent Business Affiliate
Name of Company	TriVita, Inc.
Website	www.trivita.com
Location(s)	Phoenix, Arizona
No. of employees	Approx. 200 with 4,000 business affiliates & 2.5 million customers
Product/Service	Preventative health products
Industry	Health
Revenue (range)	N/A
Public/Private	Private

I. GENERAL ENTREPRENEUR QUESTIONS

1. When did you start your first entrepreneurial venture and what was it?

I started my first entrepreneurial venture in 1970 when I began buying and selling houses in Oshawa, ON, after 11 years of climbing the corporate ladder with The Bay, Sears and Canadian Tire. Although I was a manager with one of the largest department stores in Canada, real estate was going through the roof at this time. I told the Lord, 'if You bless this real estate venture I will give you 51% of all I make.' To make a long story short I bought and sold 38 pieces of property in 8 months, with none of my own money. At the end of the venture I walked out of the bank with a cheque in 1971 for \$100,000 which was a lot of money at that time. I argued with God that I would give the money to him later. But I didn't and gave Him His 51% at that time.

My second entrepreneurial venture was in 1974 when I started a retail store called 'Accent Shops.' Accent Shops was an original warehouse store concept that sold household linens. We started in White Rock, BC, [a suburb of Vancouver]. I did \$1,700 in business in the first day. My wife said that I was crazy at first, but then she became my biggest supporter and we expanded to 14 stores across Western Canada.

2. What motivated you to become an entrepreneur?

I became an entrepreneur to provide a higher standard of living for my family and to give more money to others. As well, I wanted to provide an opportunity for others to reach their potential.

3. Was there any one person who was a model of inspiration for you and in what way?

There were three people who inspired me. The first person was my father; he was always positive and had a great attitude. Secondly, Peter J. Daniels, the President and Chairman of the World Centre for Entrepreneurial Studies in Adelaide, Australia, inspired me. Peter Daniels has become a personal friend and this relationship has had a huge impact on me. The third person that has had a huge influence on my life was Sir Winston Churchill.

4. Was your educational experience (to whatever extent) helpful? If so, in which way?

No, absolutely not. I thought school was a waste of time. That was my mentality. I left school in Grade 10. However, a few years ago I received a Bachelor of Science degree in Business Administration with a major in Marketing from American Intercontinental University in Florida that said my life experience was equal to a university degree. Despite my own experience, however, I do support education. I do not believe, however, that our education system really prepares people for life and for business.

5. How many different business ventures have you started in your entrepreneurial career?

I have started eight or nine ventures:

- Real estate (1970)
- Accent shops Ltd. This was the original warehouse concept that sold linens (1973-1980)
- 3-4 preventive health companies, including: Enrich Canada Inc. (1991-1999) and TriVita Inc. (1999-2006) as President and co-founder. Both companies grew to multimillion dollar companies
- I was involved with one franchise, Sole Comfort Ltd. (1986-1993)
- 2 churches (I was a pastor at one of them)

6. What percentage of these business ventures do you estimate were financially successful?

75% of the ventures were financially successful.

II. ENTREPRENEURIAL QUESTIONS REGARDING YOUR SPECIFIC BUSINESS

7. How did you identify the opportunity that led to the setting up of the business?

I did a study of demographics of the business I wanted to get into. Two examples are:

- For Accent Shops (linen warehouse). At the time all linens, drapes and bedspreads were being sold out of department stores. I saw an opportunity for a concept to offer quality products for less money for the consumer.
- For the preventive health business that I am in now and have been for the last 25 years, I identified an opportunity by understanding that we are in a major health crisis. For example, in British Columbia we spend \$35 million a day on health care; which comes from the tax payer. The *National Post* recently claimed that, 'In ten years every single tax dollar raised will go to health care and education. There will be no money for anything else.' It is a crisis, but most people do not know it is a crisis. This shows that the study of demographics and knowing and understanding the demographics is a key to a successful business.

8. What were the critical elements you assessed before you decided to pursue the opportunity?

For Accent Shops I looked for competition and found out that there wasn't any. Therefore, one of the critical elements for success prior to starting a business is to understand the demographics of what you are going to go into—what are the consumer needs and what will they pay for your product? You don't grow a company to multimillion dollars because you're lucky, you have to know and understand the demographics of the business. For other companies that I was involved in, it was the demographics of the health crisis.

9. How much time did it take from seeing the opportunity to the first day of business?

I took anywhere from three to six months for all of the businesses and ventures I started. Every business begins with a dream.

10. If you had partners, who were they, and how did you find them?

I would not want to go into detail, except to say that in my experience equal partnerships seldom work. The main problem in my experience was that I found it hard to let go and therefore it was my problem.

11. Did you have a business plan of any kind?

Without exception, I had a written business plan. You have to have one. You are dead without one. I have recently completed writing a 160 page manual on 'How to Become CEO of Your Company' which covers in detail the writing of a business plan.

12. What kind of financing did you have?

I did not have very much financing. I believe that a good idea properly put together in writing draws money to it. For example, I started Accent Shops with \$3,000. I spoke to creditors and talked them into financing me. They made a lot of money off me, and then they also lost a lot of money because of me when I went bankrupt, although I paid a lot of it back.

Here is what we are facing today: we have a huge shortage of human capital; there is not a shortage of money. New entrepreneurs should be careful going into business today. The *Harvard Business Review* says that we are traveling down a road that we have never traveled down before. They estimate that in the next five to ten years, the seniors' market (which is comprised of people 59+ years of age) is going to grow at the rate of 81% per year. The people that are between the ages of 7-59 are going to grow at the rate of 7% per year. Today, businesses are advertising for people everywhere; there is a shortage of human capital. The media tells us that it is because of a low birth rate and low immigration, which is true. But what they don't say is that we have aborted 44 million babies in North America since 1972. That's 44 million people that are not here, but should be here to work. The government gets their money from taxpayers. If there is a lack of people working then what are they going to do?

The big thing in financing and in business today is that it does require a lot of human capital because human capital is going to be very hard to get. This is because of the demographics of today.

13. How much capital did it take?

Accent shops took \$3,000 of capital and my venture in real estate took \$2,000 from the bank. The real estate market was hot at the time. With the \$2,000, I put a down payment on a dirty, run down house that cost \$24,000. My wife and I fixed up the house and sold it three months later for \$29,000. We took something that was ugly, put some sweat equity into the house and made \$3,000. When I went

to close the deal the lawyer that was closing the house said, 'I know that house. That house is a disgrace to humanity and you fixed it up. I will tell you what I am going to do. You can have all the second mortgage money from me if that is your attitude towards working.' So I took him at his word. In the next eight or nine months I bought and sold 38 houses using the lawyer's money, not using a penny of my own. I walked out 8 months later with \$100,000 in my pocket. Peter Daniels has excellent teaching on this subject [see response to Question #3].

14. How long did it take to reach a positive cash-flow position?

With a heavy human capital involvement it took three years to reach a positive cash-flow position for Accent Shops. By contrast, my Enrich nutritional business did not require a lot of financial capital and so it took only three to six months to reach a positive cash flow position. TriVita Inc. took a huge amount of financial capital, but it was not my capital; it was the capital of Michael Ellison, CEO and co-founder of TriVita Inc.

15. If you did not have enough money at the time of the start, or at low points in the business cycle, what were some things you did in order to stretch your capital?

I did some stupid things to stretch my capital. I got people to guarantee a loan; I did that twice. Both times I had to repay the loan. One of my principles now is not to guarantee a loan. In both cases that I guaranteed a loan they lost their money and I had to repay the loan. Proverbs 6:1-5 states the biblical concept very clearly:

My son, if you have put up security for your neighbour,
if you have struck hands in pledge for another,
if you have been trapped by what you said,
ensnared by the words of your mouth,
then do this, my son, to free yourself,
since you have fallen into your neighbour's hands:
Go and humble yourself;
press your plea with your neighbour!
Allow no sleep to your eyes,
no slumber to your eyelids.
Free yourself, like a gazelle from the hand of the hunter,
like a bird from the snare of the fowler.

16. What did you perceive to be the strengths of your venture?

Two things that I perceive to be the strengths of any venture are:

1. Finding a need and filling it.
2. We are a business that focuses on relationships; having a real emphasis on recognizing and promoting people. I came across a study of successful people that concluded: 12.5% of being successful is knowledge and 87.5% is because you can deal with people.

17. What did you perceive to be the weaknesses of your venture?

The weakness of Accent Shops was that we were expanding too quickly. I did not listen to my wife! I had a mentality that if one is good than two is better. Additionally, I was not prepared for interest rates to go up to 23% in 1979.

18. What was your most triumphant moment?

My most triumphant moment was when I received the Winston Churchill Award in 1998. I was President of Enrich Canada and then I was asked to be President of the entire company and so I moved to the United States. The company had a big convention in Banff, Alberta. They presented to my wife, Margaret, and I a magnificent sculpture. They then explained that there were only two of the sculptures ever made. I was so overcome with emotion that I couldn't speak. Back in the 1940s the sculptor was to sculpt Winston Churchill. The original one remains in the House of Commons in England and the tradition is that when the Members of Parliament come in, regardless of what party, they would rub his head. The second one was in storage in England. The sculpture came along with a story that only someone who was worthy of it could buy it and only someone who was worthy of it could receive it. All of the people that I worked with convinced whoever was in charge that I was worthy of it. And I will never forget the moment of taking off the drape of the bust of Churchill. It was a very humbling experience.

19. What was your worst moment?

The worst moment of my life was on May 29, 2000 when I lost my wife Margaret, my high school sweetheart, to cancer. Margaret and I were married for 40 years. Never had I experienced the love of my three children and family more: Glenn

and Judy, Garth and Barbara, Peter and Jodi, and my ten wonderful grandchildren. However, in the mystery of it all, God has given me another love of my life, Ruth. My second worst moment was when I had to declare personal and corporate bankruptcy in 1979 with the failure of Accent Shops.

20. Once you got going, what were the most difficult gaps to fill and problems to solve as you began to grow your company?

The most difficult gaps to fill were finding the right people in the company.

21. What were the key attributes you looked for in people (partners, advisors, managers) as you grew the company?

I look for people with the right attitude. I don't like complainers unless they have a solution to their complaint.

III. REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

22. What are some things that you have found to be most personally rewarding and satisfying for yourself as an entrepreneur?

The most personally rewarding thing for me is seeing the success of other people. That gives me the biggest thrill; I love it. I can't give enough money and time away for someone who really needs it.

23. What are the three most important lessons you have learned with respect to starting and running a business that you pass on to an aspiring entrepreneur?

1. Have a dream and have a vision.
2. Study the demographics of the business you are going into.
3. Have a written business plan and belief system.

IV. FAITH AND THE MARKETPLACE

24. What does the term calling mean to you?

My starting point is a quote by Michael Baer: 'the very first aspect of building and leading a Kingdom Business is to know that you are called to it. A Kingdom Business is vocational. It is based on confidence that business is a good thing, and that God has called you to this enterprise. Everything else flows from this reality. The good news is that believers are called to it. All Christians have a calling, a high and holy calling. Business is mine, is it yours? If so, pursue it with all your heart to the glory of God and always remember that God made you for a purpose that includes business, and when you do business you honour Him.'¹

25. Do you believe that you were 'called' to entrepreneurship? If so, what does that mean to you?

Yes, without a doubt. I feel that I have been called to business every bit as much as I was called to be a pastor for six years. It is all about helping people. One of my favourite quotes in this regard is by Dr. Billy Graham: 'I believe one of the next great moves of God is going to be through the believers in the workplace.'

26. Who, if any one, affirmed that calling?

1. My wife. If your wife says no, then do not do it. If I had listened more to my wife over the years I would have saved myself a lot of money.
2. Friends and employees. The Book of Proverbs talks about the wisdom of counsellors.
3. Most importantly, God's confirmation.

27. What do you believe your gifts are as an entrepreneur?

I am an apostle teacher. I believe Ephesians 4: The gifts of the Holy Spirit are every bit for business as they are for the church. My gifts are leadership, teaching, giving and faith. I use those gifts in the business world. The Bible is the greatest business guide in the world. For example, according to Crown Financial Ministries², there are approximately 2,350 verses in the Bible on money.

¹ See www.amazon.com/Business-Mission-Power-Kingdom-God/dp/1576583880.

² See www.crown.org.

Barry Borthistle's belief system:

1. Establish written goals and objectives. Without a vision the people perish
2. Develop a written business plan and mission statement
3. God owns everything and it is God who gives the ability to attain wealth for his glory
4. Stay out of debt
5. Pay your bills on time
6. Give at least 10 percent of your income to charity and save or invest 10 percent and live on the balance 80 percent
7. All employee compensation plans should include:
 - Base wage
 - Commission on sales if applicable
 - Profit sharing
 - Rewards for excellence
8. Do not co-sign a loan unless you can afford to lose the money
9. Your customers are the boss. View your customers as the reason that you are at work, not as an interruption.
10. Always be open to new ideas and to listen to both sides of any story or complaint. 'Ideas are the ultimate arbitrators of success or failure' according to Jack Smith, CEO, General Motors
11. Set the example by hard work
12. Develop a burning desire with single-eyed vision for your cause
13. Do everything with honesty and integrity and remember to have fun
14. The positive attitude of employees is a company's number one asset
15. Remember your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. The importance of diet and exercise is vital. I have not had to take a prescription drug in the last 30 years and I have run virtually every day of those 30 years. I have discovered that physical, emotional, and spiritual health are very important to a balanced life and financial success
16. 'Never, never, never give up.' -- Sir Winston Churchill (my hero)

28. How did you (or do you) integrate your business expertise with your Christian calling?

My approach is that I don't integrate my business expertise with my Christian calling; instead, it's all one. My calling is to be in business. My belief systems are all biblically based.

The secular view of work leaves God out of the system. This is particularly unacceptable for Christians, because God calls us to make him the centre of our life. He wants us to have a Biblical worldview that weaves Him into every aspect of our lives, including work. He wants to be invited into our work; He wants to be Lord of our work.' - Sue Bohlin³

29. How have you been involved in your local church?

I was pastor of a church for six years. We started off with 17 people and the Lord blessed unbelievably with miracles and a growth in numbers. I took what I believed to be the New Testament pattern of growth action--Acts 2:42.⁴ And the Lord blessed us unbelievably with numbers and miracles.

We recently just moved back to Vancouver from Phoenix, AZ so we have not had sufficient time to find a local church to attend regularly. I have done some teaching in a couple of churches and am connected with City Axis in developing a marketplace ministry.

30. How have you been involved in your denomination and how?

I am not really involved in any denomination as I see myself as a Christian entrepreneur and not committed to any denomination.

³ See, Your Work Matters to God; <http://www.probe.org/faith-and-sexuality/personal-development/relationships/your-work-matters-to-god.html>.

⁴ 'They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.'

31. Have you been involved in para-church organizations and how?

Yes, I have been involved in Young Life Canada⁵ and supportive of World Challenge Inc.⁶ and Dalit Freedom Network Canada.⁷ My biggest involvement is with the International Organization of Christian and Jews. I believe very much in the support of Israel. I think it is an area where Christians have not shown sufficient support. In fact, I believe that supporting the State of Israel is a Biblical principle. Genesis 12:3 states:

I will bless those who bless you,
and whoever curses you I will curse;
and all peoples on earth
will be blessed through you.

When you get into it there is a special blessing which I believe includes financing for those who support and love Israel. Not to convert them, but to support them because they are God's chosen people. For years I have been bringing over Jewish families from Russia and Ethiopia back to Israel and financially supporting them. That is the organization that is biggest on my heart right now.

32. What are some examples of how you have integrated Biblical principles into your business practices and thus acted differently than a non-Christian due to your Christian faith?

First of all, I haven't always acted Biblically and I am ashamed of some of the things I have done. Now I try to pay my bills on time or ahead of time; that is one of my financial principles. I was over in India preaching and doing business. I came through Hong Kong and I ordered some tailor-made suits, but I wasn't there long enough to get them. So the tailor shop said that they would end up shipping the suits back to me. Two weeks later I get a package at my doorstep and it was labelled 'no value', but in it were two tailor made suits that valued \$2,000. So they got the package through customs thinking that they did me a favour, but I thought that it wasn't right. So I went down to the border with these suits and went up to a customs officer and told her the story. I will never forget the lady and she said that she had never seen this happen before. She stopped everyone and called them over and said 'You all have to hear this story.'

⁵ See www.younglife.ca.

⁶ See www.worldchallenge.org.

⁷ See www.dalitfreedom.net.

Another story is when I was being audited by the Canadian Revenue Agency (CRA), which is every businessman's nightmare. The auditor was in the office with all my staff and someone wanted to see me urgently, so I came out and asked if this could really wait because I am with a CRA auditor. So one of the ladies goes in the door and says to the auditor, 'I hate people like you.' I came back in and apologized to him. I said, 'the Bible tells us that you are God's servant and you're here to provide a service, so I appreciate what you are doing. I apologize for that.' He probably thought I was nuts. Now I can't say that it changed his mind, but those are two examples of taking Biblical principles into the marketplace and doing what you know is right in your heart.

33. What are the lessons you have learned that you believed are important for Christians pursuing entrepreneurship?

I am so convinced that the Bible has all the necessary principles for running a successful business, that I have taken the time over the years to put many principles in writing particularly in two areas:

- God's economic order or God's financial principles (this study changed my whole life financially).
- Working smart, not just hard. Mainly principles from King Solomon.

'Christianity as a world view holds a position on virtually every subject that pertains to life, its meaning and purpose. The Bible is considered to be the word of God and therefore infallible in all of its instructions.'-- Michael Evans.⁸ A challenge for all Christian entrepreneurs is that we can have a positive influence in showing how Christianity can affect the seven spheres of influence:

1. Business and commerce
2. Education
3. Arts and Entertainment
4. Government and Law
5. Family
6. Media
7. Church

⁸ 'The American Prophecies,' www.amazon.ca/American-Prophecies-Michael-D-Evans/dp/044652252X.

34. How could the church in a general sense support you as an entrepreneur in pursuing your calling in business?

The church could recognize that a call to business is on the same level as a call to being a pastor; we are all in ministry. We are all one. I would love to see a Sunday where instead of asking people to come forward to confess their sins, to ask those people that are going into a new job, which is their calling, and to come forward and have the congregation pray for them. Peter Wagner⁹ said 'Churches that recognize that everyone is called to ministry would explode.' The church is a theocracy, not a democracy. Jesus said I will build my church, not a Pentecostal, or a Baptist or Anglican church—all those denominations were invented by people.

35. What have been the biggest challenges for you as a Christian in business?

The biggest challenges are keeping my cool when people hurt me and not really wanting to tell how I feel. Take time for your family and friends.

36. Who was the most helpful (and why or how) in addressing these challenges: church leadership, Christian friends, etc.?

Church leadership sure has helped me with these challenges and my own knowledge of what the Word of God says. I have gotten up at 5 o'clock in the morning for the last 35 years and have spent two hours reading and studying the Word of God every morning.

37. Have you hired people from your church? If so, has it been a positive or negative experience?

My experience has been negative, totally negative. Don't do it.

38. Have you done business with other people in your church and how?

I have done very little business with those in my church. I have tried to stay away from it and when I have done it, it has generally not been a very positive experience.

⁹ C. Peter Wagner is a church growth specialist; see www.wagnerleadership.ca for more information.

39. Has your relationship with those people you have done business with in your church been positively or negatively affected-from a business and spiritual standpoint-by doing business together and how?

The relationships have mostly been negatively affected. I have done it and I wish I hadn't. Because I am a Christian leader they think that a return on investment is guaranteed. But nothing is guaranteed. Simply because we are from the same church if anything goes wrong they think that you will give them the money back. That's not the deal. I won't do business with anybody in the church anymore.

40. Is there any particular passage(s) of scripture that you have found particularly meaningful or that is inspirational to you?

The Book of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes in the Old Testament are particularly meaningful to me. In all of Jesus' parables recorded in the New Testament, 16 out of 35 deal with money. What I have found is the way that you reach people's hearts is through stories. Jesus does this through parables. Jesus appeared 132 times in the New Testament, 122 times were in the marketplace, and only 10 were in the synagogues. He told His stories through parables.