

A Century When Money Matters Less and People Matter More

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We live in an era when being a “millionaire” doesn’t satisfy us, get us very excited, or mean much about our achievements. There are almost 8.5 million households in America with one to ten million dollars in assets, and they fall into the “middle-class” category -- especially in Silicon Valley, which is a hub for innovation and technology deal making. But are these Silicon Valley millionaires happy? Entrepreneurs and investors keep hunting for “the next big thing” so they can make even more money, and until then everyone keeps comparing their bank accounts with each other as a way of keeping score. There seems to be no exit out of the rat race; enough never seems to be enough.

Maybe there is a better way; maybe innovation, satisfaction, and true wealth do not have to be so elusive. IdeaMamaClub.com, one of the sexiest new Silicon Valley start-ups, is a social networking site for entrepreneurs, with some very interesting and unique capabilities. You would expect it to be backed by a few top notch venture capital firms, run by a bunch of Stanford graduates, with an army of geeks spending 24/7 in front of their Macs making it all happen. However you might be surprised to find that in fact it is the brain child of just one, magnetic and spunky, 5’3" woman in her early 30's, who radiates more entrepreneurial spirit and energy than 50 mere mortals, while spreading what she calls her “little toilet wisdom.”

IdeaMama Club (<http://www.IdeaMamaClub.com>) is founded and self-funded by Ukrainian-born Olga Kostrova, a serial entrepreneur who sees this business as not only a door to prosperity but as a humanitarian act in which everyone can take part to achieve a higher state of being while playing “the game” of high-stakes collaborative innovation.

Intrigued by her resume of successes, I asked Olga a few questions to get a deeper understanding of what drives her while she drives her business.

Question: "What would you like to see changed in the business world? What drives your passion?"

Olga: "What I want to see is more collaboration and less competition. That's the whole philosophy behind IdeaMamaClub.com. The collaborative ownership of ideas is the only way we will be able to innovate fast enough to keep up with the possibilities presented to us by the emerging technologies. Those who are focused on aggressive selling techniques, and are obsessed with closing deals at any cost, are actually destroying the basic trust and humanity that makes life beautiful.

"It is about time that we all dedicate our efforts to building a more ethical society -- a society with less aggression, less manipulation, less "selling," less brainwashing, and more attention to the things that really matter.

"I share a philosophy that can be formulated as “stop selling, and start helping to resolve the problem by finding solutions.” this is difficult to accept by the majority of sales professionals and especially their supervisors who “act in the interest of their corporation.” My approach is simple: if you see that you can’t offer the best solution, walk away. Sometimes your solution is really not the best one from which a client can benefit at this time. An average sales person will still make an effort to close the deal and make the commission for himself and profit for his company. I want to see a utopian society where a sales person will walk away by saying “I don’t think what my company can offer will benefit you enough, it’s time for me to go and meditate on better luck [smile].

"To help companies 'get lucky' there is a section called 'My Challenges' in each member profile on www.IdeaMamaClub.com. It is designed to help other members learn and analyze the situation before approaching members with their services or goods, to see if they really have something that can be a great solution for a fellow club member."

Question: "What types of people do you surround yourself with to help make IdeaMama a successful company?"

Olga: "It is not only about making IdeaMamaClub.com a successful company, but also about making my own life a success and a joy. I don’t have any strict criteria for the people in my life, but I am a magnet for people who are honest, real, passionate, supportive, encouraging, and hardworking... people with vision.

A common saying states 'surround yourself with successful people for your own success.' I completely disagree with this selfish statement. I believe that as long as we have a heart and dignity, it is our responsibility to make an effort to help others become more successful... But then again, we are coming back to the definition of success; it is very personal for each of us.

"Recently I had a chat with a homeless man who happened to be a graphic designer in the past, but he chose to test his strengths with a new lifestyle. He is happier than ever. Would one question that he is successful?"

"I think that there are too many clichés in western society with regard to success. In most cases it is associated with money. I think that since we don’t live in a vacuum and we are forced to observe “evidence” of this definition every day, we must remind ourselves every morning that there is so much more to life than fat wallets and big bank accounts. We have to look deeper inside and find those little things that make us true human beings, and redefine the things that really matter.

"It doesn't mean that I preach against wealth; no way. But I just want to remind us all that becoming wealthy is much easier when you have a purpose and a higher mission, then the money you make can serve not just you, but really make a difference in someone else's life.

"That is why IdeaMamaClub.com is a "baby" that is so close to my heart. I want to see it growing along with its members' dreams and visions. I want its members to acquire wealth and learn how to use it for the good of humanity."

Question: "What would you like aspiring entrepreneurs to know before starting their businesses based on your experiences?"

Olga:

"I turned 34 in August 2007, so it is still too early to summarize my life and its experiences [smile]; I still have a long way to go to learn my lessons again and again. But what I have learned so far is that the formula of success is simple if you formulate the definition of success for yourself.

"If it's 'to have a lot of money' robbing a bank could also be a solution [smile].

"But as I mentioned before, I believe any reasonable person realizes that the size of a bank account itself will never make one happy. With more freedom in business decision making, for example, we might limit our freedom in our personal life by gaining more attachments and more responsibly.

"But whatever your own definition is, the formula of success is simple:

Tenacity + passion + commitment + flexibility + ability to learn + ability to stay true to yourself and your values + integrity + ability to lead +...

"My leadership secret is also very simple. I was not the one who invented it though [smiling]: create a vision, articulate the vision, passionately own the vision, and relentlessly drive it to completion. As per drive... drive not as you own the car, but as you own the road... "

Question: "What is your personal motto?"

Olga:

"I borrow my motto from time to time from those who are worthy of being quoted...

Here is one well-known line, my long-time favorite: lead me, follow me, or get out of my way!"

Olga's "it's my way or the highway" approach, though it sounds a bit harsh, in fact comes from a love of seeing real results in other's lives. It seems to serve her well and helps her stay true to herself so she can build her dream and inspire others to reconnect with their own deepest needs in making a difference in their own lives and lives of others. I expect you will be hearing a lot more about Olga and her brain child, IdeaMamaClub.com.

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