

Finding a "Work Around"

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Dunn and his wife Sarah and their four children.

At 12 years old, all Jason Dunn cared about was sports, football in particular. His life revolved around it. He and his friends spent all of their time playing football, baseball, soccer and basketball. It was all he thought about in his waking moments and his dreams.

This world came crashing down around him when doctors informed him that he had a spinal-birth defect. Because his spine was very susceptible to injury, his youthful football career abruptly ended out of necessity. This was an epic moment for Jason. All of his friends suited up and went to play without him. The leader of the pack was a mere spectator for the first time in his life. Dunn was crushed.

"It was the first time that I can remember that I made a conscious decision to change my focus from the adversity I was experiencing and to dwell on solutions," he said. "I call them work arounds. I needed to find a way to work around the problem."

Dunn asked the coach if he could be a manager for the team. He could be a part of the football effort even if he couldn't be out on the grass.

One day, before practice, Jason was out on the field with his friends kicking field goals. The coach, Bruce Bean, took notice of Dunn's talent. He approached Dunn to join the team as a kicker. Dunn was thrilled with the idea, but his parents were understandably concerned and opposed any chance of disabling injury. Bean visited Jason's house to convince his parents that his players would protect their son from a spine-crushing tackle. They consented.

Pouring himself into this new opportunity, Dunn finished his high school football career as a first-team-all-state kicker.

Caption Call

At an early age, he learned that the power to overcome challenges starts with mental focus. Now, as vice president of operations at Caption Call, when he is faced with impediments, he chooses to look at the possibilities, not the roadblocks. There is no doubt that he has a clear vision of where Caption Call is headed. He is determined to find the work arounds in every area of his life.

"I am blessed to work in one of the most rewarding businesses in the world," he said. "Few businesses can give people back something that they have lost and that is exactly what we do."

Caption Call serves the deaf community by providing phone-relay services.

Dunn loves his work, no doubt. His eyes are teary as he relates a story about one customer's phone that was returned. With the phone came a letter explaining that this woman and her daughter lived in distant cities. They could not communicate much before she began the Caption Call service. After they began using Caption Call, they were able to reconnect and the last few years of her life, they were able to reconnect and communicate often. It gave them back time together that disability had taken away.

The customer's daughter thanked Caption Call for giving them a vehicle to be close again.

"Caption Call gives back what a disability takes away," he said. "It has a direct impact on people's lives."

Because Caption Call is a communication industry tied to phones, it faces tight government regulations. Dunn's goal is to keep his eye on the goal and find a work around when regulations provide roadblocks.

Dunn is handsome, kind, unassuming, people-oriented and extremely competitive. His unique personality traits make him an outstanding businessman. Sorenson Communications (which was the parent company of Caption Call) has utilized his energy to grow several businesses. When he started 12 years ago, they brought him on to be the operation's manager of a small corporation that developed video phones for the

deaf. He worked to grow the operations into a nation-wide business.

Then Dunn moved on to new challenges in Canada's market. He testified before Canada's regulatory agency, much like the FCC in the United States, to bring Sorenson's services there. He led the opening of eight offices throughout Canada. Breaking ground in new territory was exciting for Dunn and he was extremely successful.

In 2011, the CEO at Sorenson Communication pulled Dunn off of his assignment and asked him to grow a small startup called Caption Call, an internet protocol or text relay service for the deaf. At the time, Caption Call had five employees. In five years, the company has grown frantically. Caption Call now employs 3,500 people.

One thing that Dunn enjoys about working hard to grow Caption Call is the opportunity to give back. "I've been able to come to my hometown and open an office here in Price." The office has been open for seven years and employs 160 people.

Price roots run deep in Dunn's heart. He recognizes that growing up in a close-knit community was an amazing way to start life. The schools in Price gave him confidence to excel in many areas: socially academically and in sports. He graduated from Carbon High in 1995 and went to College of Eastern Utah after a mission for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

As his college education began, Dunn remembers one of the most important lessons that he learned - outside of the classroom. He was on an adult softball team with Brad King, now retired from USU Eastern and formerly a Utah State legislator representing District 69. King pulled Dunn aside and asked him how things were going. Dunn indulged in some negativity and told King about some difficulties that he had experienced. Dunn said King's reply to him struck him deeply, "Just remember that you have the ability to determine your happiness with your college experience."

As a result, Dunn said he chose to put the time and effort into making the experience at CEU amazing. He focused on academic excellence and making the most of the moment by attending activities and reaching out to make friends. He looks back on those years as the time when he found his career calling.

Pre-medical was his designated major. A business leadership class looked interesting, so he signed up. The professor's classes were so entertaining and

engaging. Dunn realized that he had a hidden passion for the business world. The professor took students off site to analyze real businesses. He realized that his competitive personality fit the business world perfectly and that he could make a positive difference in other people's lives. Dunn chose to change his major and hasn't looked back with a moment of regret.

After graduating from the University of Utah, Dunn worked for American Airlines. He loved moving his way up through the managerial staff. He got to the point where if he wanted to continue his upward career path, he would have to move from Utah to Palm Springs, California. He and his wife, Sarah Smith, paused for a moment to evaluate their goals. They decided that they wanted to stay near extended family and raise their children in the safe environment Utah offers. Dunn started to search for employment that would keep his family in the state.

One of Sarah's relatives approached Jason about considering a job with Sorenson Communication. After a grueling interview process with four executives and then the chief operations officer, the company offered him a job.

Dunn immediately entered an intense training program he equates to an on-the-job-MBA, master's in business administration. He quickly picked up on the skills needed to lead in many areas: operations, segmenting, human relations, seeking opportunities to add value to the company and customer service.

Now as a leader in the business world, Dunn is traditional about what matters most. His goal is to be the best husband and father he can, and to help others do the same. The business centers on family at work and home. Professionals are invited to bring their families to conferences and spend a few days together vacationing after the business is complete. As a leader in the company, he looks to hire individuals who support the team goals. His mantra is, "Nobody has a personal agenda, and our focus is the team." He is willing to take a gamble on people whom he can trust if they are hard workers, he said.

If the culture of the company and the environment for employees is excellent, it will have an impact on creating a better bottom line. As a team they work and play hard. Occasionally they even have a dodge ball competition to blow off steam, he said.

Dunn served as a trustee for CEU starting in 2008 during the transition discussion phase prior to the merger of CEU with Utah State University. It was a difficult situation, but the two institutions were able to resolve

issues surrounding the partnership in a way that was in the community's best interest, he said.

Currently, he serves on the Regional Advisory Board. He takes time out of his hectic schedule because he loves serving the students. In the end, he feels, "proud of the school and community for finding a work around to serious problems."

~ Renee Banasky