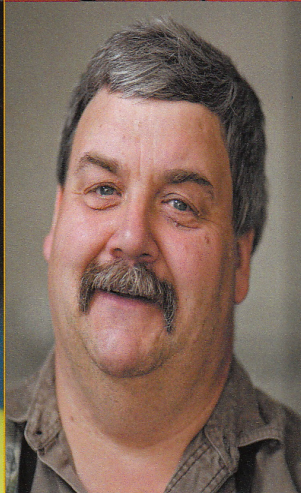
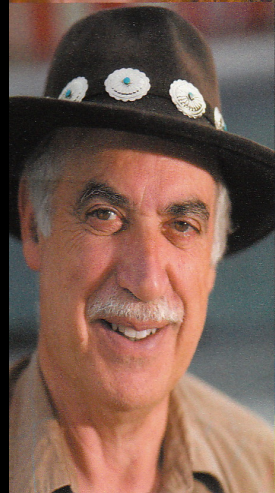
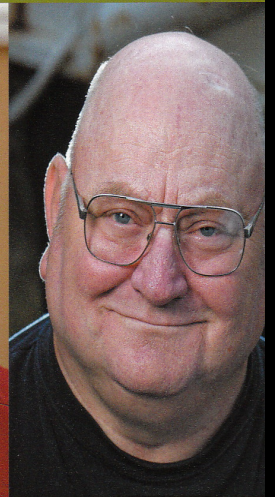
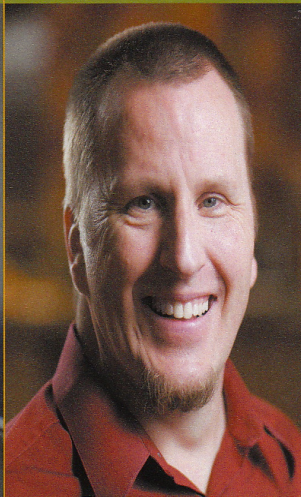
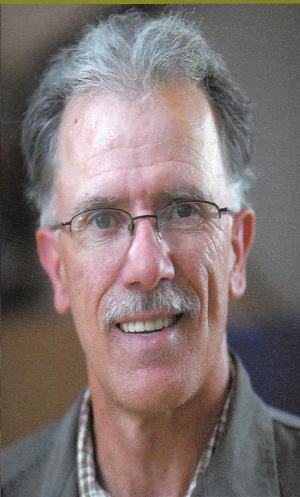


EDP

excellence
determination
passion



10 everyday people

10 extraordinary entrepreneurs

A photograph of Michael Bortolotto, a man in a dark suit and light blue shirt, sitting on a black stool in a large, empty theater. He is smiling and looking towards the camera. The theater seats are dark with orange frames, and the stage floor is dark wood. A bright light source is visible on the right side of the frame.

michael
bortolotto

“

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”

He calls himself the Positive Rebel and went from having \$20 to his name to having a house, a family and a booming business. That is no small task for anyone, let alone entrepreneur Michael Bortolotto, a professional motivational speaker who was born with Cerebral Palsy.

Equally impressive is that Michael's business has him travelling all over North America speaking to more than half a million people.

It all started with what Michael calls the "telephone call from destiny" that helped him find one of his greatest assets.

"I got a phone call from a gentleman who wanted me do a speech on therapeutic recreation," he says. "I told him I was quiet and shy and wasn't really interested. I was quite adamant that I didn't want to do it. But he talked me into it. Communicating verbally has always been challenging for me, yet after I did that initial speech, everything changed."

Finding work had never been an easy thing for Michael, so it was even more amazing that – in this case – work found him.

"Because I have Cerebral Palsy, it has been really hard to find full-time work," says Michael. Employers couldn't see the value in me and I felt discriminated against."

Today Michael is a different person: a successful businessman who has dedicated himself to helping

others understand and overcome the challenges with disabilities and life.

He credits Community Futures Central Island in Nanaimo for helping him turn his newfound passion into a thriving enterprise.

"When I was struggling, they put me in their Self-Employment Program, where I learned fundamental business skills," he says. "They have been very helpful over the years – most recently with a loan through the Entrepreneurs with Disabilities Program to help me expand my business – and have even hired me to work with other Community Futures staff and clients."

Wanda Zink, Community Futures Central Island Manager of Financial Operations, says that she and other staff in the Nanaimo office have been directly affected by the conviction of Michael's cause.

"Most of us have attended at least one of Michael's motivational speeches and he is absolutely awesome," she says. "He is an astute business man with a great sense of humour, and is always a pleasure to be around."

Today, Michael's powerful message continues to inspire people from all walks of life to find their own path to success.

"I talk about all sorts of things to all sorts of audiences," he explains. "I talk to students about bullying

and using power responsibly, to youth and adults about looking for work, and to professionals in the corporate, financial and small business sector about resilience and self-motivation."

Seventeen years later, not even the current recession can slow Michael down.

"I have tripled business in this recession," he says. "I have more business this year than ever before, and that is because I did not accept the concept that the world is in a bad situation. One of the greatest things I have learned is that if you want to be successful, you have to look for it."

As for Michael's future, his plans for success continue to diversify and grow.

"I intend to take this to a million dollar business and speak around the world, and create products such as CD's, books and videos," he says. "Most importantly, I want to help people realize that the impossible is possible, regardless of challenges, obstacles and barriers. I believe people don't understand the freedom that being an entrepreneur gives you. You can create a home-based business that is really rewarding."

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