

GLOBAL GRIND

HOW WORK, RISK, AND
REINVENTION BUILT
A GLOBAL CAREER

TOM TARACH

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Title: Global Grind: How Work, Risk, And Reinvention Built A Global Career

Table of Contents

Foreword

Work, Resilience, and Reinvention

About the Author

Chapter 1 — Roots of Resilience

The Spark That Ignited My Entrepreneurial Journey

- Humble Beginnings and Formative Influences
 - First Steps into the Workforce
-

Chapter 2 — Brewing Ambition

Launching into the Coffee World from Chicago to New England

- Landing the First Role and Relocating East
 - Building the Foundation: Sales Strategies and Early Wins
-

Chapter 3 — Scaling the Bean Empire

From Regional Sales to National Scale

- Pivoting to Larger Markets
 - Explosive Growth and Big-League Lessons
-

Chapter 4 — Wiring the Future

Co-Founding a Telecom Powerhouse Amidst Personal Storms

- Identifying the Telecom Boom
 - The Call to Entrepreneurship
 - When Business and Life Collide
 - From Fiber to Security Systems
 - Towering to New Heights
 - Difficult Decisions
-

Chapter 5 — Securing Innovations

Pioneering License Plate Recognition Technology

Chapter 6 — Bridging Cultures

Venturing into Saudi Arabia's Security Sector

Chapter 7 — Global Alliances

Mergers, Acquisitions, and the Call Back to Entrepreneurship

Foreword: Why This Book?

Global Grind is a concise professional memoir documenting a career built through persistence, reinvention, and accountability rather than linear success. Beginning with blue-collar roots, the book traces experience across manufacturing, telecommunications, security technology, and international ventures.

This is not a playbook or framework. It is a record of lessons learned through execution — what worked, what failed, and how adaptability matters more than momentum over time.

Written for founders, operators, advisors, and professionals, Global Grind serves as both a credibility piece and a reminder that careers are built through sustained effort, not optics.

About the Author

Tom Tarach is a lifelong entrepreneur whose career spans global consumer brands, telecommunications infrastructure, security technology, and international joint ventures. From factory floors in Chicago to boardrooms across the Middle East and Asia, his work has focused on building businesses through trust, execution, and resilience. He now advises founders and executives on growth, leadership, and successful exits.

Chapter 1: Roots of Resilience – The Spark That Ignited My Entrepreneurial Journey.

“I didn’t grow up thinking about entrepreneurship. I grew up thinking about work.”

You know, when people ask about where it all started for me, I always go back to those early years. It's not just about the facts of growing up—it's about how those experiences quietly built this inner drive that carried me through decades in business.

Looking back, my childhood was a blend of hardship and heart that shaped who I am today. My parents were Polish farmers caught in the chaos of World War II. The Nazis took them to work camps in Germany, and after liberation, with little more than resilience and determination, they made their way to England. That's where they met, married, and started our family with my older brother and sister. Eventually, they immigrated legally to the U.S., settling in Chicago, where they had four more kids—including me—bringing the total to six: three boys and three girls.



Dad second from the left serving in the Polish Army under British command.

We lived in a blue-collar neighborhood on the South Side, surrounded by Chicago police officers and firefighters. It was a tight-knit community, the kind where everyone looked out for each other.



A traditional blue collar family

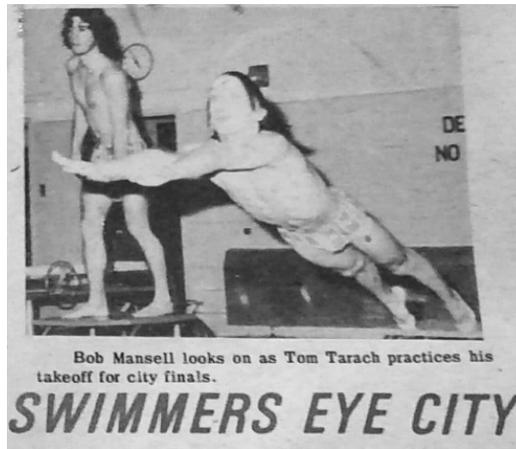
Sports were my outlet—I played baseball and basketball as a kid, and in high school, I became a competitive swimmer. Academically, though? I wasn't exactly a star. My conduct grades were straight F's; I was more focused on laughing and having fun than hitting the books. In subjects I liked, I'd ace it, but the rest? Just enough to get by. I even made it as a finalist for class clown out of over 700 students in my public high school class. That sense of humor has stuck with me—it's helped with my international business more than any degree.

CHARACTER TRAITS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO SUCCESS

A pupil must demonstrate progress in social, work, and health habits in order to obtain maximum benefit from the educational program. A check (✓) indicates a need for improvement. No check indicates satisfactory progress.

	10th Week	20th Week	30th Week	40th Week
SOCIAL HABITS <i>Conduct</i>				
Exercises self control		✓	✓	✓
Listens courteously	✓	✓	✓	✓
Observes school rules and regulations		✓	✓	✓
Accepts responsibility for actions				✓
Respects the rights of others				✓
Respects private and public property				✓
WORK HABITS				
Has materials and is prepared for work				
Follows directions				
Does neat work	✓	✓	✓	✓
Works independently and is not easily distracted		✓	✓	✓
Uses initiative in thinking for self				
Completes work on time				
Does homework assignments				

Grammar school report card.



High School Swim Team

But life threw us some heavy punches too. The toughest was when my mother was diagnosed with cancer. She fought it for years, enduring chemotherapy and surgeries with a strength and grace that still amazes me. She was the toughest person I've ever known, and watching her battle shaped my views on health profoundly. To this day, I avoid medications unless absolutely necessary—it's a reminder to prioritize resilience in all aspects of life. Her passing when I was a teenager left a void, but it also instilled in me that life is short and a willingness to take risks.



Mom before cancer.

Growing up in that environment taught me that success isn't handed to you; it's forged through perseverance. Those roots planted the seeds for my entrepreneurial mindset—seeing my parents rebuild their lives from nothing showed me that calculated risks could lead to new beginnings.

First Steps into the Workforce.

“There was never a question of whether I would work—only where.”

Transitioning from those formative years, my entry into the workforce was all about grit and learning on the fly—lessons that became the bedrock of my sales career later on. My father, a blue-collar factory worker who'd toiled on farms back in Poland, just laughed when I asked for an allowance. The idea was foreign to him. So, at a young age, I took on a paper route in grammar school. Picture this: Sunday papers stacked in my wagon taller than I was, pulling it through Chicago blizzards, seven days a week, 365 days a year. It built a work ethic that's unbreakable—rain, snow, or shine, you show up.

I kept hustling with odd jobs: cleaning and painting businesses, bagging groceries and eventually working alongside my father in the same sheet-metal factory before I even graduated high school.

It was honest work, and it was hard work—but I knew one thing for certain: I didn't want to spend my life on that factory floor. It motivated me to save up and head to college. I enrolled at Northern Illinois University and graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Economics. Those early roles weren't glamorous, but they taught me perseverance, working together, and the value of showing up consistently.

I remember my first day on the factory sheet metal line machine was jamming with razor sharp sheet metal and two men from the lines next to me came over to help out while keeping their lines running. They let me use their tools until I got my own. Everyone had nicknames and I still remember theirs, 8 Ball & Tall K. Guys I never met helping the new kid. I didn't have to ask. Human kindness wasn't dulled by the drone of the factory. It was a small example of paying it forward that set lifelong example for me.

Chapter 2: Brewing Ambition – Launching into the Coffee World from Chicago to New England.

“I didn't yet know what my career would be—but I knew I wanted ownership of my future.”

From those blue-collar roots, my professional path took an unexpected turn into the world of gourmet coffee. It's funny how one opportunity can pivot your entire trajectory—let me explain how it unfolded.

Right out of college, I landed my first real job with a gourmet coffee roaster in Chicago. It started modestly, but I advanced quickly, eventually managing the New England market. Moving to Boston was a leap—I didn't know a soul there—but it felt right. The role immersed me in the industry, from roasting to distribution, and set the stage for what came next.

Building the Foundation: Sales Strategies and Early Wins.

“Always one more call.”

Working for Araban Coffee, a great local roaster, I rose to become the top salesman. It was ideal for a newcomer in Boston: my days were spent cold-calling every restaurant, bakery, diner, hotel, and banquet

hall that sold coffee. Think door-to-door sales, but with a caffeinated twist. A great by-product was I found where all the best places to eat in Boston for myself and my fiancé. That's where I learned the "just one more call" rule. If my goal was 15 visits, I'd push for 16—and it paid off. Those extra efforts often landed the deals that kept the momentum going. I still live by that today; it's a simple mindset shift that turns good performance into exceptional results.

The role honed my sales skills: persistence, reading people, and turning rejections into opportunities. One anecdote stands out—I once convinced a skeptical diner owner to switch suppliers after sharing a laugh over an old coffee maker of their current brew “I think John Adams drank from that I said”. It humanized the pitch and built trust. These early wins weren't just about revenue; they taught me that in business, relationships and consistency brew long-term success.

Scaling the Bean Empire – From Regional Sales to National Scale.

“A 1 million dollar check with no fanfare”

Building on that coffee foundation, the next phase was about scaling up—moving from local hustles to managing massive accounts. It was a natural progression, but one that demanded adapting to bigger stakes.

I got promoted to sales training and management at Araban, then recruited by Nestlé's gourmet coffee division, which brought me back to Chicago. As a regional manager, I handled sales to major grocery chains across the Midwest and Northeast, overseeing hundreds of millions in business. It was a crash course in consumer retail: promotions, shelf space as prime real estate. I recall hand-delivering a \$1 million check to a chain buyer—joked with my manager that I should've arrived with a great fanfare and a marching band. Instead, it just landed in a pile on his desk. Moments like that grounded me in the realities of corporate dealings.

Explosive Growth: Achieving Hundreds of Millions in Sales.

In a global corporation like Nestlé, I gained insights into sophisticated sales strategies, marketing campaigns, and navigating distributors at local and national levels. A key lesson? The effort for a \$1,000 sale isn't vastly different from a \$10 million one—just longer contracts and more stakeholders.

My approach—building relationships through integrity, delivering on promises, and injecting a bit of that class clown humor—helped scale operations globally.

My strength was always relationship-building. I kept my word, delivered what I promised, and occasionally used a bit of class-clown humor to disarm tense moments. That combination helped me grow businesses nationally and, eventually, globally.

Chapter 4: Wiring the Future – Identifying the Telecom Boom Amidst Personal Storms.

“He said fiber.”

The shift to telecom was a bold pivot, sparked by a conference insight and a friend's idea. But it wasn't just business—it intertwined with some of the most challenging personal moments of my life. In the '90s, at a

conference, Paul Allen from Microsoft painted a vivid picture of how fiber optics and the emerging internet would revolutionize everything. Weeks later, a friend—a second-generation union electrician—approached me about starting a business installing network cable systems, including fiber. Hearing "fiber" clicked; I didn't just advise—I jumped in as co-founder.

The Call to Entrepreneurship.

A few months later, I quit Nestlé, and we launched Network Electric. Our first big win: selling to Ameritech, the original Midwest Bell Telephone company, installing fiber and network cabling in Illinois and Ohio. Overnight, I went from coffee to computer networking with a massive client. It was exhilarating, but the real tests were just beginning.



Network Electric Inc. President Jim Johnson (above, left) and Tom Tarach, vice president, work with some of the company's equipment at their offices in Crestwood. The company, founded in 1994, is expected to exceed \$2 million in revenues this year.

Wired for success

Network Electric connects communities to cable

The start of Network Electric

When Business and Life Collide: Rescuing my Sister and her Children.

Right as the business was launched, I got a frantic call from my sister who was living in a foreign country. She was in an abusive situation—and feared for her life and her four children. My brother and I flew down immediately. Getting them out was tense; the airport was tiny, and he was a local taxi driver who'd hear if we tried to leave and certainly become violent. So we chartered a sailboat to make our escape. We pulled the kids from school, met at the marina, and sailed across the open ocean to a small island with tiny airport. From there, a chartered prop plane—barely fitting, ditching a duffel bag of cloths to make weight and fly to a main island where we could take commercial airline. We made back to Chicago, they had to fit in my tiny one bedroom home huddled together on the floor in a spare room for months.

The next day my wife shared she was pregnant. I'd just quit my stable job, started a new business and now 5 new people counting on me to provide and protect them. But I'm so proud of my sister—she's the hero who left everything, started anew, got a job, and raised four incredible kids as a single mom. Helping her was one of my life's best decisions.

From Fiber to Security Systems

With a stellar partner—a brilliant, tireless electrician—we exceeded expectations on Ameritech projects, earning "perfect" and "outstanding" referrals. But then Congress passed the Telecom Act, allowing Ameritech to use in-house crews. Business halted. I pivoted, using referrals to land security system installs in 700 Illinois central offices. We pioneered digital cameras (huge Kodak blocks back then) to document work. The project manager won the Chairman's Award, which opened doors to wireless cell site builds.

Towering to New Heights

As a union contractor, we hired added hiring electric linemen—experts in steel towers for nearly a century—to build cell sites. We expanded to Sprint, VoiceStream/T-Mobile, and continued fiber work with Ameritech on power poles. Securing power permits was key and we have the expertise and relationships to get it done faster than any of our competitors. We had experienced crews and with our digital documentations system our linemen excelled at it, making us the top contractor in the tri-state area with nearly 100 employees.

Working with marketing guru Jay Abraham, we embraced "pre-eminence"—striving to be the best. We expanded to installing base station equipment upgrades, shutting down sites in night maintenance windows. It included technicians and managers from the customer as well as our crews. One client kept sending wrong equipment that caused it to be rescheduled and as they say, shit rolls down hill. We would get blamed for not completing a swap on-time. We had a reputation that we worked so hard to achieve and we weren't going to let this very difficult project bring it down.

I went with their techs and learned their systems, documenting every cabinet, computer card, nut and bolt. And then I created training for their managers, so they ordered all the correct materials. We again became the best and they quickly hired us to warehouse and assemble all the upgrade cabinets and equipment for all the tri-state area contractors. It became our most profitable project.

We completed thousands of sites—farms, rooftops, steeples, water tanks—using cranes and helicopters, hitting \$15 million annually. From coffee to fiber to wireless: a wild ride, until the dotcom bust paused everything.



Building a cell sites on towers and rooftops with a helicopter

Difficult Decisions

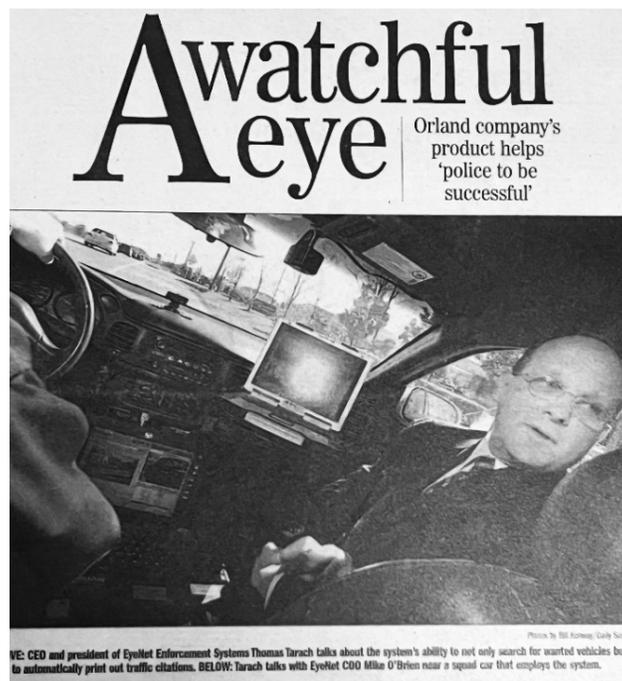
Struggling post-doc com bust, we went after different types of projects. We won the first red-light running projects in Chicago but it wasn't enough. Carriers consolidated, new sites dried up. We had to close. It was heartbreaking—from starting in a rundown warehouse, emptying trash after executive calls to industry leaders. But failure is common for entrepreneurs; it builds leadership. You celebrate wins, endure losses, and emerge knowing you can rebuild. It transforms you—you're an entrepreneur.

Chapter 5: Securing Innovations – Pioneering License Plate Recognition Technology

“A neural network?”

Post-closure, true to entrepreneurial form, I created my next opportunity. Drawing on red-light experience, I launched an automatic license plate recognition (ALPR) company. We sourced cutting-edge software from Hong Kong—originally for shipping containers, then Chinese plates using neural networks. It was world-class for intricate characters.

We secured a U.S. development and distribution deal, built systems with UK-manufactured mobile computers and cameras (where CCTV was advanced). Sold to the complete solutions to Chicago-area police, integrated with law enforcement databases for real-time results—first in Illinois. It was about innovating access control and security, turning tech into practical solutions that enhanced public safety.



Pioneering solutions for law enforcement

Chapter 6: Bridging Cultures – Venturing into Saudi Arabia's Security Sector

“Many said they could... but couldn't.”

More challenges till laid ahead. After a battle with a corrupt venture capitalist left us broke and down to three people, a partnership arose. I connected with a U.S. in-car video firm bidding on a Saudi pilot needing ALPR for English and Arabic plates simultaneously. We won, but no mobile solution existed yet. Though I'd never been to the Middle East, I dove in—traveling extensively to negotiate with a respected Saudi family business. We developed a bilingual system that blew away the requirements.

The key? Reputation. Their Managing Director noted: "Many promised they could read the plates and failed. You said you couldn't yet but explained how you could—and delivered." In that culture, once in the tent, you're in; out, and you're out. I was treated like family, forging cherished friendships. It taught me that international business thrives on being yourself, people from any culture can sense when you are being authentic and straight forward. No bullshit corporate mumbo jumbo. Do more than you promised.



Check point in Saudi Arabia

One other tip, try their food. People everywhere love to share their nation's famous dishes and it helps make a personal connection. I once had camel milk right from the camel in the desert with my customer. It was actually delicious and we laughed that I must have Bedouin in my heritage.



“Try the camel milk”

Chapter 7: Global Alliances – Mastering Mergers and the Call Back to Entrepreneurship

“Doing what I love.”

Building on Saudi success, I assembled a team—U.S. advisors including a retired Fortune 500 CEO and military leaders—to form a Singapore company. Our goal: acquire the Hong Kong and U.S. entities with multinational agreements. I spent seven years traveling to Saudi, Egypt, and Abu Dhabi, navigating cultural nuances while expanding distribution.



Forbes
e.com

BusinessWire

EyeNet and DDIT Sign Distribution Agreement

02.02.09, 9:05 AM ET

EyeNet Enforcement Systems, Inc. (www.eyenet.us), a leader in Automatic License Plate Recognition (ALPR) technology and integrated information systems, announced today that it has reached an exclusive distribution agreement with Developed Dimension Information Technology (DDIT), a registered Saudi company, to distribute EyeNet products in Saudi Arabia and other GCC countries.

The EyeNet system uses video cameras to scan the road for vehicles, automatically read license plate numbers and check the plate number against police department databases. It then alerts the officer when there is a match to security alerts, stolen vehicles and emergency situations.

"DDIT and EyeNet share the vision that reading a license plate number is only the beginning. It is the management and interaction with databases that is critical to the success of ALPR as a public safety tool. We are honored and excited to begin our relationship with one of the most respected companies and families in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Middle East," stated Thomas Tarach, President and CEO of EyeNet Enforcement Systems.

"EyeNet offers a precisely mapped total solution that is compatible with many camera and server platforms. The capability to expand to borders, security access and shipping containers provides nearly endless growth opportunities. We are thrilled to add EyeNet to our family of products," stated Sheikh Mohammed Bin Khamis, President and CEO of DDIT.

International Agreements

We divested the ALPR business eventually. I tried retirement for a few years—missed the thrill. Now, I advise business owners on clean, creative ways to sell their business and enjoy the benefits of all the hard work they put into it. Because at times it can be a grind.

If there's one takeaway, it's that every pivot, even the tough ones, leads to the next horizon.