

## Getting employees in their 'flow state' is key

"Companies get the employees they deserve," said Web Elite's new Chief Operating Officer Lawrence Dolph. "Organizations are either generative, bureaucratic or pathological." Generative companies remove barriers in order to create an environment where employees are pushing the envelope on quality issues, where creating creative products is inevitable, Dolph said.

### An open door policy

"The reason why (Dolph) joined us is because this is an environment without ceilings," said CEO Jacques Habra. Dolph joined the company Feb. 12. "There's a lot of talent here. Now we want to grow. He is not only thinking in process, but also people." Habra said COOs in high tech companies are usually focused on numbers. "Why did I choose Lawry? It came down to communication."

"I told Jacques that my door is always open," Dolph said. Habra then told him, "Good, because your office doesn't have a door." The only room at Web Elite with doors is the conference room, and of course, the restrooms.

### 'Flow state'

Dolph said the key to making creativity inevitable is getting employees to work in their "flow state."

"I got this chance to study high performance teams," Dolph said. High performance teams are simply "regular folks who are put in an optimum environment. Think of two parallel lines. The top is a person's stress point. Take people over that and you have errors. The bottom line is the threshold of boredom. The key is to keep your people between those two lines. When you do, work is exciting. They feel alive. They're pushing you on issues of quality. Where those lines are is different between individuals." Dolph said he must stay in close contact with the people he leads in order to know where those lines are for them.

"During our first year we went from four to 30 people," Habra said. "I made a lot of mistakes that took people out of their 'flow state.'"

"But they weren't going to leave him," Dolph added. Dolph said he could tell right away that Habra had developed "a phenomenal group of people" and connected with them. He said people are more forgiving of your mistakes if you have a personal connection with them.

"We want to grow from 35 to 70 people by the end of the year," Habra said. "We



Photo by John E. Abo, IBJ

**Web Elite CEO Jacques Habra is excited about his choice for COO, saying Dolph will help Web Elite find and retain key employees.**

want to do it right. There is no one person who can be the source of energy for everyone. The mantra of our company is "Keep the lines of communication open." That could be as simple as wearing jeans to having no doors on the offices."

### Recruiting

Dolph said what he focuses on in the recruiting process is finding what people do well and what they love to do. "You have to put people in the right place in the organization," he said. "You also have to begin with the premise that your people are smart, talented and hard-working. That makes it easier to recruit and keep employees. You don't have to push employees. They push us. For the employee to be good enough, we have to be good enough. You have to align people with what they're good at rather than making people do what they don't want to do. People have a lot less internal negative stress."

"They're looking for a winner," Habra said regarding the companies people are looking to work for. "They don't want to be laid-off in six months. They want to be with a company that is not tanking." Habra said that during his state of Web Elite address he asked all of his employees if they had any questions. A new employee was concerned about the downturn in the economy and asked what Web Elite would be doing to cut costs. Habra told him it wouldn't be cutting employees. He said no matter if the economy is good or bad, Web Elite is concerned with cutting the costs of its clients. "People are saying, 'I want to work with a company that is saving GM \$1.2 billion.' They're researching the companies they want to work with."

By John E. Abo