



I New Creation Consulting & Information Management Inc.
IAN DANIEL

Interview conducted on March 10, 2010
by Anne Buhler (BBA '10)

Company Background

DESCRIPTION	COMPANY #1	COMPANY #2
Dates of Involvement	June 1998 – Present	May 2006 – Present
Title	President	President
Name of Company	New Creation Consulting & Information Management Inc.	NCOL Ministries
Website	www.NCOL.com www.NCOLinternet.com	www.NCOLministries.ca www.Sunergo.net
Location(s)	Vancouver, BC	Vancouver, BC
No. of employees	8-15	
Product/Service	eCommerce and eBusiness Solutions	eCommerce and eBusiness Solutions for churches, church camps, etc.
Industry	Information Technology	Information Technology
Revenue (range)	Confidential	Confidential
Public/Private	Private	Non-Profit

I. General Entrepreneurship Questions

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

I don't want to sound too typical here but my first entrepreneurial venture was a paper route. I learned a lot. I learned a lot about marketing. I learned how to write a check when I was paying my bills and so on and learned how to collect money from people. Saturday night hockey games were the best time to collect money because people were usually home. You'd have to wait until a stoppage in play or in between periods and then knock on as many doors to collect as much money as you could from all the customers that owed you money. I did papers for several years.

I grew up in Penticton, BC where we picked fruit in the summer time. Tourists would flood the town, and we'd sell papers on the beaches and make an awful lot of money. I actually learned about foreign exchange because I learned that if a paper costs 15 cents or something like that and they would give me an American quarter, I would give them a Canadian dime back. I would save all that U.S. money up and roll it up and at that time you would get 7 cents on the dollar. I made more money on the foreign exchange than I did on selling the papers. So much the better if they gave you a dollar, two dollar or five dollar bill or something like that and you give them some change; the exchange was just enormous. It was like selling ten papers just giving them the exchange and they were just perfectly fine with that. I learned all kinds of things from being a paper boy: hard work and diligence and messing up and having to fix your own mistakes and customers who weren't happy until their paper was delivered exactly where they wanted it. I learned how to follow through on my promises and a ton of other life lessons that a lot of people don't learn at such an age.

On the down side, I was never available for after-school intramural sports or those sorts of things. You develop differently. I'm not sure that I grew up well-rounded. I grew up early in some ways and a little developmentally delayed in other ways. I was good at marketing, but having never played on a team, understanding team work would have been a challenge. Being a young entrepreneur is very much a one-person sport.

2. What originally motivated you to pursue entrepreneurship and what has maintained your ongoing entrepreneurial focus?

The pursuit of entrepreneurship was part of a career transition because I was an electrical engineering technologist by training with over twenty years at a power company [BC Hydro] and then I decided to start my own company. It would have been very difficult to get me out of the power company except that I began to realize that I was locked into a certain path. I wanted to explore things that were not in my job description. I ended up watching as the company laid off thousands of people. I was told by my boss not to worry, that it wasn't going to impact me, and it didn't. But I began to wonder after that: what if it had? What would my back up plan have been? What would I have done? And if more layoffs come some time in the future it could impact me and by then I'd better have a plan. I was always into planning, trying to figure out a good path for things. And in that exploration of self, like inventorying my own skills, asking what I could do and taking some night school courses and listening to some other people, I just let a whole lot of different ideas about business wash over me. I started putting some pieces together of things that I might be able to do that would be valuable outside of a large corporation. I would have to say that the wakeup call was realizing that what I had previously thought to be true, getting a job in a large corporation would be a job for life, cradle to grave kind of thing, was not necessarily true and I needed to be prepared with an alternative. That was the start of it.

I started to make friends with some entrepreneurs and some of their ideas started to rub off on me. As you express your own confidence or lack of confidence, they start looking at you critically and thinking, "you could be good at this and you could be good at that and, as a matter of fact, I have a small job I wouldn't mind contracting to somebody right now that I don't have time to do myself and you would be really good at it." One of my buddies gave me a contract to do in my spare time. I really thrived on it and I had a great time. So the risk-reward thing started to build a sense of "this has potential. Yes, I can be successful at this." I began to look beyond what I thought was a very secure responsible thing to do and into something that required a little more risk in order to be successful.

3. What individual(s) have been models of inspiration for you throughout your entrepreneurial career and in what way?

You have to have people around who believe in you and they have to hold opinions that matter. So I would say that there were two or three people who influenced me. I have an uncle who always believed in me and I drew on that relationship. He was a home builder and had built hundreds of homes in Calgary, Lethbridge, Red Deer, and Medicine Hat [Alberta] over the years. I started talking to him about my entrepreneurial potential and he was just always a keen supporter of mine. That doesn't mean he was a supporter without a critical eye, but he believed that if I would smarten up and move in a certain direction that I would be able to succeed.

I think you really have to know who you are. You can't be fishing around, trying to be successful in some entrepreneurial role until you know who you are. Otherwise the sand you are standing on keeps shifting. You need to know who you are at your core—you have

to have that settled. That doesn't mean that you can't have the odd self doubt and so on.

You have to have supporters; nobody is a self-made person. I have given that concept up long ago. You need to know first and foremost that you are a child of God and that you stand on that. In my previous movie when I was working at the power company, I was very much a power company person. I could represent the company. I could talk about power sales and water exports. I was very defensive of the organization and if I had lost my job, not only would I have not known what I would do for work but I would not have known who I was. I was first and foremost a power company employee and if truth be known then somewhere down the line, child of God, husband, father and all the other roles you play in your life. I would not have known who I was if I wasn't working for the company since my internal net worth was so wrapped up in being a member of that organization. It was where I had my friendships, it's where I had my knowledge, where I got my sense of value from the skills that I could do there and the problems I could solve. Without my position, not only would I not know where my next paycheck would come from but I wouldn't know who I was.

I went on a retreat where I got some really good counsel, took some really good courses during that time and managed to get my priorities turned around so that I was first and foremost a child of God. When you are "there," you can lose your job and you can still know who you are. And if the truth be known, my job, husband and father roles were tied for second and third. A man, particularly that is the bread winner for the family, typically finds his net worth from what he does. It's a hard thing to move away from "doing" to "being." When I understand the bedrock of what I stand on, then I am free to excel (or fail) at things without fear, because I know that I have intrinsic net worth. I am accepted; I know that I am loved.

4. How has any formal education you have received been helpful?

My education has been invaluable. It opened my eyes to what could be. I saw how different people solved problems, particularly when I got connected on some sort of team with people who were different than me. A team can be stressful. It has to be, especially as a driven personality. You may see things how they are while another person sees how they might be. It takes a while to realize that those two perspectives are (generally) not mutually-exclusive.

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

I have been involved in two businesses: this one [New Creation] and another one I started and sold.

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

Both have been successful. There are lots of people who have worked plenty harder than I who have not been successful. I can claim that I work hard but I can't claim the success for it. God gives the increase. We must be quick to honor God for the success of it. We honor God in all we do, whether in success or failure.

II. Entrepreneurial Questions Regarding your Primary Business

7. Please describe your primary business?

We're an internet services company. We build e-commerce and e-business solutions for people and organizations. We build complex, database-driven online solutions. Meaning, we build training systems, systems for inventory management, marketing systems, systems that sell precious metals, systems that train pilots, systems for non-profits that achieve child sponsorship and a number of things in between. We call our products "websites that work."

Most of our clients are small- and medium-sized businesses and some are medium or large, privately held companies.

Our approach is through what we call a "Relationship-Based Consulting Model." "Relationship-based" means that our clients recommend us, naturally, without payment or compensation. We end up building a strong relational base. There's a risk with it because many of our clients know each other. If we screw up with one, it can impact many client relationships. But that's also good because that puts the onus on us to behave very responsibly and to do the right thing. There's nothing wrong with that and we have nothing to fear with that if we are dealing with clients in an upright, honorable manner. They have this huge trust relationship with New Creation.

The "trust advantage" means we don't have a large marketing budget. We don't need to have 20% of our budget set aside for marketing. People tell others all the time, "you need to get service from these guys, they do a great job." We get business through relationships. Our whole business model involves standing on our reputation—and I'm too old to rebuild my reputation!

8. How did you identify the opportunity that led to the setting up of your primary business?

I was in search of something to do on the Internet and I enrolled in a certificate program in Internet studies at UBC. I observed all the other people in the class and why they were all there. There was a young lady who flew down from Alaska to take the class. She had put together a business, shipping fresh salmon from Alaska down into the lower 48 States. She had built this entire business to the point it was bursting at the seams. It was all done through a website that just had a picture of a fresh salmon, what she could do, the sizes and the prices and a 1-800 number. She came down to this course to figure out how to build an online shopping cart so that people could place orders online, because

her phone was ringing off the hook. She had to put some structure around her business. After the course she went back to Alaska and was making money hand over fist from her little enterprise. I thought to myself: "I have to figure this out." What is it that I want to do? That weekend was quite pivotal to me in seeing this young lady who had otherwise very little schooling and education but just the gumption to get out there and actually try something. So I had to figure out what industry was I going to approach. The question planted itself there and would not go away until I resolved it.

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

People often ask me about my competition. To this day I do not assess the competition. Again, we are relationship-based which means based on referrals. What I needed was an area or an industry that I knew quite well or at least knew something about and could learn the parts that I was missing. I needed to find an area where companies felt that their business could be vastly improved by moving them into an e-commerce solution. To this day we look for things that other people don't solve very well.

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

Not very long at all. Keep your costs low, work from home, don't go and take on leases for office space and so on. For most businesses all you need is an idea and a laptop and a strong pot of coffee.

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

I do not have partners.

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

No. I have a personal life mandate which you might argue is the same thing when I am the CEO because the business is going to flow from who I am. The business takes on a culture based on who I am and my values. And again that comes back to knowing who you are before you try to do anything.

13. What kind of financing did you have?

None. I worked from cash. People will often advise you to invest – which some translate to opening a location, taking out a lease, etc. But to take out a lease requires that you do something that I believe is against a scriptural principle: that of presuming upon the future. "Working from cash" is a Warren Buffett kind of style of operation and it requires conservatively operating and preserving precious cash. A new business should not get a lease on something unless there is money set aside to pay for it. If all of your revenue falls off, you could still afford to pay it out cash. Don't lease it unless you can afford to buy it.

14. How much capital did it take?

Probably \$10,000-\$15,000.

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

I was immediately cash flow positive. In order to do so, all of your costs have to be kept way under control to begin with. You must be willing to do everything yourself: to be the developer, handling the accounts receivable and accounts payable, to do the marketing and so on.

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

I made my own business cards. I bought card stock from the printing supply store and figured out a nice design and did my own business cards, sometimes staying up late, cutting them very, very carefully so that they would properly fit anybody's rolodex. I didn't want them to look homemade at all. It's an enormous amount of time to put in. That and a million other things I did myself. You save money because you are not paying for your own labour. In addition, you're learning the value of what it is you are doing.

I also bought a business. When the consulting dried up in the dot com bust [around early 2001], I wanted to keep my team together. By then I had enough cash that I went and bought an internet service provider. What took the previous owners twenty people to run, we had running more efficiently with five. Then I sold it.

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

First, we have diverse sources of revenue. We don't have clients all in one business segment: we are in manufacturing, training, precious metals, pharmaceuticals and a few other areas as well.

Second, we have good levels of competence throughout our company. All of my people have at least a bachelor's degree in something and some even have two degrees. They are not all in the same specialty either but they are all very competent. So around the team we have 50 or 60 years of "business-class" expertise in a wide variety of backgrounds.

Third, we have a very conservative approach to management of company resources.

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

I hadn't anticipated this question. I have spent a lot of time chiseling and shaping the company, I don't think it has any significant weaknesses.

19. What was your most satisfying accomplishment or event?

We serve a number of Christian organizations that are making a difference in Kingdom [of God] issues. We built a site for one client that helps secure the release of people around the world who have been imprisoned for their Christian faith. We have managed to secure

the release of, I think, 17 people over the course of the last 5 years. I am quite pleased to be associated with that organization.

20. What was your most disappointing situation or event?

I can't think of a disappointing event that has been debilitating for our company. I don't have big disappointments like that. I don't have big core "I wish I had done it better" types of things. I am very reflective, but I wouldn't call my reflections "regrets." I would say instead that I engage in good, ongoing self-analysis to see how we could improve. I don't have anything that I terribly regret.

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

When you start your own company it's your baby. It's about passing off work to somebody else and then freeing them, and remembering that they can't just do what you want. I find that in order for another human being to enjoy work they need to be able to put themselves into it. Someone else has to be invested in it and you have to be a leader enough to let them take the credit. It's no longer yours. There's a stage in there which is sometimes referred to as "founder's syndrome." Founders are typically impossible to work for because they know exactly what they had in mind. Typically a company doesn't actually become a stand-alone company until the founder has moved on. It's only then you know for sure if a company has its own legs. If you want to be a good founder and grow a company you need to attract good people who also have as strong a mind and as strong a will as you. You might need to give them room to spread their wings.

My definition of empowerment is that my team will not be constrained from moving forward by a different set of circumstances in my absence, but will make the decision that they think I would have made had I been there to make it. The problem that you, as leader, are solving is to impart your values to the people who are there to carry on what it is you have set out for the company to do. You have to share my values – or at least understand my values – and carry them out to the extent that you understand them, in my absence.

III. Reflective Questions

22. What were the key attributes you looked for in people as you grew the company?

I can teach people skills, but what I can't teach people is what they needed to learn at their mother's knee. I cannot teach a person teamwork and integrity and all those sort of things they needed to learn elsewhere. Everything else I can teach a person. When I interview someone for a job the very first question I ask them is, "Who are you?" This is a very different question than "What is your name?" I want to know what drives a person and what excites them. They can run with it in a thousand different directions and I get a sense of who they are. I want to know what their core values are. Some people want to tell me their

mission statement. I don't want to know what their mission statement is. What I want to know is, "What is their mission?"

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

There's no life like it. I love it. I love the freedom that I have to influence the world around me. I love the freedom that I have to engage in a greater purpose than making widgets for somebody. One wants their life to count for something and if you want it to count, you need to ask: "Where should you apply all the skills and all the smarts that your Creator has endowed you with and that your parents have invested in you?" With all that investment by others, you don't belong to yourself anymore. You have been bought at a price. We are God's instruments here on earth. I want to be the one that He looks for to strengthen others and that actually makes a difference. I want to be there.

24. What are ways in which you have developed your own entrepreneurial skills in order to be more effective as an entrepreneur?

I read the books of the people I admire. I also read a few leadership skill books as well. I learn what I can from them. I read Rudy Giuliani's book titled *Leadership* [Hyperion Press, 2002]. In one of the opening chapters, there's a simple little line that really sticks out. He said that "weddings are optional, funerals are mandatory." He's talking about the lives of the people you lead. If you have a bunch of employees and someone's got a wedding in their family and you get an invitation, it's optional for you to attend. But funerals are mandatory; people count on you being there. I had an employee whose grandfather passed away and he asked for the afternoon off to go to his grandfather's funeral so I gave it to him. I didn't tell him that I chose to go as well. He later said, "That was the most meaningful thing that you could have ever done for me; I didn't know that you cared that much for your staff."

25. What are ways in which you cope with or manage the personal stress of being an entrepreneur?

I have a great wife. I share enough of what I am doing with my family so that they feel involved and understand but not so much as to burden them with it. Live your life holistically. Don't try to compartmentalize things like a lot of people do. Personal time can be interrupted by business now and then and that's okay. I take my business with me on holidays and I take personal issues to the office. There's a kind of blurring between when I'm at work and when I'm doing personal things. I think it's because when you are an entrepreneur it's really not work. You are already doing what you love to do. You have to be aware of the others who are important in your life and make sure that they are not crowded out by your focus on your work—and that they get to share in the joy and be a part of it. I think that everyone in my family really appreciates that I enjoy myself at work.

They are my cheering team and they get joy from it as well.

26. What are ways in which you have dealt with others who have disappointed you in business?

I try to deal with them with grace. I don't get angry and defensive of them myself but I get angry with them if I feel like someone among my staff has been abused.

27. What do you think are the most important personal traits for an entrepreneur and why?

First, know who you are.

Second, be able to be self-critical so that you see yourself objectively and realistically.

Third, have a great deal of integrity about everything you do.

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

First, keep costs down.

Second, work in an area or sphere of expertise that you know something about from start to finish or feel that you can learn.

IV. Faith, Entrepreneurship & the Marketplace

29. How do you describe the impact of your Christian faith in terms of how you find or define meaning in the context of your entrepreneurial pursuits?

"Calling" isn't normally in my vocabulary although I respect and understand its use. I also believe it gets overused. We knock on doors and we'll go through them if they open; we don't try to break doors down. We look for direction that we think God wants us to go or will bless us in going. It's usually only in retrospect that I can trace God's hand through all the ups and downs of business. Conversely, just because a job may be easy doesn't mean that's what God wants someone to do. Sometimes He wants a person to do the hard thing. That's sometimes very difficult to see except in retrospect. We do look for the hand of God in our lives and in our business. So, to that extent, I say, yes, God has blessed us in what I do and I'm grateful for His blessing. I also believe there is some eternal impact in the things that we do in His name.

30. Who, if any one, affirmed your sense of direction in your entrepreneurial pursuits?

My sense of direction has been affirmed by a Christian mentor and Christian friends. I meet with a group of guys early on Wednesday mornings and I have been meeting with them since before I was married. I bounce a lot of things off those guys. We hold each other accountable and ask difficult questions. We know each other very well after all these years. I think of them as my advisory board in many ways.

31. As a result of being a Christian entrepreneur, how has your approach to entrepreneurship changed?

I understand that my business belongs to God, He's entrusted us with it. I used to think in terms of tithing to God, but not anymore. Instead, I think in terms of generously giving back because He's been so good to me. I wouldn't have anything without Him. It influences your decisions.

32. How did you (or do you) integrate your business/entrepreneurship expertise with your Christian commitment (and how are they complementary)?

We do a lot of work for Kingdom purposes. It's very complementary. My staff sense they are in ministry because we do so much work for a number of Christian organizations.

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

They opened up a position on the leadership team; I think they just did that to keep me quiet!

34. Have you been involved in your church denomination and how?

In the past three years, a little bit. We support the Canadian Baptist Seminary, which is a member of the Association of Canadian Theological Schools (ACTS) at Trinity Western University, and which is associated with the Baptist General Conference. In addition, I think someone put my name forward to chair the next BC Baptist General Conference meeting.

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

I have been involved in a number of para-church organizations, such as The Voice of the Martyrs, Young Life and Youth With A Mission. When I was an early believer, I spent three and a half months in the jungle in Ecuador working with World Radio Ministry Fellowship. I was living with missionaries in a remote location and it was very eye opening, and even entertaining. It was very good. I learned as much about myself as I did about mission work.

36. 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?

I gave the example of finances [see response to Question #31 above]. We are counseled in scripture to not presume upon the future. I think that is such a core principle; it makes such a big difference. It keeps your credit card balances low and strengthens a person's ability to deliver on their promises. A promise made is a debt unpaid. It's about living by your word. We do sign contracts but they are in very plain language. Some of the clauses in them talk about how we are going to amicably solve things through negotiation, if negotiation doesn't work then mediation, if mediation doesn't work then arbitration but in

no case will either party take the other to court to solve things.

I believe in honest weights and measures, quoting accurate billable hours to a client.

37. What are the most important lessons you have learned that you believe are important for Christians pursuing entrepreneurship?

An important lesson I have learned is to not make any assumptions about someone else's character because they claim to be a Christian. Let's say you join some Christian business association and assume that everyone thinks like you—it's not true. Don't say you can truly understand someone's motivation and behaviour because they're a Christian.

38. How could the church in a general sense support you in applying your faith in the context of entrepreneurship?

I don't know.

39. What have been the most significant challenges for you as a Christian pursuing entrepreneurship?

Dealing with clients who are under stress for reasons that are not my fault but for which I must assume some responsibility in order to assist in its resolution.

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

The team of guys that I meet with on Wednesday mornings has been helpful [see response to Question #30]. We pray and they allow me to vent in a setting where my comments are confidential. That's a very valuable outlet for me to team with and partner with. So in some ways they are the church for me, they are a care and accountability group.

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

No.

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

No, I typically avoid that, particularly when I am in leadership because whatever I say or do is amplified. If I was just a member at large it might be different. It's making sure there is no conflict of interest or appearance thereof. One of the things that people need to find at church is "sanctuary." I need it there and so do others who come. I don't even take a business card to church. Most people there wouldn't even know the name of my business and that suits me just fine.

43. Has your relationship with these people you have done business with in your church been positively or negatively affected—from a business and spiritual standpoint-by do-

ing business together and how?
N/A

44. What do you believe are appropriate means to share your faith in your company?
I want to share my faith by my actions. I also let people know that I am caring for them and praying for them. I pray for all my staff and they all know that. I never put them on the spot and ask them to pray. If I am buying a meal then I return thanks and whether they are a believer or not, they have to be respectful of that. No one has ever had a problem with that. That's about as pushy as I get as far as sharing or asking people to participate.

We don't have prayer breakfasts or anything like that. People need to be free to come to Christ and not under compulsion. It's important to have a respectful environment that allows people to be on their journey whether they are living a successful Christian life or suffering with some shortcoming. They are not accountable to me for their spiritual walk. They are instead accountable to me for their productivity and other things that are my business. In much the same way as relationships at church, people at work need sanctuary from unrelated pressures. In that environment, I have had several spiritual discussions, but always initiated by staff.

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

PROVERBS 2:1-11 (*New International Version*)
Moral Benefits of Wisdom

¹ My son, if you accept my words
and store up my commands within you,

² turning your ear to wisdom
and applying your heart to understanding,

³ and if you call out for insight
and cry aloud for understanding,

⁴ and if you look for it as for silver
and search for it as for hidden treasure,

⁵ then you will understand the fear of the LORD
and find the knowledge of God.

⁶ For the LORD gives wisdom,
and from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.

⁷ He holds victory in store for the upright,
he is a shield to those whose walk is blameless,

⁸ for he guards the course of the just
and protects the way of his faithful ones.

⁹ Then you will understand what is right and just
and fair—every good path.

¹⁰ For wisdom will enter your heart,
and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul.

¹¹ Discretion will protect you,
and understanding will guard you.

Source: <http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Proverbs%202:1-11&version=NIV>

It's all about wisdom. So almost anytime that people ask how they can pray for me, I ask them to pray that I might receive wisdom.

46. Do you have any questions or comments related to Christian entrepreneurs that you would like to express an opinion on and that were not covered in this questionnaire?

I don't think everybody who is a believer is called (there's that word!) to be in business. I think we need to do what God has wired us to do.

I think for the Christian who is an entrepreneur, who believes that God is opening a door for them to be in business, then that it is absolutely awesome. I encourage anyone who is a believer and thinks that God is leading them into business, to look for the opportunity to really have an impact in His world because if God is the one placing the "burden of business" on your heart, the burden itself will be light. The business, then, must be for His purposes. They just have to discover what that purpose is – and live it out.