

Feature

The Anil Singh-Molares Interview:

Anil Singh-Molares is CEO of EchoMundi, an international consulting, research and product development company based in Bellevue, Washington. Prior to founding EchoMundi, he worked for twelve years at the Microsoft Corporation in Redmond, where he was Senior Director of Vendor Relations and a recipient of the Microsoft Achievement Award. He is also currently a member of the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation. We met with Mr. Singh-Molares in Bellevue.

Global Markets and Entrepreneurship



Kaizen: You are a successful businessman—yet as an undergraduate you majored in Philosophy and English Literature. That might seem a surprising background. Has your undergraduate education been relevant to your success in business?

Singh-Molares: Yes, absolutely. Philosophy in particular. English certainly gave me the ability to express myself succinctly and technically. But philosophy taught me how to think and taught me to appreciate that there are many sides to an argument, but that you have to make some judgment about what you think is the correct judgment. It has to be well-supported, it has to be well researched, well thought-out, but it should be grounded in common sense. And that's why I, like you, am a big fan of the Greeks, Plato in particular, and Aristotle as well. So, it's been very helpful.

Kaizen: You talk about making sound business judgments. In management or strategy meetings, do you find philosophy's method of argumentative give-and-take useful?

Singh-Molares: Yes, the Socratic method is brilliant. It continues to be a good way to disarm people, and not just

in business, but in various dialogues. Which is to say, "I do appreciate your argument but let's take it a step further, let's dig beneath the surface and see what's really there—to see if what you think is there is really there." And that's been very useful.

Kaizen: You mentioned Plato and Aristotle. Are there other philosophers or literary authors who have been influential on your business thinking?

Singh-Molares: This has been so long now that I need to think back, but certainly the Greeks were key. I am a big fan of Eastern philosophy in general. I was a big fan of Schopenhauer.

Kaizen: Why Schopenhauer?

Singh-Molares: I think because the nexus between East and West is easy through Schopenhauer, even though his appraisals of Eastern philosophy and Eastern thought were a little preliminary when he was writing in the nineteenth century. But I liked what I read there. I have to say, though, that I keep going back to the Greeks because the professors who made the most impact on me and the courses I took that made the most impact on me were about the Greeks.

Kaizen: Many students who are undergrads are wrestling with their career choices and are thinking in terms of practical education. They want, in many cases, to have a business career. For them, the importance of liberal arts education seems a little abstract. Is there advice that you could give to students who are wrestling with this choice between a narrower professional track and broad liberal arts education?

Singh-Molares: I think a well-rounded generalist is the best equipped. Something that I've said often is that common sense is the most uncommon value you can find in business. In Microsoft you have a lot of people who have a very narrow focus who don't see the bigger picture. A liberal arts education makes you a well-rounded generalist and allows you the option to stand back and take a look at all sides and see a much broader picture.

Kaizen: And if you end up in a field that requires technical education or technical career skills, do you acquire the technical knowledge on the job?

Singh-Molares: Yes. I came into Microsoft with my Philosophy and

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SINGH-MOLARES, CONTINUED

English literature degrees and my Theology degree from Harvard. Those degrees, even though they might not seem relevant, were the *most* relevant. With the language of [software] developers, whether it's Windows, whether it's Office, that's two months worth of study. It's terminology and it's not rocket science. And you don't need to be a developer to manage developers. You need to be a good manager. Those with liberal arts degrees, in my view, are going to become better managers than MBAs. We had lots of MBAs at Microsoft—very bright guys. But management was not their forte. Their education was very narrowly focused.

Kaizen: So you can make an argument for a liberal arts education in that it will help you become a better manager and you can always pick up the technical along the way. What if the person's interests are in a narrower technical field? How would you advise them: Get your major in what you're interested in and then maybe pick up some liberal arts on the side?

Singh-Molares: I would say a developer obviously needs to take four years worth of computer science courses and mathematics and logic and programming—very narrowly tailored. But also give that person a philosophy course, a very broad philosophy course, and a very broad history course, and English literature. And I know it's not the proverbial well-rounded individual, but that person will have the ability to step back and say, "I'm not going to dedicate 100 hours to writing these lines of code because, if I look at the product overall and where it fits, that's not a good use of my time." And in order to have that you really need other points of reference outside of your narrow field. So, I would say, certainly do both.

Kaizen: So, if your interests as an undergraduate are more technical you might find yourself being a manager, but it also will help you manage your own technical work?



Microsoft Corporate Campus, Redmond, Washington

Singh-Molares: Right. It will give you perspective. This is something that I always say to all of my kids: you cannot change the thing in and of itself, but you can always change your perspective on it. And the ability to shift perspectives is invaluable, because you can turn every challenge into an opportunity. I think it's just the Renaissance ideal: the broader your vision the better you are able to deal with all of the challenges that are thrown at you.

“Doing business with the French, the Germans, the Spanish, the Japanese, and so on—are very different things.”

Kaizen: And philosophy and literature make you take different perspectives.

Singh-Molares: It makes you appreciate different perspectives. You don't necessarily have to agree, but it's much easier to disarm someone if you understand what they're saying.

Kaizen: Both your college years and early career were in the eastern United States. How did you come to the west and to work for the Microsoft Corporation in Redmond, Washington?

Singh-Molares: That's an interesting story. I'm a translator. My mother's from Spain; my mother taught me Spanish. I grew up in Belgium, so French is really the language that I'm formally trained in. And English is the language I learned when I came here at age eleven. I translated my way through grad school—various books and various authors. The translation agency that I worked for after I decided not to pursue a Ph.D. at Harvard because I got married and

started having children, said, "Well, why don't you come in and work for us? Why don't you run the translations?" I ended up taking over the company—the Boston Language Institute. My wife at the time was from Anchorage, Alaska and her mom had cancer and she wanted to move to the west coast. So she came in one day and said, "Have you ever heard of this company Microsoft?" This is 1990. And I said, "No, I haven't" because I was with my Mac, like most of us in those days. And my wife said, "They're really up-and-coming." So she faxed them my résumé. We didn't hear anything for six months. Nothing—not a word. Then suddenly I got a call from a recruiter, saying, "Oh, we're very interested in your résumé." They did a couple of phone screenings that week, they invited me the following week—this is how aggressive they were—to come here. In fact, I stayed just a block away from here—and did my interviews—a day's worth of hazing. That's interesting to recount because it *was* hazing: ten separate interviews back-to-back, one hour each, basically to gauge how tough you are, how able you are to react to various situations. And two weeks later they had relocated my entire family from Boston to here.

Kaizen: And what did they hire you in as? What were your early positions at Microsoft?

Singh-Molares: They hired me—they wanted someone from the industry to manage the industry. So, translation, localization, what we at Microsoft called "localization," which is translation but also cultural adaptation, and rewriting the code for various languages. Microsoft was just starting to realize the importance of international markets on a bigger scale. And so they wanted someone with a lot of translation expertise and management expertise—with translations—to manage that part for Microsoft, which is what I ended up doing.

Kaizen: After how long did you become Director of Vendor Relations?

Singh-Molares: I joined up in 1991; I became a full-fledged director by 1994.

Kaizen: And what did that shift to the Director position entail?

Singh-Molares: Running larger and larger teams. I think that was my fourth promotion in three years, so they promoted me very quickly up to director level. We had a large internal team of translators and terminologists, language leads and localizers, the people who actually were tinkering with the code for the foreign language version.

And then managing all the external partners who were doing our translations was also part of my responsibility. By 1995 I was managing Microsoft's entire localization budget, which was \$200 million at the time. It's much larger now. The management skills obviously came from my background in philosophy, but also from the real-world experience of being part of a large company—and Microsoft itself is the best training ground for developing these skills.

Kaizen: And then you rose to a Senior Director position. What did that promotion entail?

Singh-Molares: More scale, more responsibility.

Kaizen: At this point, how many people were you managing altogether?

Singh-Molares: I outsourced most of this work from Microsoft, so instead of having 400 people on staff or 1000 people on staff, which you did at the international product group in 1991, we pushed all of that out to vendors.

Kaizen: And the rationale for that was ...

Singh-Molares: It wasn't a core competence of Microsoft. We were big on core competences. The question we asked ourselves was: if you use a headcount measure for a translator instead of using it for a developer, does that make sense? Particularly when you don't *need* to hire translators internally, especially because their productivity goes down if they have a \$50,000-a-year fixed salary and they're sitting at a desk, i.e., what's their motivation to produce more than *x* number of words per hour? None. If we outsource it, it is a better use of headcount, of our resources, and it also motivated our vendors to be *extremely* efficient—the more words they translated, the faster they did it, the quicker they would get paid.

Kaizen: You speak French, Spanish, and English fluently. For this position specifically those were essential skills. Did your fluency help you in other ways at Microsoft? Aside from being able to speak the language, were there cultural issues?

Singh-Molares: Yes, it was critical. Because they were looking for people who had an appreciation of what it meant to do business with different cultures: doing business with the French, doing business with the Germans, doing business with the Spanish, the Japanese, and so on—very different things. For example, things as simple as this: If you're at a meeting in Germany, do not be late. Do not be even five minutes late, because they will take great offense. If you're at a meeting



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in Spain, do not take offense at their 45-minute delay, because that's the way *they* operate. And Japan is another big culture. My master's was in theology, but really my focus was Buddhism, and so I had to speak Japanese and Chinese to study it as well. And there are many cultural challenges there. If you approach them in the right way, then you can make lifelong friends and you can get things done. But if you don't understand the difference between—in Japan, for instance—saying, "Now is everyone clear on what I expect you to do?" And they all go, "Hmm. Hai!" That doesn't mean they *agree* with you, that doesn't mean they're going to do what you say; it just means that they understood what you said. So understanding those nuances across cultures was very important and certainly my knowledge of foreign languages and cultures was very helpful there. And to my career.

Kaizen: You make that argument to students and many students will nonetheless still resist taking a foreign language. It's a hard sell. They know it's going to be a lot of work and they are not convinced of its practical importance. Is your case unique—or do you think foreign languages matter to anyone entering the twenty-first century business world?

Singh-Molares: It's absolutely critical. Not that the US is going down the drain, but China is a fairly powerful economic engine, and yet they're all striving to learn English. If you learn Mandarin, you have a competitive advantage over anyone who doesn't, doing business with China.

Kaizen: At Microsoft you worked directly with Bill Gates on some projects. What was that like?

Singh-Molares: That was fascinating and challenging. "Scalding hot" is the way I would describe it. Brilliant, brilliant intellect, very sharp, very focused, very impatient with arguments that he considered weak or poorly thought-out, and he could skewer you if you weren't well-prepared. But a wonderful education. Most of us would prepare for six months to deliver a ten-minute, fifteen-minute presentation that was basically three slides because that's all we were allowed. If you couldn't make your argument in three slides or less, there was no argument to be made and you were wasting his time. So part of the education that I received at Microsoft was to get to the point very quickly, to understand what the bottom line was—not just for me, but for him. The key was how to drive an effective business, how to make the most amount of money while spending the least amount of money to get our objectives without sacrificing quality.

Kaizen: Many entrepreneurs are successful at starting businesses, but they struggle with transforming themselves into leaders of large enterprises. What made Gates successful at both the startup and big-corporation stages?

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“THINK LIKE A MAN OF ACTION, ACT LIKE A MAN OF THOUGHT.” HENRI BERGSON

From the Executive Director



We had a busy and exciting past semester at CEE. We moved into our beautiful new space in the Burpee Center, launched our website (www.EthicsandEntrepreneurship.org), heard a lecture from visiting professor Eric Mack, awarded prizes to five students for excellent work in Business Ethics, and made plans for the new courses in Sports Ethics and Entrepreneurship and Ethics being offered this fall 2008 semester. Read all about it within.

Our feature interview for this issue is with Anil Singh-Molares. We met with Mr. Singh-Molares in Bellevue, Washington to explore his thoughts on entrepreneurship in the dynamically expanding world of global markets, his twelve-year experience working at the Microsoft Corporation, and the relevance of liberal arts education to international business.

Kudos again to Christopher Vaughan for his fine work in designing *Kaizen's* visual theme and layout. And welcome to Anja Hartleb-Parson, our new managing editor, whose excellent editing and organizational skills made this issue possible.

Stephen Hicks, Ph.D.

SINGH-MOLARES, CONTINUED

Singh-Molares: Well, he had a lot of help. This was a culture of very aggressive young people—when I joined Microsoft in 1991. I was 29 and that was the average age of all the people in the company; Bill Gates was three or four years older. We were all very driven, very committed, a very aggressive culture. That was part of what you were signing up for when you signed up for Microsoft—a pretty brutal pace and demands on your intellect and demands on your capacity to discern a good argument from a bad one.

Kaizen: I have read that Gates encourages debate and argument among those he works with and is willing to be convinced and change his mind—unlike some CEOs who prefer to surround themselves with “yes-men.” Is that true?

Singh-Molares: To his great credit he always encouraged vigorous debate, and he would be the first one to challenge you on any point that he felt was worth challenging. He could be pretty tough to convince, but he could be convinced. If your argument was good enough and it prevailed, then he would accept it. And not only would he accept it, he would empower you to run with it.

Kaizen: Were there special ethical challenges working in a high-stakes, high-pressure organization? Did the corporate culture encourage achievement and competence or were there regular temptations to take inappropriate shortcuts?

Singh-Molares: Sure. Because you have a lot of very aggressive people who are elbowing each other to come out ahead. The great thing about Microsoft in those days—the mid-90s—was that the playground was big enough that a lot of us could play. That’s not to say that there weren’t office politics, that there wasn’t back-stabbing, that there wasn’t careerism of all kinds. That was part of it too.

Kaizen: When those things happened, how were they dealt with? In effect, how did they not spread and infect the whole corporation?

Singh-Molares: Even though we were reasonably flat from a management standpoint, it was a very hierarchical structure. So if you were a manager, your manager’s manager would make a decision, and that’s what you would live with, and you would orient yourself and go there. It was not a democracy—you put your best efforts, you put your best arguments; sometimes you won, sometimes you lost. When you lost the argument you kept going and implemented whatever needed implementing.

“Even though I was comfortable, I had a good salary, I had made good money, I was working from home Monday through Friday, telecommuting, it was a little too comfortable.”

Kaizen: But weren’t there opportunities for those who had, say, lost an argument or who didn’t have a good case to make to back-end other people or find circuitous routes to get what they wanted anyway? Did those individuals typically succeed or fail?

Singh-Molares: Sure. There were attempts, but there wasn’t a lot of patience for that because the goal was always, “Let’s get these products out to market as quickly as possible, let’s increase our sales.” It was very results-driven, and results speak volumes. So if someone did a back-handed maneuver and it turned out to be the right thing to do, then they were heroes. But if they did a back-handed maneuver after a decision had been made and it turned out to be the wrong thing, then they wouldn’t last long in the company. There were a lot of casualties at Microsoft. We used to count

Microsoft lifetimes in terms of stock vesting, which was four and a half years. Because a lot of people burned out after four or five years and they left.

Kaizen: You mentioned there was a hierarchical element. Part of the manager’s job is to assess the arguments, weed out the weak ones, stop the office politics, and so forth. But it’s also partly to encourage people who are creative and driven. Were there any basic management techniques used by managers to keep the creative spark going and focused in the right direction? The financial incentives that you mentioned before are important ones, but people also work for other reasons. Were managers attentive to those other issues?

Singh-Molares: Yes, they were. Microsoft is lots of different companies at different stages, and in those days if you won the argument and were empowered, you were given a lot of latitude to implement your objectives. And other people in the organization understood that—you had been blessed and anointed by Bill Gates to do a particular activity—people didn’t really stand in your way, because that wasn’t tolerated; there wasn’t much patience for it.

Kaizen: You mentioned the four-and-a-half-year issue; you were there for twelve years but at that point you decided to leave. What brought that decision about?

Singh-Molares: The company that I left was very different than the company that I joined.

The things that I loved about the Microsoft that I joined were: aggressive, very entrepreneurial, very driven, empowering individuals, no patience for red tape, no patience for obstacles—and I’m not talking about myself, I’m talking about the company as a whole, which has some public downsides. That’s well-known. Sometimes we were a little too aggressive. But the company that I left in 2003, five years ago, had become a big bureaucracy, where decisions were made more and more by committee. So if you’re an entrepreneur, that’s very frustrating. Even though I was comfortable, I had a good salary, I had made good money, I was working from home Mondays and Fridays, telecommuting, it was a little too comfortable. In terms of my personal development and my personal goals, I wasn’t achieving those anymore. So the company changed. And a lot of that change is inevitable, because as the company grows you have to standardize more and more, you have to limit creativity. You can’t have people running all over doing their own thing.

Kaizen: You are now in the fifth year of your entrepreneurial venture, EchoMundi. What is its core service?

Singh-Molares: We do international services. So it’s translation, localization, cultural adaptation, but also international market research, international product development across all types of products. “International in a box” is how we describe it. Right now, we mostly work with American companies and help them take their products or their services internationally.

Kaizen: Much of what you do is internet-based? What are the main advantages of that?

Singh-Molares: The business model that we use is the freelance model. That’s why we don’t



Bill Gates

have large offices. And it’s very much by design. After managing vendors for Microsoft for ten or twelve years, we saw that the largest translation company in the world—Lionbridge—had 5,000 employees and forty offices, big office in Germany, big office in France, Spain, and so on. And that infrastructure is not necessary. Because this market is mostly a market of freelancers—translators like to work on their own schedules. So we eliminated that infrastructure, and replaced it with the internet, which by now had become quite secure if used properly. Ten years ago that was very difficult to do because the internet wasn’t far enough evolved. These days it’s very easy to do: we have very fast connections worldwide, we have great security protocols, we can assign project managers for any project from anywhere in the world where the clients want them. So communications costs are low or non-existent. We use VOIP Skype for most of our international communications; that works wonderfully. And so we built a business model where we can reduce our costs and therefore we’re more competitive. We appeal also to that target crowd of freelancers because they can work for us for a project for three months, and then they can go and trek the world for six months and come back. And we’ll still be there. You can’t do that if you’re nine to five.

News from the CEE

Student Presentation Prize Winners

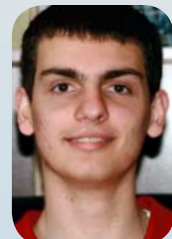
Erik Torres won the Spring 2008 Center for Ethics and Entrepreneurship Essay Contest for his essay “Social and Business Entrepreneurs: Big Bucks and Some Change.” The contest was conducted as part of Professor Klein’s business ethics course. The four runner-ups are (in no particular order): Richard Walters, “False Advertising as an Impediment to Reason”; Almir Causevic, “Minimum Wage: Case Studies at Coyote Blog”; Andrew Tuttle, “Italian Tax Law: Justified Fraud?”; Scott Danielson, “The New Belgium Beer Company.”



Erik Torres — First Prize



Richard Walters
Runner-up



Almir Causevic
Runner-up



Andrew Tuttle
Runner-up



Scott Danielson
Runner-up



Dr. Mack with a student

CEE Guest Speaker: Eric Mack

The Center’s Spring 2008 Semester speaker was Dr. Eric Mack. Dr. Mack (Ph.D., University of Rochester). Dr. Mack is professor of philosophy at Tulane University and a faculty member of Tulane’s Murphy Institute of Political Economy. He has written extensively on the philosophical foundations of individual rights, property rights, markets, and toleration. He is currently working on a book on the political philosophy of John Locke. Professor Mack spoke on April 25th in Professor Klein’s Business and Economic Ethics course. He gave a talk on political philosopher Robert Nozick’s criticisms of distributive justice theories.



Professor Shawn E. Klein

CEE Course Development Grant

Congratulations to Professor Shawn E. Klein, who received a course-development grant for his new Sports Ethics course, being offered for the first time during the Fall 2008 semester. In this course students will examine a range of ethical, political, and economic issues about sports: Why are sports so universally popular? What physical and psychological values do they provide? Does the playing of sports develop good character? Why are many sports fans so fanatical? Is there anything wrong with ticket-“scalping”?

“THROUGHOUT THE CENTURIES THERE WERE MEN WHO TOOK FIRST STEPS ...

SINGH-MOLARES, CONTINUED

Kaizen: Is this a growing market that you're tapping into?

Singh-Molares: It's a huge, huge market. International sales, depending on who you speak to, is either a \$10 billion to \$20 billion a year market. It's enormous, and the largest single player controls about \$400 million. Everybody wants to take their product internationally—everybody—the Chinese, the Germans, the Americans—we all do. And I don't see that diminishing, I see that increasing.

Kaizen: Did you have the idea for EchoMundi before you left Microsoft, or did you leave first and then investigate possible entrepreneurial projects?

Singh-Molares: Basically I left Microsoft and took a year off and tried lots of different things, and think groups, and we had four or five different ideas. We said, “Okay, fine, those ideas are good, but why don't we do what we know, because we have all the contacts, we have the pedigree, we have the experience, we have the reputation.” And we started the company with \$5,000. Because, what do you need? You need an office, you need a couple of laptops, you need a phone line, a server, and even these days, with a laptop you're all set to go, because you can do *all* your communications through that. So the barrier to entry was extremely low and we were well established.

Kaizen: Who is the “we”?

Singh-Molares: My partner, Mario Tuval Kuperwajs, and I. Mario managed one of the big vendors for Microsoft. It was a company called Bowne Global Solutions, which has since then been acquired. But he was managing about \$50 million worth of Microsoft contracts. So he and I run the company.

Kaizen: What were the first key steps you took in starting EchoMundi?

Singh-Molares: You reach out to all of your contacts. Many professional contacts that I had developed in my years at Microsoft, other companies that were doing international business, certainly vendors that we had relationships with. So a little bit of marketing, a lot of word of mouth, because we were so well-known.

Kaizen: What was the biggest challenge? Finding enough customers? Hiring the right talent? Defining strategy?

Singh-Molares: The obstacle that we have is capital, at this point. We're at a very good point from a revenue perspective, particularly for a “small” company. But scaling from a couple of million dollars to twenty to fifty million dollars is going to require a capital infusion—a significant one. I don't want to create a monster, but we do need some capital infusion.

Kaizen: What would a monster be?

Singh-Molares: I think it would be back to the twenty offices worldwide, a hundred fifty employees, and we're not going to do that. But we

do need some infrastructure to take it to a much larger level.

Kaizen: How do you approach venture capitalists?

“The beauty of being a small entrepreneur and running your own company is that you get to do what you want to do.”

Singh-Molares: There is a great deal of hunger out there for great ideas. The beauty of this industry is that it's well-established, the parameters are known, and it's not a gamble. So we are in touch with four or five venture capital firms in Silicon Valley and here—there's quite a few here [in the Seattle area], many of them run by ex-Microsoft people as well. And they're quite interested but obviously we're negotiating, we're seeing how much capital we want and we want to put it to use.

Kaizen: Starting one's own business always involves risk-taking. What were the biggest possible risks you foresaw before starting up?

Singh-Molares: We decided that if it all came crashing down it wouldn't have been the end of the world, but we act as if our lives depend on it, and I think it's important to have that mindset—that every sale counts, that every contract counts, that every project counts, keeping our customers satisfied counts. And so that work ethic we hold very dear. We say, “If we don't raise enough funds this month, we're not going to be able to pay everyone's salaries”—freelance, in this case, but we have salaried individuals who make six figures, and cash flow was an issue. Especially when you are dealing with large corporations and they pay 90 days, 120 days, 150 days, and you have small freelancers who depend on this stuff for a living.

Kaizen: Was that unforeseen?

Singh-Molares: No, not unforeseen. We knew that. When I was in Microsoft I made sure we paid everybody in 30 days, but by the time I had left that had changed to 90, which is still standard for most major American companies—60 to 90 days. So we knew we were going to run into that.

Kaizen: As an entrepreneur, have you had to develop new skills in addition to those that enabled you to do well within an established corporation like Microsoft?

Singh-Molares: The beauty of being a small entrepreneur and running your own company is that you get to do what you want to do, so you don't have the political pressures that you did at Microsoft. Especially the Microsoft that it became, where you had a lot of people elbowing each other and got a lot of decisions by

committees, which are impossible, because the result is very poor decisions that get made in an attempt to satisfy everyone on the committee. And so the upside was: a lot more nimble, a lot more flexible, a lot more able to respond—and respond quickly—to challenges.

Kaizen: So it has mostly been sharpening up skills that you had in the earlier days at Microsoft?

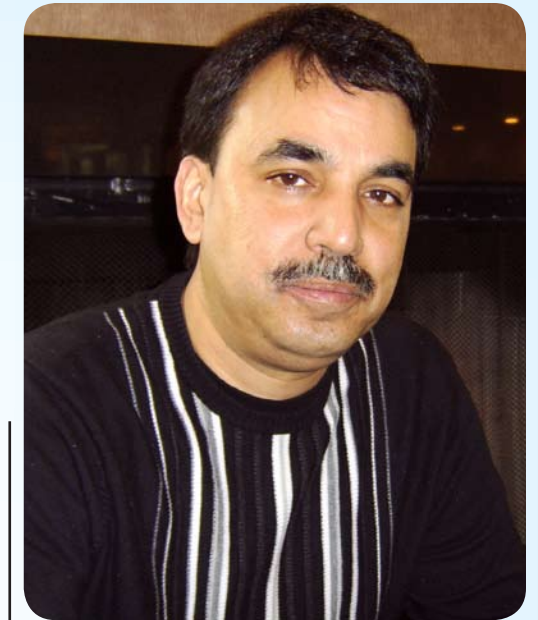
Singh-Molares: The interesting thing is that I thought after twelve years at Microsoft I was prepared for anything. But the reality is different being outside of a big corporation where you're protected. When you're running your own company the downside is not protected, or if it's protected it's protected by you, and your resources, and your house, and your finances, and so on. That's a huge change. The reality was that the gulf between what I expected and what I had to work with was much bigger than I thought it would be.

Kaizen: What is the most challenging part of your job as CEO?

Singh-Molares: Staying true to our organic vision. We really want to grow this company organically, and we've gotten it to the stage where it is organically self-sustaining.

Kaizen: And by “organic” you mean ...

Singh-Molares: Without putting a ton of money into advertising, a ton of money into infrastructure, a ton of money into other things.



Mr. Singh-Molares in Bellevue

Kaizen: At what point in EchoMundi's development did you know that it was going to succeed? What achievements or benchmarks did you reach?

Singh-Molares: First of all we wanted to fund our generous salaries and distributions. We started out saying, “Well, we want to make \$250,000 a year, and that's milestone number one.” Now the challenge is to not get complacent and not remain comfortable, but to scale up one more level. That's to the \$20 million level—that's the next milestone. So multiplying this company times ten.

Kaizen: You mentioned that you don't want it turn into a huge conglomerate, so is \$20 million the upper limit?

Singh-Molares: No. I'm happy to have a \$100 million or \$200 million company, there's no question about that! But doing it in a way that preserves the model that we've developed but yet allows for that big growth. Finding that middle ground is what we're still thinking through.

Kaizen: Your business success has also enabled your considerable philanthropic efforts. You are, for example, the Founder and on the Board of Directors for the Preeclampsia Foundation (www.preeclampsia.org). What is that organization's purpose?

Singh-Molares: Preeclampsia is a pregnancy-induced hypertension, so of course it affects women, and it can have devastating consequences. My ex-wife had preeclampsia with three of our

The New CEE Space in Burpee



The Center's new physical space in the Burpee Center is open to students in Business, Economics, Accounting, and Philosophy as a quiet study space. The Center is also developing a small library of books on entrepreneurship, business ethics, and related fields for research purposes and has available subscriptions to recent periodicals such as *Forbes*, *Business Ethics Quarterly*, *Fortune*, *Entrepreneur*, *Business Week*, and several others.



... DOWN NEW ROADS, ARMED WITH NOTHING BUT THEIR OWN VISION.” AYN RAND

SINGH-MOLARES, CONTINUED

children, so this was a concern that touched us very closely, very personally. And the challenge there was that when we started the foundation we wanted to save at least one life, and I think we've saved far more than one. It's basic education about preeclampsia that needs to happen—e.g., if you have a headache and you're seven months pregnant, it's not okay for the doctor to just give you a couple of aspirin and send you home. He or she needs to look deeper than that, at blood pressure, and there are a number of tests.

Kaizen: So the foundation's purpose is educational, to get women who are pregnant aware of certain symptoms so they might press a little harder when they're dealing with their physicians?

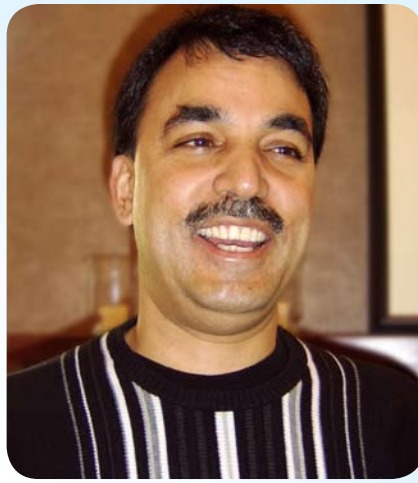
Singh-Molares: Yes, but that's not all we're doing. We funded medical research, so we have Tom Easterling, who's a well-known expert in the field of preeclampsia. We did a lot of research and supporting—we'd give grants to various doctors around the world.

Kaizen: You have an extremely busy life. You work hard and have all these other activities and a very full family life and you're comfortable financially. So it's a natural question: Why work so hard when, presumably, you could opt for a less complicated and less stressful work life?

Singh-Molares: Well, I think there are several reasons. One is that you want to keep accomplishing, you want to keep raising the bar, and if it's something that's close to your heart ... Translation, localization is what I've been doing for twenty years or more. I've been very instrumental in developing that industry, and I want to continue to do that. And I want to continue to prove that it can be done in different ways—and that excites me. I love languages, I love foreign culture, and I love the challenges of product development. I need to keep busy. Because it's not just about making money; it's about accomplishment and constantly pushing the boundaries and your expectations of yourself and of others.

Kaizen: At the same time, there are people who reach their middle years and are burned out. What would you say to young people, who have twenty or thirty years ahead of them before their middle ages, to make sure that when they are in their middle years they're still excited, wanting to grow, interested in the world, and all of the things that they've accomplished?

Singh-Molares: I'd say keep reinventing yourself. Certainly that's what I've done, even though I do translation, localization, international services professionally, there's lots of other skills that I've built up. I love music, I love art, I love literature, I'd love to write a book, I love academia, and that's been kind of stagnant for twenty years, which is why I'm doing this, and I have four



Mr. Singh-Molares in Bellevue

other universities on my roster before the end of the year, surprisingly. So keep expanding, keep broadening your horizons and you'll be fine. If you get stuck in a rut, if you get to the stage where I was at Microsoft after twelve years, where you go, "Okay, this is very comfortable, but I'm not growing personally," then it's time to change. Then it's time to say goodbye. Which is what I did.

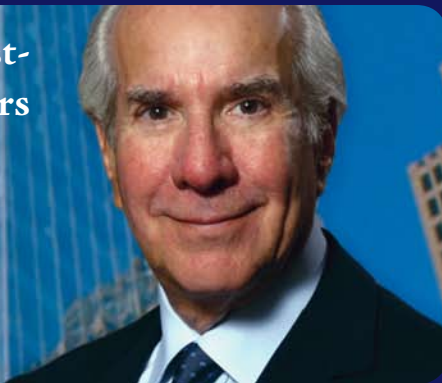
This interview was conducted for Kaizen by Stephen Hicks. To learn more about Anil Singh-Molares and EchoMundi, please visit www.EchoMundi.com. Kaizen's full interview with Singh-Molares will soon be posted on the Center's website at www.EthicsandEntrepreneurship.org.

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MORE INFORMATION ABOUT CEE AND ROCKFORD COLLEGE

Kaizen is published every semester by the Center for Ethics and Entrepreneurship at Rockford College. Founded in 1847, Rockford College is a four-year, independent, coeducational institution offering undergraduate and graduate degrees in traditional liberal arts and professional fields. One of 81 colleges nationwide designated as a "College with a Conscience" by the *Princeton Review*, Rockford College also is among 76 U.S. colleges and universities selected by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching for inclusion in a "Community Engagement" college classification. Rockford College is one of 11 colleges in Illinois and 276 in the country with a Phi Beta Kappa chapter, the oldest and most prestigious academic honors society, and in 2007, was named a "College of Distinction."

In the Next Issue: Ed Snider, CEO of Comcast-Spectacor and owner of the Philadelphia 76ers, Flyers and Phantoms, on Sports and Entrepreneurship



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Kaizen (改善) is a Japanese term meaning "change for the better" or "continuous improvement." Kaizen has been applied worldwide as a method for continuously improving the efficiency of all aspects of a business through a cyclical process of standardizing operations, measuring their efficacy, evaluating the data, innovating to improve performance, and returning again to standardization. Kaizen is also used to eliminate wasteful effort and to humanize relationships within the workplace.