UC SANTA BARBARA

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James Badham

Construction on the Cloud

There is no machine somewhere that cranks out successful entrepreneurs. While all share some traits — energy, tenacity and passion come to mind — they are equally original, as unique as the products and ideas they bring to market.

Recipients of the Venky Narayanamurti Entrepreneurial Leadership Award from the UC Santa Barbara College of Engineering demonstrate this singular nature. The award is conferred annually on an individual who has demonstrated success and leadership in the Central Coast's high-technology entrepreneurial community. This year's winner, Craig "Tooey" Courtemanche, founder and chief executive officer of Carpinteria-based Procore, a construction management software company, is no exception.

"If you have an idea, the first thing to do is to literally go sit on the beach for a few days and think about your strengths and weaknesses," Courtemanche said by way of advice to would-be entrepreneurs. "Examine who you are as a person, and don't fool yourself."

"On behalf of the UCSB College of Engineering, I offer sincere congratulations to Tooey Courtemanche for being named the recipient of the 2020 Venky Award," said Dean Rod Alferness. "It takes immense courage, originality and energy to accept the challenge of steering one's startup into largely uncharted entrepreneurial waters. Dean Venky understood that, and Tooey Courtemanche embodies it."

Courtemanche — his first name is the same as his father's, so he became "Craig, too," which got turned into Tooey — first worked in construction and later became a software engineer. He founded Procore in 2002, growing it to over two thousand employees operating out of 14 offices around the world. More than 1 million construction projects have run on the Procore platform, which is used daily by more than 1.3 million people in over 125 countries. Courtemanche has been credited by Forbes magazine with building the Cloud's hottest technology "unicorn" by bringing software to low-tech construction sites.

"We were born in the cloud in 2002, something I'm really proud of," he said. "The whole concept of Procore has always been to connect everybody in construction on a platform. There was no way we were going to do that if every client had to have a server.

"But I knew how to deploy a cloud server — an ASP server, as it was known back in the day — and I knew how to create multi-tenancy [so that multiple users could work off one server simultaneously] — and it was something I was kind of passionate about," Courtemanche continued. "It was a very new idea in the late nineties. I had seen it deployed in a company called Edify, and I thought, 'What a novel way to work.' It was also way less expensive to buy one computer than to buy multiple servers and databases and everything else."

When the company began, Courtemanche and Procore president, Steve Zahm, employee number two, who has now been with him for 15 years, would go to job sites to install internet Wi-Fi access points and routers so that the builders could use their software for $95 a month.

Now, 20 years later, Courtemanche has received the prestigious Venky Entrepreneurship Award. "I am tremendously honored," he said. "I've lived in Santa Barbara for 20 years and have watched this award go to people I admire and look up to. For a guy who is a college dropout to receive this award is kind of mind-blowing to me. It is really a special honor."

"All of us at Technology Management congratulate Tooey Courtemanche on his well-deserved recognition," said Dave Adornetto, entrepreneurship program executive director for the UCSB TM program. "Tooey is the ultimate entrepreneur, whose vision and leadership enabled Procore to successfully navigate the uncertainties of disruptive technology and emerge as one of the fastest-growing and largest

employers on the Central Coast. Under Tooey's guidance, Procore has contributed significantly to the local entrepreneurial ecosystem and has become a major draw for our certificate and Master of Technology Management graduates."

Courtemanche says that UCSB software engineers have been a key part of Procore's success. "People choose UCSB out of all the UC systems because of the quality of life they get there," he explains. "You're not in a city. You're on the beach. You're choosing that. We find that the people who come out of UCSB tend to be obviously highly educated and highly motivated, because they can't get into the UC systems unless they're highly motivated, but they also have some sort of interesting characteristics about them. They're not just going for the diploma; they're going for a well-rounded life, so we tend to get very well-rounded people from the program. I've seen it time and time again: some of the most interesting engineers we have working at Procore have come out of UCSB."

Now that Procore is a global success, Courtemanche is often asked for advice. "Don't assume you know all the answers or know what you're doing; you don't," he offered. "Don't be afraid of self-doubt; not everyone you see as a successful entrepreneur on TV was sure of themselves the whole way. Ask a lot of questions of many different people; I believe strongly in inquiry over advocacy. Raise enough money; no one ever raises enough money. Assume that it's going to be harder and take longer than you would ever imagine."

All of that, of course, follows that initial trip to the beach: "Examine who you are as a person. If your strengths are product, be the product CEO, and hire someone who's going to be your operations partner. If you're an operations person with a product idea, hire a product technical partner. If you look at all the great tech companies, there is always a partner, a foil. If you try to be everything to everybody, you won't succeed. At the successful companies I know, the CEOs hire for their weaknesses."

The Venky Narayanamurti Entrepreneurial Leadership Award is made possible through an endowment to the UCSB College of Engineering that honors former dean and professor Venkatesh 'Venky' Narayanamurti, whose tenure as dean was marked by his visionary leadership and enthusiastic support for the then-nascent local entrepreneurial economy. He worked diligently to infuse an entrepreneurial spirit into all aspects of the College of Engineering.

About UC Santa Barbara

The University of California, Santa Barbara is a leading research institution that also provides a comprehensive liberal arts learning experience. Our academic community of faculty, students, and staff is characterized by a culture of interdisciplinary collaboration that is responsive to the needs of our multicultural and global society. All of this takes place within a living and learning environment like no other, as we draw inspiration from the beauty and resources of our extraordinary location at the edge of the Pacific Ocean.