

Going to Work

Entrepreneurs make it work

By Heather Miller
Daily Staff Reporter

As a University undergraduate, Patrick Sarkissian worked at Maude's Restaurant making salads. But while he was making \$30 a night, the waitstaff could be pulling in \$150.

Sarkissian said he knew he was equally intelligent and had worked just as hard, but he was earning far less pay. So he quit.

And he never worked for anyone again.

Sarkissian now owns Web Elite, a web site design company, with fellow University alum Jacques Habra.

"I developed a belief in myself, which is quintessential to everybody who wants to start their own business," Sarkissian said.

The company, which is based in Ann Arbor, now has 15 employees and has a wide range of clients.

Habra, who turned down a position to work as a programmer analyst for Ford Motor Company, said the corporate world can be limiting, whereas "in an entrepreneurial endeavor you don't have a ceiling or a floor."

Tali Edut, a 1994 University graduate and one of the co-founders of HUES magazine in Ann Arbor, agreed.

"It's not my dream (to work for other people)," she said. "There's always a ceiling over you."

Owning your own business can offer more freedom, but also

contains risks.

"(You have) more control over what you're doing and where you're going," said 1968 University alum Tom Porter, who is a general partner for Enterprise Development Fund.

However, owning a business does have a risky downside.

"You never stop thinking about the business," Edut said. "It's like having a kid."

Habra agreed. "The worst aspect is that there's no time off. ... It's a 24-hour, seven-day-a-week job."

But Kirkland Teeple, owner of the Mainstreet Comedy Showcase, warned of the risks of starting a business.

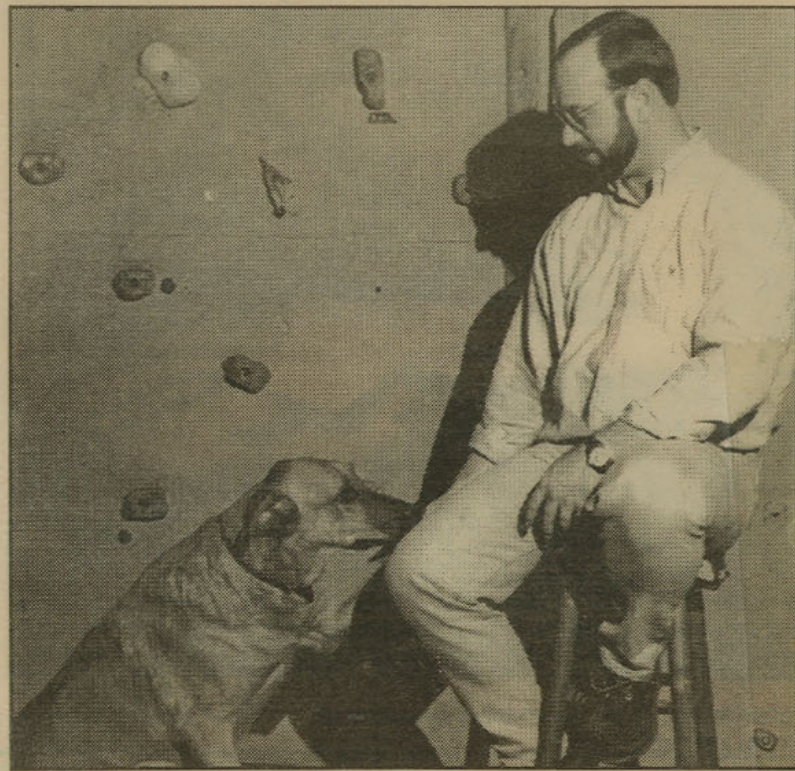
"Be afraid. Be very afraid," he said. "It's not what people make it out to be."

Sarkissian said there is a myth that becoming an entrepreneur means a successful career.

"Success doesn't equal your own business and vice versa," he said. "It's your attitude and the way that you work that equals success."

Debbie Taylor, assistant director for multicultural services for Career Planning & Placement, said a successful entrepreneur needs to possess a number of versatile skills, which can range from marketing to working with clients.

"Small business owners have to wear many different hats," she said.



Ann Arbor Climbing Gym owner Cortland Coene plays with his dog. Coene started the business after graduating from the University in 1993 with an MBA.

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