business

[Rana FloridaRana Florida](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/rana-florida)

*CEO, The Creative Class Group*

**Your Start-Up Life: Rocket Man on Making the Impossible Possible**

Posted: 08/23/2012 7:03 am

Thursdays at the Huffington Post, Rana Florida, CEO of [the Creative Class Group](http://www.creativeclass.com), will answer readers' questions about how they can optimize their lives. She will also feature conversations with successful entrepreneurs and creative thinkers about how they manage their businesses, relationships, careers, and more. Send your questions about work, life, and play to rana@creativeclass.com.

Chairman & CEO of the [X PRIZE Foundation](http://www.xprize.org/), a humanitarian non-profit launching innovative global initiatives, entrepreneur [Dr. Peter H. Diamandis](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peter_Diamandis) pushes the boundaries of creative ideas, tirelessly seeking to make the impossible possible.

Born in the Bronx and fascinated by space exploration from his earliest childhood, he attended Hamilton College and then MIT, where he studied biology and physics. He received his MS in aeronautics and astronautics from MIT and his MD from Harvard Medical School.

Dr. Diamandis has founded, cofounded, and served in leadership positions in a number of important research and learning organizations and businesses, among them the [International Space University](http://www.isunet.edu/), the [Zero Gravity Corporation](http://www.gozerog.com/), [Space Adventures, Ltd.](http://www.spaceadventures.com/), the BlastOff! Corporation, the [Rocket Racing League](http://www.rocketracingleague.com/), [Singularity University](http://singularityu.org/), and [Planetary Resources, Inc](http://www.planetaryresources.com/).

Perhaps his best-known endeavor is The X PRIZE Foundation, headquartered in Playa Vista, California, which has raised millions of dollars for incentivized competitions in life sciences, exploration, education, and global development. Its high-profile Board of Trustees includes L[arry Page](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Larry_page), [James Cameron](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_cameron), and [Arianna Huffington](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arianna_Huffington). Its [Google Lunar X PRIZE](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Google_Lunar_X_PRIZE) will award $30 million dollars, the largest incentive prize to date, to the first privately funded team to land a rover on the Moon that travels more than 500 meters and transmits high-definition images and video back to Earth.

His book [*Abundance: The Future is Better than You Think*](http://books.google.com/books?id=lCifxlN8ZIoC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Abundance:+The+Future+is+Better+than+you+Think&source=bl&ots=_e_pMirKOx&sig=dstTSWRQLlge-YZzyDmFoYn5RT4&hl=en&sa=X&ei=bu0wUOWMO4-N6QHB0YHADw&ved=0CC8Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=Abundance%3A%20The), co-written with Steven Kotler, spent weeks at the top of both *The New York Times* and Amazon bestseller lists.  
  
Dr. Diamandis' conversation style is high octane and motivational; he is so energized that he could easily be the poster boy for Nike's 'Just Do It' campaign. He advises us to bulldoze our way through bureaucracy, fail early, fail often and explore multiple projects. His personal motto is "the best way to predict the future is to create it yourself!"



*Caption: Peter Diamandis experiences weightlessness aboard a ZERO G flight.*

***Q. What did you want to be when you were a child?***

A. Even in my earliest memories I wanted to be an astronaut. I was born during the Apollo era and was also very heavily inspired by Star Trek. Not only did I dream about traveling to space; I longed to take people with me and live there. Apollo and Star Trek were huge drivers for me and still are to this day.

***Q. What was your first job?***

My first job was actually my first start-up company. I created a snow plowing service and went door-to-door selling it to the neighbors. I learned some important lessons because I sold a fixed service for cleaning driveways for the entire winter for just $20 or so - and then that winter turned out to be one of the snowiest on record. My dad came to my rescue by hiring one of the local snow plow services to help me finish my obligations on days of heavy snowfalls, when I ran out of time, daylight, and energy.

***Q. How did you find your passion?***

A. My passion came naturally. The grand vision of humanity's exploration of space was brought home to me by Apollo and Star Trek. I consider my passion for opening up the cosmos one of the most important things I have in my life. Whenever I'm down, whenever I'm confused, whenever I'm not sure what I want to do, that passion serves as a guiding star to help me reenergize and focus.

***Q. How important is creativity in your work?***

A. Creativity is the single most important thing that I have. As an entrepreneur and in my roles as Chairman of X PRIZE and Singularity University, I envision what doesn't yet exist and use my passion and drive to get others to help support that vision and make it reality. It's what I do. I love the creative process and I love the entrepreneurial process and the two go hand in hand for me.

***Q. How do you like to work?***

A. I only know one way to work - 24/7, 100% full on, all-day long, basically whenever I'm awake. I work at a white board, I work pacing, I work on walks, I work on airplanes and I work working out.. Beyond that, I love the brainstorming process with people I care about and respect--really unconstrained thinking about how to solve problems, what might be possible.

***Q. How did you come up with the X PRIZE?***

A. My good friend Gregg Maryniak gave me a copy [*The Spirit of St. Louis*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Spirit_of_St._Louis_%28book%29)when I was trying to finish my Pilot's License. I learned that Charles Lindbergh crossed the Atlantic in 1927 to win a $25,000 prize. I became enamored with the power of incentivized prizes to drive breakthroughs and new technologies and in the course of reading the book, the idea of creating a $10 million prize for suborbital flight to inspire a new generation of spaceships came to mind. I called it the X PRIZE because I didn't know who the sponsor would be that would put up the $10 million. X stood for a variable to be replaced by that sponsor's name, X stood for the Roman numeral 10 for $10 million, and X stood for experimental.

***Q. Describe the culture of the organization?***

A. The culture we aspire to have at X PRIZE is focused on making the impossible possible. Our goal is to really think in an objective, measurable fashion. Whenever we take on a new project, we set clear goals for what we want to achieve. Then we set bold objectives for what is possible and incentivize people to achieve them.

***Q. What kind of leader are you? What traits do you think a successful leader needs to have?***  
A. I consider myself a leader who leads by passion and by vision; as someone who is willing to work as hard as everyone else, who loves to give credit where credit is due and who recognizes people for their extraordinary support. Today in society, when anything is possible, I think leaders need to have a bold vision that inspires people, that allows them dream and to feel not only like they're successful, but that they're having a significant impact on the world.

***Q. How do you know when it's time to move on to the next thing, when it's time to retire a product, service, or job?***

A. When it's no longer fun. When you're bored. When you're not growing. When it's not part of what makes you happy or drives you with passion. Life is short (until you extend it) and today people can have multiple careers doing literally anything. Find something that inspires you, find something that you're passionate about, find something which is an adventure and stretches you every day.

***Q. What's the best advice you were ever given?***  
A. Many years ago I created called Peter's Laws. Peter's Laws summarizes all of the advice that I have been given and that I offer these days. Here is my current list:  
  
1. If anything can go wrong, Fix It!!... to hell with Murphy!  
2. When given a choice... take both!!  
3. Multiple projects lead to multiple successes.  
4. Start at the top then work your way up.  
5. Do it by the book ... but be the author!  
6. When forced to compromise, ask for more.  
7. If you can't win, change the rules.  
8. If you can't change the rules, then ignore them.  
9. Perfection is not optional.  
10. When faced without a challenge, make one.  
11. "No" simply means begin again at one level higher.  
12. Don't walk when you can run.  
13. When in doubt: THINK!  
14. Patience is a virtue, but persistence to the point of success is a blessing.  
15. The squeaky wheel gets replaced.

**Follow Rana Florida on Twitter:** [**www.twitter.com/ranaflorida**](http://www.twitter.com/ranaflorida)