



VALLEY INSIDER
JOEL RUSSELL

Entrepreneurial Maxims

Congratulations to **Garrison Thompson** for his promotion to the new position of chief operating officer at **Saalex Corp.** in Camarillo. Previously, he served as director of process improvement and handled transformation initiatives for the defense contractor. The company also promoted **Robert "Bobby" Bezduch** to director of programs. "These role refinements are part of an ongoing growth strategy as Saalex transitions from a small to large company," according to Saalex. ... Valley Insider has learned **Raymond James**



Cesarec

recently opened an office in the Trillium Towers at 6320 Canoga Ave. in Woodland Hills. **Tony Battaglia**, the new office's manager, said the firm chose Warner Center because the Valley is a major market. ... **Marc Cesarec** has joined the Encino office of **Marcus & Millichap Capital Corp.**, where he will arrange loans for commercial real estate investors. The lending operation is a subsidiary of brokerage **Marcus & Millichap Inc.** in Calabasas. Cesarec previously worked at **Logix Federal Credit Union**. ... For its Entrepreneurship Fall Kickoff, California State University – Northridge hosted se-



Rathod

rial entrepreneur **Nishit Rathod's** presentation on how to develop "the entrepreneurial trait" in your personality. The talk mixed practical suggestions and cosmic wisdom – and not just for twentysomethings. "Corporations prefer entrepreneurial employees," Rathod told the gathering of about 80 people. "If you're not entrepreneurial, you're turning yourself into a commodity." To develop the "trait," Rathod led a workshop using maxims to change behavior. Example: "Absence of doubt and lack of risks are good prompts for questioning what's being take for granted." Another tip: "When confused or in a dilemma, pinpoint the right questions to ask before anything else." CSUN's entrepreneurship series continues through Nov. 19 with the Fast Pitch New Venture Competition.

Valley Insider is compiled by Editor Joel Russell. Send submissions to jrussell@sfbvj.com.

Marketing Study Touts Music Lessons

Guitar Center poll shows kids improve time-management skills.

By **ANDREW FOERCH** Staff Reporter

In the age of targeted, direct-to-consumer digital advertising, musical instrument retailer **Guitar Center** is going old-school to market its products.

An independent study commissioned by the Westlake Village company investigated the behaviors and screen use of adolescents ages 7 to 17 who take music lessons. It found that after a year of lessons, 85 percent of parents polled saw an improvement in their child's ability to keep working until they finish a task. Additionally, 71 percent of parents said their child became better at self-monitoring their screen time because they understand it allows them to prioritize other activities.

The study is a clever way to market childhood musicianship to parents — after all, they're the ones paying for instruments and music lessons, and they're certainly more likely to do so if they see it as a meaningful investment in their child's future.

"Parents make decisions regarding their kids' extracurricular activities, and we know that limiting kids' screen time is essential to them. So, we set out to understand and highlight the benefits of music lessons that current music-focused parents are seeing among their kids," **Donny Gruendler**, Guitar Center's vice president of music education, told the Business Journal via email.

Andrea Kosven, chief executive of marketing agency **EDK & Co.** in Granada Hills, said that while any company can get its name in front of its target market,



Self-Help: Guitar Center store in Westlake Village.

PHOTO BY THOMAS WASPER

long-trusted methods like independent studies lend credibility to Guitar Center's campaign.

"Commissioning an independent study to substantiate information about the value of music lessons on a child's cognitive development is a smart way to rise above the noise – no pun intended – of the flood of advertisements and promotions to parents," he said in an email.

Even so, **Lindsey Carnett**, chief executive of Camarillo agency **Marketing Maven**, said the results are bound to be a bit skewed — with commissioned studies, marketers reverse-engineer their questions based on whatever findings they anticipate would encourage the purchase of their products.

"What do you want the headlines to be? Those are the questions you ask in the study and hopefully the data will come back positive."

For the study to result in increased sales and lesson enrollment, she said, "it's all about what other channels they market (the study's results) through. Every single one of those callouts could be a social media post. If they put dollars behind those and boost them and target the right people, it's music to parents' ears."

Lorrie Thomas Ross, founder of Atlanta-based digital marketing firm **Web Marketing Therapy**, said the study format allows Guitar Center to market a "why," rather than a "what."

"Marketing with an educational focus is an ethical and effective way to brand, build and boost business," she said in an email.

The study was written by **Brian Wesolowski** from the University of Georgia Hugh Hodgson School of Music and **Stefanie Wind** of the University of Alabama College of Education.

'American Idol' Star A Business Speaker

William Hung tells audiences to become champs despite setbacks.

By **AMY STULICK** Staff Reporter

Best known for his off-key rendition of Ricky Martin's "She Bangs" on ABC's television show "American Idol," **William Hung** has taken an embarrassing singing audition and turned it into a platform for his self-help business book, "Champion by Choice."

"I've been sharing many stories related to my 'American Idol' journey with my speaking in the last several years, but I still feel I can't give people the complete picture about what happened before, during and after my 'American Idol' audition," said Hung in an email to the Business Journal. "Even though I am confident what I share will help the readers, people need to know I've been there and done it myself. It builds credibility."

Hung grew up a Valley kid, with his family moving to Northridge right after the earthquake in 1994.

The book, which launched earlier this month, is part memoir, part self-help guide for people looking to move on from embarrassing personal experiences. Public ridicule is hard to stomach on its own, but amplified to the tune of 5 million YouTube views after its original airing roughly 15 years ago, it can seem impossible to move on.

Hung not only moved on, but he used the experience to cultivate an upbeat look on life that he looks to share with his readership. The book expands on his public speaking circuits which run through the Valley; his speeches give tips on building a successful business through memorable self-marketing and finding the "right message for the right market," according to his website.

"Champion by Choice" retails for \$12.99.

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