

Q&A

■ INTERVIEW

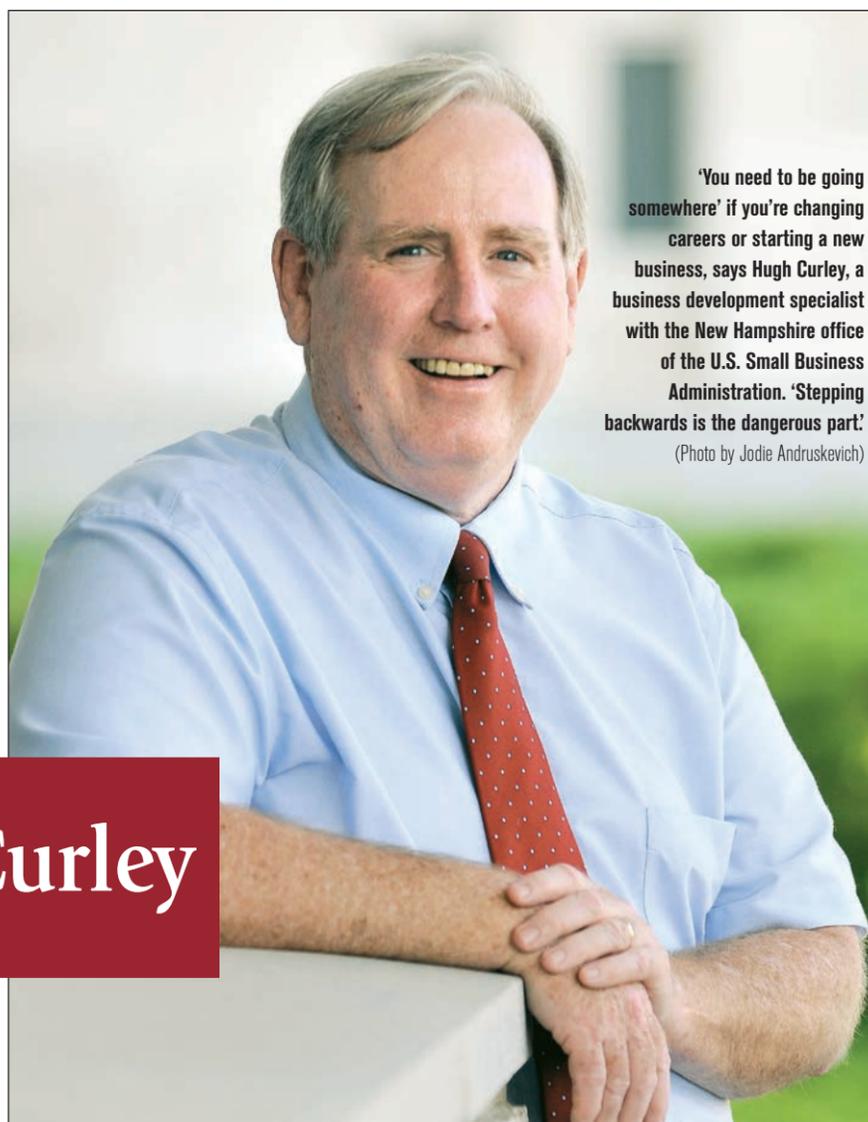
BY CINDY KIBBE

Hugh Curley, a business development specialist with the New Hampshire office of the U.S. Small Business Administration, can counsel entrepreneurs with good authority – he spent six years as a Franciscan friar. Even more intriguing, prior to his years in a religious order, he worked with the likes of Howard Cosell at Monday Night Football, when it was on ABC.

■ **Q.** You've traveled quite a winding road before arriving at the New Hampshire SBA.

A. When I graduated school, I wasn't sure if I wanted to be a priest or not. I first went to work for Monday Night Football at ABC. I worked as a gofer with their graphics crew. I made some really good friends from those days that I still keep up with.

Then I went to grad school at Maryknoll in upstate New York with the friars in 1978. I was a Capuchin Franciscan — I wasn't smart enough to



'You need to be going somewhere' if you're changing careers or starting a new business, says Hugh Curley, a business development specialist with the New Hampshire office of the U.S. Small Business Administration. 'Stepping backwards is the dangerous part.'

(Photo by Jodie Andruskevich)

SBA's Hugh Curley

be a Jesuit (laughs). Yes, I went from Howard Cosell to a year of silence.

■ **Q.** When did you leave the order?

A. I left in 1983. There was no moral crisis — it just wasn't for me. One of the parishes I worked at in Connecticut as a friar asked me if I wanted to stay on as a layperson. So I stayed doing parish work.

After I got married and had a family, I was selected to be on the board of selectmen for Durham, Conn. That helped me develop some credentials and an understanding of what businesses were going through.

I became connected with the Middlesex County Chamber of Commerce and later became its vice president. At the chamber, we secured monies for a revolving loan fund, and then the SBA came along.

■ **Q.** When and why did you come to New Hampshire?

A. I came to New Hampshire two years ago this June. We've built a house in Epsom.

I came to New Hampshire because there was an opportunity here. It was an opportunity to see the skills I developed in Connecticut

and community involvement, to see how they would "play on the road."

■ **Q.** What did you learn during your time as a friar that aids helps in your current job as a business development specialist?

A. There is a need to counsel people on capital preservation. It's not just about whether you need to get financing or not, it's about whether getting into business or not is a good idea at this time.

■ **Q.** What are some of the SBA's programs that are often overlooked by business owners?

A. I think people could know more about the government contracting programs. We try to connect business owners with government contracts or with subcontracting opportunities with larger contacts.

■ **Q.** What are some of the philosophical mistakes that business owners often make?

A. If they're an existing business owner and

they've had success at something, sometimes the pitfall is that they identify themselves with that process rather than being a solution-finder.

Likewise, when someone's new, they might say, "I've got the answers," and they're not open to questions from others.

■ **Q.** What advice would you give someone considering a big career shift — like you did — especially when contemplating starting a business?

A. Keep connected to where you came from. You never know when one of those contacts can be a seed that germinates into something. Also, you need to be going somewhere. Stepping backwards is the dangerous part of career change. **NHR**



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Last year, legislators deemed apple cider the official state drink of New Hampshire. But one Washington, D.C.-based lobbying group might contend that it should have been beer. Estimates from the Beer Institute show that **New Hampshire had the highest per-capita beer sales in the U.S. in 2010**, with 32.7 gallons of beer purchased for every person of legal drinking age. Nationally, the average was 20.7 gallons. Guess we know where everyone's heading after work.

Time to take a red pen and an appraising eye to the old resume. A recent Manpower survey found that **27 percent of New Hampshire employers expect to hire more employees in the third quarter of 2011**, up from 18 percent who expected to hire in the second quarter. An additional 60 percent expect to maintain current staffing levels, while 10 percent expect to reduce their payrolls.

Once your beefed-up resume has secured you an interview, make sure to do more research than just glancing over the company's website. In a recent survey by staffing firm Accountemps of more than 1,000 senior managers, **nearly four in 10 said the biggest mistake candidates make in the interviewing process is having little or no knowledge of the company.** Other blunders include being unprepared to talk about skills and experience and career plans and goals.

When it comes to handheld gadgets, it seems more Americans are interested in Anna Karenina than the latest brainchild of Steve Jobs. A Pew Research Institute study of **2,277 adults found that 12 percent own e-readers, compared to just 8 percent that own a tablet** like the popular iPad. Sure, e-readers offer access to a huge library of literature — but can you play Angry Birds on them?

Entrepreneurship — like reading, writing and arithmetic — is apparently something that can be taught, according to a study out of Wellesley, Mass.-based Babson College. A survey of 3,755 alumni found that **those who had taken two or more classes in entrepreneurship were much more likely to strongly consider becoming or actually become entrepreneurs.** Writing a student business plan also played a big factor. Now, if only someone can figure out how to teach a class in getting rich quick.



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