



## Rana Florida

CEO, The Creative Class Group

# Your Start-Up Life: "Find What You Love to Do"

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

Whether it is working out in the field on a raid of a cockfighting operation, lobbying lawmakers on Capitol Hill on behalf of animal protection legislation, saving seal pups in Atlantic Canada, or partnering with mega-fast food chains, grocers, and food processors such as McDonald's, Burger King, Wendy's, Heinz, Kraft and Kroger to pioneer new and better policies for farm animals, Wayne Pacelle is a modern day super hero. His beneficiaries aren't just animals but people too, who can achieve a better and truer kind of humanity by changing the way we treat the creatures we share the planet with.

Pacelle's passion for activism started during his years as an undergraduate at Yale University, where he majored in history and environmental studies. He worked as national director of The Fund for Animals and is now the president and CEO of The Humane Society of the United States, the nation's largest animal protection organization with more than 11 million members and constituents.

Pacelle's career provides a great example of the important role that passion plays in effective leadership. A longtime vegan, he draws on his beliefs and experience in his work, which includes more than 25 successful statewide animal protection ballot initiatives. Pacelle is also the author of the New York Times best-seller *The Bond: Our Kinship with Animals, Our Call to Defend Them*.



Photo credit: David Paul Morris

Q. You are head of the nation's largest animal protection organization. With 11 million members and \$160 million in annual revenue, the Humane Society of the United States is one of the largest charities in the country. With so many constituents, how do you determine your core audience?

A. We have many different audiences, and if we don't speak to them all, we won't succeed in driving our mission of "Celebrating Animals, Confronting Cruelty." No organization can survive if it does not maintain a connection with its members; they fund the organization, they drive the ideas in so many settings, and they act as ambassadors. At the same time, we are having a conversation with the entire society. Everyone makes decisions that influence the lives of animals, and if we are not raising awareness and calling on people to focus their outlook and their actions, then we're failing. And without question, we are trying to reach out to opinion leaders, to politicians, to corporate leaders, to major social and cultural institutions, and even to our adversaries. We are having multiple conversations with different audiences every day.

Q. Often companies look to outside experts to fill senior level positions. A lot of our readers ask how they can be promoted from within. You were promoted to CEO and President after 10 years with the organization. What tactics did you engage to ensure your career path?

A. I never imagined animal protection as a career path. I started an animal protection group in college because I had a deep passion for the issue, and it was volunteerism and passion that led me to where I am today. When I interviewed with the HSUS board of directors for the position of CEO, I emphasized that I had a broader vision for animal protection, inclusive of all animals, and that I was focused on making an impact. I had served previously as the organization's chief political and communications person, and I pointed to a record of passing federal laws, state ballot measures, and to attracting major publicity and other tangible outcomes. I said I'd bring that same sort of impact in all of the major areas where the organization works. "Just turn me loose," in effect.

Q. Given our economic climate and high unemployment rates, many of us are putting our purpose-driven career goals on hold and settling for what we can get. What advice would you give today's job seekers about purpose and meaning?

A. The beauty of our society is that it requires people with different skills, interests and passions. If you can, find what you love to do, either as an employee or a volunteer, and make the most of it. There's no guarantee that your passion will be rewarded with continued employment or career advancement, but putting your passion on display is a powerful thing. And I strongly believe that people are most successful -- and most happy -- in the pursuits that command their passion.

Q. How important are partnerships to an organization? How do you go about building the right ones?

A. We'll never succeed in the broad, far-ranging work that we do without finding common ground with groups and industries that have a different focus than we have. The challenge is to find intersecting and complementary interests. When we work on factory farming, we cooperate not just with other animal protection organizations, but with environmentalists, public health advocates, small farmers, and even sometimes with industries we've been at odds with. Lawmakers and corporations, and all of society really, are looking that kind of bridge-building, and we set a premium on it.

Q. What influence should charitable organizations have on government issues and legislation?

A. Some charities are service-oriented, and it's best that they concentrate on those services, whether that's rescuing animals from cruelty, sheltering the homeless, or providing vaccines to people in developing countries. Some groups will want to blend those hands-on services with some policy work, and that's what The HSUS does. That kind of activity, because of IRS restrictions, must be limited in scope, and certain actions, like electioneering for candidates, are strictly forbidden. The HSUS works to help animals directly because they are, every day, in life and death crisis situations. But we'd be failing in our mission, and chasing our tails, if we did not work to prevent cruelty through every legitimate channel, including passing laws to set standards. We cannot rescue our way out of so many animal-related problems. We have to get to the root of the problem, and working with government is one way to handle that.

Q. How do you get your team on board with far reaching pioneering ideas?

A. You hire good people who are open and ready to stretch themselves. And you hope of course to inspire them with a vision. In my case, that means talking about preventing cruelty, building a humane economy, and solving problems in society through innovation and tenacity. The founding vision of The HSUS was one of great clarity in this regard and I do what I can to reinforce it at every turn.

Q. Can you work with team members or consultants who are experts in their field but don't necessarily espouse your beliefs and values?

A. Yes, to a degree, you must work with people whose views are not entirely in sync with your own. But you cannot have a hodgepodge of people with divergent views. A common purpose and a sense of mission is vital to the success of an organization like The HSUS. I tell my managers to look not just for skills and experience, but for passion. That's been a key ingredient in our success.

Q. We all know that for a company to survive, innovation has to be constant. Do the same rules of constant innovation, flexible organizational structures, and adaptable processes apply to nonprofit organizations?

A. Yes, indeed. Non-profit corporations must behave like businesses, in regard to management, professional conduct, research, innovation, and the reinforcement of core values. At The HSUS, we are

trying to change the world and make it better by urging people everywhere to exhibit greater kindness and mercy toward animals. You cannot get there by running a second-rate operation. We have to bring focus and high performance to all that we do. We set goals, we stay on message, we find the resources to carry out the work, we keep the ball moving.

Q. With so many local affiliates and partner organizations, how do you maintain consistent messaging and best practices? How much freedom and flexibility are given to affiliates and local members?

A. While we actually do not run local humane societies -- they are independent by custom in the United States -- we have our own constellation of organizations and entities with different concentration areas, united by a common mission and purpose. Internal communications is one of our greatest challenges. We deal with that challenge in a hundred ways, but I play a part by writing a blog every weekday. I don't write it just for our members and other audiences outside of our building. I write it also for my colleagues, so they understand what's happening, what language I'm using, and where we're going as an organization.

Q. Lastly, how do you do it all? You head up the largest animal rights organization in the world, you've authored a new book, *The Bond*, you've gotten some of the world's largest restaurant chains on board with animal welfare, and you are in a new relationship. How do you strike a work-life balance?

A. I work really hard, and many of those who are closest to me -- my fiancée above all -- would say I am not achieving that work-life balance very well! My work is a dynamic and demanding passion, and I get fulfillment and pleasure from seeing the progress we're making in society. There are things that I do for myself, including exercise and reading history, and socializing with friends. There's no template for this. We find our own level of balance and try to sustain it. That's always a work in progress.

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