

Improving Entrepreneurial Journey Initiative

BROCHURE Vol. 3

1st Wave Release

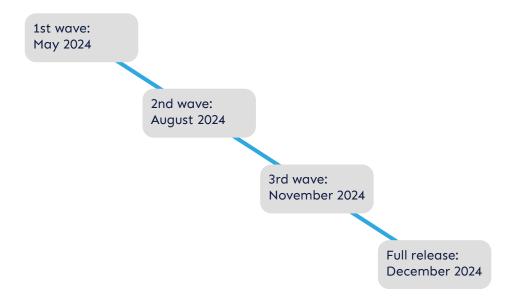
About This Release

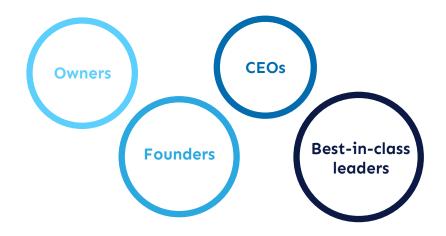
Each year, our **Improving Entrepreneurial Journey Initiative** traditionally ends with the release of a comprehensive brochure in December.

This year, we're switching things up! We're introducing three special releases throughout 2024, leading up to our traditional December brochure release.

With this new approach, our goal is to improve our readers' experience by offering fresh and relevant content that can be used throughout the year.

2024 Release Timeline:





About Our Initiative

At the heart of our Improving Entrepreneurial Journey Initiative is a simple goal: to make the entrepreneurial path clearer and more navigable.

Every year, we connect with over a hundred global experts to bring you a diverse range of insights and advice. This initiative is designed as a supportive community where entrepreneurs at all stages can find guidance and inspiration.

We're here to support and inspire everyone on their entrepreneurial path, making the journey a bit smoother and a lot more exciting.



Advice from Global Experts

Participant sections, each filled with advice and insights

1.0

Advice from Global Experts

Each participant was asked a simple question

In the following pages, you will find advice and insights from global experts who offered their advice between January and May 2024 to be featured in the first wave release of our Improving Entrepreneurial Journey Initiative Brochure – Vol. 3 (2024) / Part 1 of 3.

We are sincerely grateful for the growing interest and engagement, as it brings a diverse range of experiences and perspectives to our community.

Each participant was asked a simple question:

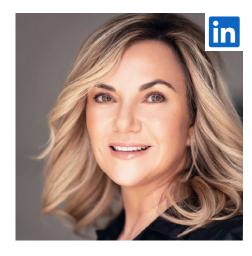
"What advice would you give yourself if you were starting your entrepreneurial journey all over again, armed with the knowledge and experiences you have today?"

Notes & Disclaimers:

^{*} Images (profile pictures and company logos) are clickable and lead to personal and/or company profiles/websites.

^{**} The participants listed are presented in no specific order. The arrangement does not reflect any ranking, preference, or hierarchical order among them.

^{***} Each participant has granted permission for the use of their personal information, including but not limited to their name, title, provided advice, profile picture, logo picture, personal LinkedIn link, company LinkedIn link, or company website link. The information is utilized solely for the purpose of the Improving Entrepreneurial Journey Initiative and related activities.



Christi Maherry

Co-CEO at Snode Technologies - South Africa | Co-Founder of LAWtrust - South Africa



You can't rely on anyone else to save you. You have to save yourself. Remember that **today's struggles are tomorrow's strengths**. Be true to yourself and know who you are, and everything else will fall into place naturally.

This advice is also relevant to your entrepreneurial journey. Stay passionate about your purpose and keep an eye out for any changes that could impact your goals. You'll need to navigate through turbulence, uncertainty, and ambiguity, so it's important to develop a few different scenarios to ensure that you stay on track.

Above all, remember that **courage is a habit that you need to practice every day**. Be brave, face your fears, and live your life with purpose.



Primož Zelenšek

Co-Founder & CEO of Chipolo - Slovenia



If you have the **right idea** that solves real problems, possess enough **persistence** and **adaptability**, and have a **team**, then you are ready for a seat on the entrepreneurship roller coaster. You will think you are at the top, only to be quickly taken to the bottom and then back up again, with something new around every corner. Good luck on your journey.



Nick Fawbert

Founder & CEO of Mutiny Consulting - Singapore



Entrepreneurship is an exercise in what makes humanity so successful. Too often we assume it's about 'great men.' We have been conditioned to believe that physical dominance and stubborn self-righteousness are passports to power, but to paraphrase John Maxwell, if you lead without followers, you're just taking a walk. 'Great men' is a philosophy fueled by the power and gender politics of a European industrial age almost 200 years in our past.

It took me decades to understand that the **path to the top is based on compassion**, collaboration, cohesion, a common purpose, a great culture, and a shared set of goals. You don't reach your potential by dragging other people down; you reach the top because other people put you there. Real leadership is not based on instruction but on inspiration.

Put it this way, the first steps to a great business are not based on genius, but on the recognition of common failure. There is a shortcoming, a gap, a problem that needs to be resolved. Your skills as an entrepreneur will not be based on the unique solution you have contrived, but by the team of like-minded individuals you build around you that fuels a process of innovation that delivers real and lasting results. That means a great team is not people that look like you, but people who contrast and conflict, and whose different life experiences mean that they will contribute ideas that are outside your imagination.

Entrepreneurship is not about leading wolves but about herding cats. You will probably mess up. You'll probably mess up frequently. But if you don't have that team around you, you'll never get past it. That's how we crossed the savannahs, and that's how we scaled mountains. And that is the essence of humanity that you need to embrace.



Peter Vidmar

CEO & Partner at Agencija 101 - Slovenia



The same two theses have always been and still are the key for me:

- 1) Never give up, even when everyone tells you that something is impossible to achieve. Everything is possible as long as you believe in yourself and are persistent enough.
- 2) Newton's law states that every action has an equal and opposite reaction. Therefore, **act and think positively, and do not harm others**, even if others try to harm you. By focusing on your business rather than the competition, you become better and maintain focus.



Davide De Vido

Founder & Owner of FiDeAL - Italy



If I could go back in the past and start my business journey again, I would **select my journey mates with much more accuracy**. Your mate could be a real asset personally and for the business, but if he/she is the wrong one, it can be a weight that keeps the boat under the waterline.



Raphael Sauleau

CEO at IYC (The International Yacht Company) - Monaco



Here are a few key items I always applied and would apply with the experience and understanding I gained through all these years.

- 1) Invest in Your Team: Recognize that a company's success is driven by its people. Investing in the training and development of your team, fostering a positive work culture, and attracting top talent are essential strategies. Training, Benefits, Environment, Respect = Increased Retention for the Team and Customers.
- 2) Stay Ahead of Market Trends: Keep a keen eye on market trends and evolving customer preferences. Being adaptable and innovative in meeting these changing demands sets your company apart in a competitive industry.
- 3) Nurture a Brand of Excellence: Strive to build and maintain a brand that is synonymous with excellence, exclusivity, and unparalleled experiences. Your brand's reputation is a key asset.
- 4) Maintain Financial Acumen: Keep a strong focus on the financial health of the business, balancing bold investments with prudent financial planning, and knowing how and when to take a risk.
- 5) **Build Strong Relationships:** Understand the value of building and maintaining strong relationships with clients, suppliers, and partners. Personalized service and attention to client needs and preferences are crucial in the luxury yacht market.
- 6) **Expand Your Network**: Cultivate a broad network within and beyond the yachting industry, including luxury brands, hospitality, and exclusive events. These relationships can lead to strategic partnerships and new opportunities.
- 7) Focus on Innovation and Sustainability: Pioneering eco-friendly practices and technologies in the superyacht industry is not only good for the environment but also appeals to the growing market of environmentally conscious clients.
- 8) Leverage Technology: Utilize advanced technology to enhance customer experience, marketing, and operational efficiency.
- 9) Communication: Utilize all communication tools such as social media, media, press, and others to voice your opinion, expose the brands, outline data so your brand can benefit from the "expert" approach perception.



Sasha Kranjac

CEO at Kloudatech - Estonia | CEO at Kranjac IT Training and Consulting - Croatia



In short, I'd start my entrepreneurial journey sooner. **Don't be afraid of failure** as it is not the opposite of success – it is an opportunity to learn, and it should be treated as a stepping stone to it. Learning should be your priority as knowledge is your most valuable asset.



Tine Lugarič

Co-Founder & Creative Director at Trampolin - Slovenia



The best piece of advice I have ever received that has really stuck with me is from a global design legend, Mirko Ilić. At the Magdalena Festival, he asked me to see how the party was going inside. When I came back and told him it was 'not bad', he replied: 'And you want to convince me with two negative words that the party is good?' I have never received better advice on how to create and present compelling content and, ultimately, how to communicate in business.



Liesbeth Ceelen

CEO at BioLizard - Belgium



I've always believed that if you're going to do something, you should do what you love. Listening to my heart and following my passions has been my mantra. Daring to do something and stepping out of your comfort zone isn't always easy, but I've learned that taking that leap, even when it's scary, is so worth it. I mean, why stick to what's comfortable when you can explore what's out there, right?

Whenever I'm unsure, I remind myself that there's so much knowledge around me. I've always been open to reaching out to my friends and family for advice or getting insights from those who have the experience to help me navigate the rough patches, like a coach or a role model. And of course, I also have had my failures. But who hasn't? Failing is just part of the game. It's not all smooth sailing, and that's actually totally okay.

I also remind myself to **never stop learning**. Picking up new skills, reading up on the latest developments in my field, or just satisfying my curiosity keeps me on my toes. Alongside that, I focus on getting even better at the things I'm already good at. There's no point wasting time on things that you really don't - and don't need to - master, especially if you can work with other people who are much better at it.

In the end, it's about using my strengths to push through and open doors that I never thought I could. I've come to see that **every challenge is just another chance** for me to show what I'm made of. Keeping this in my back pocket is how I turn every 'oops' into a 'yes I can!' and keep moving forward, turning my dreams into my reality.



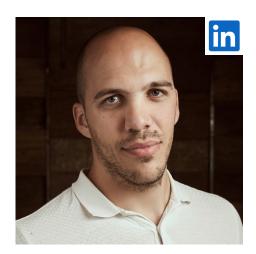
Sonja Klopčič

Co-Founder & CEO of AEIOU Universe - Slovenia



As a young woman starting my business journey, I approached it very professionally, believing that only achievements, a sharp mind, and logical thinking counted, and emotions had to be set aside. Therefore, I would give myself and other enthusiastic young women the following advice:

Listen to your heart. View your business journey as a path of personal development. Do not be seduced by successes nor crushed by failures. All these are merely feedback that guides you on your path. Do not separate the personal from the professional world. It is one world. In it, you can only be successful if you are true to yourself, your inner GPS, your values. Therefore, enrich your business language with words such as compassion, mutual support, care, collaboration, and love.'



Marin Mrša

Founder & CEO of Peekator - UK

Be patient and give yourself 10 years.

peekator



Jan Bruckner

Founder of 10Xpansion - Austria Director Germany at Austrian Business Agency - Austria





My first piece of advice would be to not be replaced by AI but instead to leverage it as a powerful tool to Your easy access to Austria automate repetitive tasks and gain insights from data. Encourage yourself to use the most cost-efficient data tools available to target specific audiences, understanding their motivations, pain points, and aspirations. This will help you tailor your offerings precisely to their needs, ultimately driving growth and success.

My second piece of advice would be to make use of the often-underutilized resources provided by government trade and investment agencies that support international growth. These resources are, in most cases, free and can be a game-changer for entrepreneurs going international. You will be able to access market reports, industry analyses, and competitor insights to better understand the cultural nuances, legal frameworks, and economic conditions of the target markets.

Additionally, I would take advantage of export assistance, as well as foreign direct investment programs and networking opportunities offered by these agencies, so that you can **expand your reach and forge strong partnerships**.



Erik van Doorne

Founder & Owner of Masters of Media - Netherlands



I would advise myself to **invest in myself**. I entered the world of online software development in the '90s when there were almost no proper educational institutes in this field. When there were, I should have taken the opportunity to educate myself better. I could say more or less the same about management and entrepreneurial skills. Today, I'm totally self-made which comes with certain disadvantages.

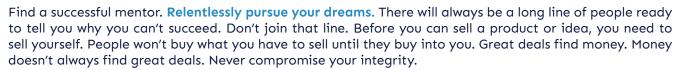
I would also advise myself to invest more in my free time. Though working hard and working long hours in itself is not a bad thing, **taking time off is a necessity** for relaxation and a precondition for mental and personal growth. And taking time to spend with your family is essential. It's also something you can't reverse if you fail to do so.

Working and being successful is one thing, developing as a person in relation to your close ones is another. In the end, you work to live and not the other way around. It's a total cliché, but true.



Robert Cash

Founder & CEO of Skye Capital - Canada







Tom Martin

Group CEO at HEALM - Australia



- 1) Embrace Failure: Understand that failure is not the end but rather a stepping stone to success. Learn from your mistakes, adapt, and keep moving forward.
- 2) Focus on Value: Always prioritize providing value to your customers or clients. Building strong relationships and delivering quality products or services will be your foundation for long-term success.
- 3) Continuous Learning: Stay curious and never stop learning. The business world is constantly evolving, so it's essential to stay informed about industry trends, technologies, and best practices.
- 4) Build a Strong Team: Surround yourself with talented and dedicated individuals who share your vision and values. Building a strong team is crucial for scaling your business and overcoming challenges.
- 5) Resilience and Persistence: Entrepreneurship is a rollercoaster ride with its ups and downs. Stay resilient, stay persistent, and never lose sight of your goals, even during the toughest times.
- 6) Network and Seek Mentorship: Networking is key in business. Build relationships with other entrepreneurs, mentors, and industry experts who can offer guidance, support, and valuable insights along your journey.
- 7) **Balance and Well-being**: Remember to prioritize your well-being and maintain a healthy work-life balance. Burnout can be detrimental to both you and your business, so make sure to take care of yourself physically, mentally, and emotionally.



Sheena D. Franklin

Founder & CEO of K'ept Health - USA



First, determine what type of business, product, and industry you can truly be committed to and set your North Star as a founder and for the company. Use that to build knowledge and influence in your chosen industry. Everything else is secondary; you will receive both great and bad advice, and you will have to pivot and pause on your journey, but having industry knowledge will always give you a sense of direction.

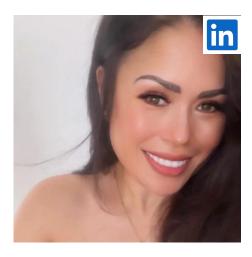


Alexey Grebennikov

Co-Founder & CEO of Aionys - Bulgaria

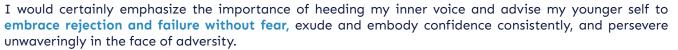


Be flexible and open to change above all. The tech industry is constantly evolving, so it's crucial to be ready for continuous learning and adaptation. I would also advise myself not to fear taking risks and experimenting. Sometimes, the most unexpected moves can lead to the greatest successes. Additionally, it would be important to remember the value of teamwork and to develop leadership and team motivation skills.



Ana Garcia

Founder & CEO of Elite Fablane Luxury - Spain



Central to this counsel would be the notion that unwavering self-belief is paramount in life, alongside the steadfast commitment to never allow anyone to surpass my efforts, regardless of the circumstances. I would underscore the significance of maintaining momentum and standing resolutely grounded in my convictions - a principle I have always upheld.

In life and in the professional world, it is a common occurrence for individuals to perceive others through the lens of their own needs for validation, often leading to judgments based on personal perspectives rather than objective truths. It is essential to **remain steadfast in your beliefs** about your capabilities and identity, regardless of external perceptions.

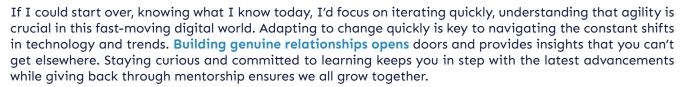
Those who have truly succeeded will guide rather than criticize, while those who feign success tend to be critical and opinionated. Surround yourself with individuals who embody wisdom, values, respect, and loyalty towards others. Stay true to yourself and continue moving forward confidently and wish them well.





AJ Green

Founder & CEO of AI Advantage Agency - USA







Neja Gozdnikar

Co-Founder & CEO of Open Pledge - Croatia

1 Open Pledge

Trust people to do their job well, but always check what they have actually done. You can't do everything delegation is crucial! However, regular oversight is essential to ensure that outcomes align with expectations and standards. This approach not only helps catch any discrepancies or errors early but also provides an opportunity for ongoing feedback and guidance, fostering a culture of continuous improvement and mutual respect.

Also, don't expect perfection from anyone. We are all just humans, so lower your expectations and lead people to achieve what you have imagined. Never assume they understood the task exactly as you thought they would. Communication is key to success, and it begins with you.



Ana Mineva

Co-Founder & CEO of DGLegacy® - Germany

dglegacy

If I had to start my journey all over again, I would remind myself of several important things:

Firstly, Ana, continue to firmly believe in your idea and the necessity of a service like DGLegacy. **Stay true to your vision and mission**, and do not be deterred by fleeting trends or sudden shifts in direction. The journey might offer many paths, but there is only one ultimate goal - the desired North Star.

Listen only to your own sound judgment and to your users, avoiding the opinions of those who can't walk in your shoes or who aren't your target customers. Their views can only serve to distract and deplete your energy.

Trust in the process of being agile and patient. Achieving success is a marathon, not a sprint. It requires both persistence and meticulous attention to detail.

Building a strong network from the beginning is crucial. It will prove invaluable when least expected. **Relationships play a significant role** in both personal growth and professional development.

Lastly, but certainly not least, securing a seasoned coach or mentor as soon as possible is paramount. The **entrepreneurial path is fraught with 'distorted mirrors'** - misleading reflections of reality, especially when you're bringing something truly innovative to the table. A mentor can guide you through these illusions, helping you remain true to yourself and your mission.



Rafał Trzeciak

CEO at SmartDust.me - Poland



Never sugarcoat the startup life. It only attracts stowaways. Build with people you can trust with your life. Funding is just a high-risk, high-rate loan. Celebrate every victory. Don't let a bad day, week, or month distract you from your progress. Focus on your personal growth daily. Cherish every person walking this path with you!



Cornelia Kawann

Founder & CEO of energy-on! - Switzerland



Manage your energy, not your time. Our energy is our most valuable currency, which we trade for everything we think, do, believe, and decide. It is the game changer. Especially because, when you have little energy, you are in survival mode. However, when you have lots of energy, you see so many more opportunities, and you even have the energy to execute them. To make them happen. And that's when you perceive life and your business as easier and have more joy.



Michaela Tzvetanova

Founder of Qalb Communications Agency - Bulgaria



I would also like to **emphasize the importance of resilience and perseverance.** There may be times with setbacks and challenges along the way, but it's vital to have an understanding to stay persistent and keep pushing forward toward what you truly envision. Embracing failure as a learning opportunity and staying resilient in the face of adversity is the key to long-term success.

The thing that mostly keeps me grounded and happy is a healthy work-life balance. The ways I have done this are to grow healthy habits and daily rituals that give clarity and peace of mind. Postponing is the worst thing a person can do. Having the allocated time for everything ensures that everything goes a certain way. Wellness is one of the most important things to me – a key pillar to maintaining a prosperous life. I am an advocate for a holistic wellness approach.

Lastly, I would remind myself to **stay true to my values and be supportive of others**. Aligning my actions with my core beliefs and pursuing work that energizes and fulfils me is vital for long-term growth. All of these principles serve as a solid foundation for a successful and fulfilling journey.

To summarize:

- 1) Network and meet great and amazing people that inspire you.
- 2) Read more books and be well educated.
- 3) Organise and schedule your time.
- 4) Separate work, personal time and family time.
- 5) Focus on specific goals and be consistent.
- 6) Make sure you have positive people around you, people who inspire you and who will support you.





Luka Banović

Co-Founder of Hummble - Slovenia



The advice I'd offer to my younger self would echo the insights shared by Alex Hormozi. Business is all too often compared to a race. People think you can win at it. In reality, it's much more akin to a marriage. How do you win in marriage? By staying married. It's the same in business. You win by staying in it and being able to make a living from it, and maybe some others around you too.



Priya M. Nair

Founder & CEO of zwag Ai Solutions - UAE



- 1) Focus on product development and getting it to the market as early as possible. This ensures testing the product and gaining valuable feedback from users. Launch sooner, fail faster, iterate, and launch again. Marketing, exhibitions, etc., can wait.
- 2) Have conviction in your product and vision. Don't be discouraged by competition or get distracted by superstar founders who announce fundraising milestones. Build a sustainable legacy business. Unicorns are a myth, and you cannot build a winning product overnight anyway. Pivoting is good for startups, but make sure you are pivoting for the right reason. Don't lose sight of your why and how.
- 3) Learn cash flow management. Sales and cash flow are all that matter when it comes to investor confidence and survival. Make sure all transactions are documented and contracts are in place. Set up KPIs and measure your progress regularly, even when you are small. Your data room with all auditable information will be a lifesaver.



Udaya Bhaskar Kamisetty

Co-Founder & President of Sollys Consulting and Solutions - India



- 1) Start small and target big: Begin with manageable goals that lay the groundwork for larger ambitions. Incremental progress builds momentum and confidence, propelling you towards your grand vision. Each small success serves as a stepping stone to greater achievements.
- 2) Build a strong team and network: Surround yourself with individuals who complement your strengths and share your values. Cultivate a diverse network of mentors, collaborators, and supporters. Leverage their expertise and perspectives to navigate challenges and seize opportunities.
- 3) Focus on solving real-time problems with values: Direct your efforts towards addressing tangible issues that resonate with your core values. Seek innovative solutions that not only yield practical outcomes but also uphold ethical principles. Let your actions reflect your commitment to making a meaningful impact on society.
- 4) Maintain a positive attitude: Embrace challenges as opportunities for growth and learning. Cultivate resilience in the face of setbacks, viewing them as temporary obstacles rather than insurmountable barriers. Stay optimistic, harnessing the power of positivity to fuel your perseverance and creativity.
- 5) Strive for regular wins, no matter how small: Celebrate every milestone, no matter how modest, as a testament to your progress. Embrace a mindset of continuous improvement, setting achievable targets and relishing each accomplishment along the way. By cultivating a culture of success, you'll sustain momentum and motivation on your journey towards realizing your aspirations.



Arian Saddam Hossain

Co-Founder & CEO of DdF (Designers do Futuro) - Brazil



The mantra 'Sell Sell' resonates strongly; nothing will happen until you can sell what you offer. Make small successes (sales) first, then leverage that success for a bigger one. Success will certainly never come without bad times. Cultivating a relentless 'Never Give Up' mindset is paramount – a trait to be ingrained as a consistent habit. This journey is such that falling down a hundred times means getting up for the 101st time.

Focus on only one thing at a time, focus on making your dream business, not money. Business will make money, not necessarily the other way around! Take care of your people if you want to grow. You saw the dream, but they make it happen. Choose people who will go through hell with you.

Finally, follow your guts. Do it.



Anas Ben Lassoued

Owner & CEO of Musiek SA ETS - Tunisia



If I were to give myself advice on starting over, I would focus on two key changes. Firstly, I would rebuild my team with individuals who excel in communication, ensuring everyone is on the same page. Secondly, I would choose to **surround myself with people who not only uplift me** with positive energy but also support the financial aspects of my work.

Additionally, I would keep my critical business insights and strategies confidential, sharing them only with trusted members within my circle. As a businessman with a long-term vision, I would emphasize building a strong and well-structured hierarchy within the company to support its growth and stability.



Andrei Kamarouski

Co-Founder & CEO of Pythia - USA



Be as brave as you can, and don't think you can't do something until you've tried and failed. Don't overplan – many things are easier to do than they appear.

Conclusion

Final statements & closing notes

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Final statements & closing notes

Through our **Improving Entrepreneurial Journey Initiative**, we aim to provide valuable guidance to both aspiring and experienced entrepreneurs who encounter diverse challenges on their journey towards optimum success.

Annually, we engage with over 100 global experts, asking them the advice they would give themselves if they were starting their entrepreneurial journey all over again, but with all the knowledge and experience they have today. The result of these conversations and the outcome of our ongoing initiative is this yearly brochure, which this year is divided into three wave releases.

This is a first wave release, so keep an eye out for the two following releases and the full brochure's release in December 2024. For more information on our initiative and to learn about the participants, please visit our website at the Improving Entrepreneurial Journey Initiative.

THANK YOU NOTE:

A big and heartfelt THANK YOU to each and every one of you — the 30 participants who took time out of your busy schedules to contribute to this initiative. Your warm welcome, understanding, and unwavering support for this initiative's purpose have genuinely made a difference.

Your willingness to generously share your knowledge and experiences has been truly inspiring. Your insights have proven invaluable, adding depth and richness to the initiative that wouldn't have been possible without your thoughtful input. Once again, thank you for your dedication, generosity, and commitment.



Indispensable partner towards optimum success

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