

8 ALUMNI

CHANGING THE

When the School was founded in 1916, then Columbia University president Nicholas Butler argued that “in the study of business the University must see to it that the aim of service is always uppermost in the thoughts of its students.”

That commitment to service has always been part of the School’s legacy. Here, we catch up with eight alumni whose efforts to improve the world run the gamut from harnessing the power of social media for disaster relief to

convincing the world’s billionaires to give most of their wealth to philanthropic causes. We ask them: **How do you define long-term success?** We hope you’re as inspired as we are.

—The Editors



Donnel Baird '13

STRENGTHENING UNDERSERVED COMMUNITIES

Baird is tackling two problems he witnessed growing up in Bedford Stuyvesant,

Brooklyn: chronic unemployment and high energy costs. BlocPower, the company he launched in January, trains unconventional employees to install energy-efficient technology for small businesses and nonprofits in underserved communities, slashing energy costs—and the amount of carbon dioxide in the environment. Last year Baird received the Echoing Green and Open Society Foundations’ Black Male Achievement Fellowship, which supports work to improve the life outcomes of black men and boys in the United States.

“Long-term success would be bringing our value proposition of energy savings, carbon-emission reductions, job creation, and impact-investor returns to every financially underserved community in the United States.”



Warren Buffett MS '51

POWERING PHILANTHROPY

The world-renowned investor’s 2010 Giving Pledge, with

Bill Gates, has already encouraged more than 110 billionaires around the world to promise to give at least half their wealth to charitable causes. The current pledges could bring an estimated \$300 billion or more to charity, representing a dramatic increase in philanthropic giving; by comparison, US foundations give approximately \$46.9 billion annually, according to the Foundation Center. As for Buffett himself, he has simple reasons for giving away 99 percent of his fortune: “Were we to use more than 1% of my claim checks [Berkshire Hathaway stock certificates] on ourselves, neither our happiness nor our well-being would be enhanced,” Buffett explains in a letter on the Giving Pledge website. “In contrast, that remaining 99% can have a huge effect on the health and welfare of others.”

“The goal is to talk about giving in an open way and create an atmosphere that can draw more people into philanthropy.”



David del Ser '08

EQUIPPING ENTREPRENEURS IN THE DEVELOPING WORLD

Hundreds of shopkeepers in Latin America are improving their business operations

with a tablet and easy-to-use app that allows them to track inventories and even accept credit-card payments. Frogtek, the company del Ser founded when he was still a student at Columbia, developed the app and works with organizations like Kiva to provide the tablets. Included among *Bloomberg Business*’s 2012 America’s Most Promising Social Entrepreneurs, del Ser is working to provide each shopkeeper with a bank account and an insurance policy, further helping them achieve financial sustainability.

“We envision a world where every small retailer in emerging markets is empowered by modern technology so that these entrepreneurs can join the global economy.”



Ron Gonen '04 (EMBA)

GREENING NEW YORK CITY—AND THE WORLD

As New York City’s first-ever deputy commissioner of sanitation, recycling, and sustainability, Gonen is

responsible for implementing Mayor Bloomberg’s plan to double the city’s recycling rate by 2017—and transform the Big Apple into a model of urban recycling. He’s bringing lessons learned from his phenomenally successful recycling incentives program, Recyclebank, which grew from an idea he had at Columbia into a company serving more than 100 cities. Under Gonen’s direction, every high-traffic New York City street corner will soon have a recycling receptacle. Also on his agenda: a pilot program for curbside organic waste pickup, more public compost bins for household food waste, an electronic waste and collection service, and a ban on materials that can’t be reused or recycled.

“Ultimately, I hope to demonstrate that smart environmental decisions are smart economic decisions.”

WHO ARE E WORLD



Sallie Krawcheck '92

INVESTING IN WOMEN With more than 17,000 followers on Twitter and over 260,000 on LinkedIn, the former head of Citigroup's and Bank of America's wealth management businesses has emerged as a high-profile advocate for women-owned businesses and gender-based diversity in both the boardroom and senior management. In May, Krawcheck acquired the global women's networking organization 85 Broads (from Janet Hanson '77) with plans to expand it into a vehicle where women can invest in themselves and one another. "The next step is to move from advocacy to real investment, just as smart companies—and smart investors—are increasingly recognizing," Krawcheck wrote on 85Broads.com.

"The research is clear: the professional advancement of women is a high-return investment. Success for 85 Broads will result from tapping the power of the network to invest in the professional success of women."



Cyrus Massoumi '03

IMPROVING ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE The average wait time for a doctor's appointment in the United States used to be about 20 days. But with ZocDoc, the company he founded in 2007 (with Nick Ganju '08), that wait is closer to a day or two. The free online service allows patients to find nearby in-network doctors or dentists, read verified reviews, see physicians' real-time availability, instantly book appointments, and even digitally submit paperwork. Millions of patients across 1,800 US cities use the service each month, and patients have booked more than 1,000 different procedures on ZocDoc to date. Healthy from the inside out, ZocDoc has been named one of the Best Places to Work in New York City by *Crain's New York* for three years in a row.

"Long-term, ZocDoc aims to be an indispensable platform through which all patients and doctors navigate every aspect of the healthcare experience."



Gail McGovern '87 (EMBA)

DIGITIZING DISASTER RELIEF Since taking the helm of the American Red Cross in 2008, she has grown the organization's social media and mobile presence into formidable allies during disasters. Text-to-donate went mainstream with the Red Cross's relief efforts around the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, raising more than \$32 million. In March 2012, with its new digital operations center, the organization became the first humanitarian relief agency to use social media to offer help in real time as a disaster unfolds. Through mobile apps and alerts—it warned 2.6 million people about the massive tornado that hit Moore, OK, in May via mobile alerts—the Red Cross is reaching more people than ever before.

"For me, long-term success means effectively harnessing the remarkable power of our donors, volunteers, employees, and partners to be a strong, dynamic organization that the nation can rely on for generations to come."



Cali Williams Yost '95

FOSTERING WORK-LIFE FIT With study after study confirming that work flexibility is essential to meeting America's diverse workforce needs, she brought the expression "work-life fit" into the national conversation, ditching the unattainable "work-life balance" and convincing such organizations as Ernst & Young and the United Nations that flexibility in the workplace is an important business strategy. The founder and CEO of Flex+Strategy Group/Work+Life Fit, she is leading conversations on work-life fit through two books, a blog for *Fast Company*, and regular appearances on such media outlets as NPR and the *New York Times*.

"I will have succeeded when C-suite leaders understand that flexibility in how, when, and where we work is a business strategy—not a perk or benefit—that enables engagement, profit, and sustainable growth."