Ted Boucher

President and CEO of Caldwell Manufacturing Company

"To serve, to strive, and not to yield."
Outward Bound Motto

Ted Boucher describes his turning point as one that serendipitously followed him throughout the course of his life, subtly influencing all of his passions along the way - although he didn't realize it until many years later. When he eventually became aware of what that influence really meant, he would go on to use it to turn his family's business into one of the most successful in both the industry and in the region. Ted didn't start out with that goal in mind because at the start he had no intention of ever working for the family business. How he went from one extreme to the other is the story of that subtle, defining influence.

When he was in high school, Ted and the other students were treated to something of an advantage. At that point in time, 1969, computers were just beginning to take off. Many businesses were seeing the advantage of using them, but most couldn't afford their own. As a result, those who owned computers, such as universities, could sell off blocks of time to companies who wanted to use those computers but still didn't have the extensive need for their own system to justify the huge expenditure of owning one. Ted's high school was one of the first in the country to use this principle in the school itself. They brought in a computer system and made it freely available to all the students. Not only could the students take advantage of the word processing

capabilities, but they were also required to learn simple programming in order to graduate.

When Ted went on to Dartmouth College, where he majored in geology, this influence followed him. Dartmouth was also one of the first colleges in the nation to feature computer terminals that were freely accessible to all the students. He became intimately familiar with programming and all the different ways that a computer could streamline the process of data collection and interpretation, making it much easier to all who were involved. Though his passion still lay almost solely in geology, in particular marine geology, this influence by computers would end up taking Ted to places he hadn't anticipated.

Fresh out of school with his Masters degree, Ted went to work for Gulf Oil. He worked with them by looking for oil off the north shore of Alaska and had quite a leg up on the rest of the employees working in that area. Whereas they were trained only in more outdated modes of geological exploration, Ted was able to use his extensive knowledge of computers to quickly move ahead in the company. After working there only six months he got his first lesson in just how much of a lead his computer expertise gave him: his supervisor came to him and told him he was being sent off to Anchorage to negotiate for the purchase of data critical to the Alaskan oil drilling industry. He was told, "try not to spend more than five million dollars," which was incredibly shocking to someone newly out of graduate school who had been subsisting largely on beans and rice!

Ted recalls being very nervous and overwhelmed at the prospect of handling so much responsibility. He called around as much as he could, seeking advice from as many in his company as he possibly could, until he felt he knew enough to advance. His negotiations were eventually successful, and he came in under budget, a fact that he attributes largely to the way he handled that stressful and demanding situation.

After two years of working for Gulf, an old high school girlfriend named Peggy came back into Ted's life, and their relationship began to get somewhat serious. She and Ted

took a look at where his prospects with Gulf were going to lead him; he didn't seem to have a lot of opportunity anywhere except in small towns that didn't appeal to either him or Peggy. As such, he decided to go back to business school and get his MBA.

Back in business school, the influence of computers continued to follow Ted. He worked with them extensively and even had the opportunity to work with cutting edge programs such as Lotus 123, thanks in large part to taking classes with the niece of Lotus founder, Mitch Kapor. The decision to return to business school proved to be a very timely one for Ted. He married Peggy, and then after graduating saw that the oil industry was in the middle of a record slump. Prices were bottoming out and no one was hiring anywhere. Ted took a look back at his life and began to see the influences that had followed him throughout high school. As he puts it, **"I did what I should have done all along."**

Ted went to work for a computer company, Data General, and was involved in many high profile assignments including working on the industry's first laptop computer, the Data General One. Though he was given a lot of responsibility and seemed to be in a very promising position, something happened that would change everything.

The business owned by Ted's family, Caldwell Manufacturing, had long been a successful supplier to window manufacturers throughout the country. Ted's father had been approached by venture capitalists who sought to buy him out, and as a result, he called a family meeting to discuss the option to sell.

Despite his intention to never work with the family business, Ted took a look at the numbers, ran them through a model that he constructed on his computer, and quickly realized that there were a lot of opportunities to take this company even further without selling out, if only certain areas could be shored up and made more efficient. Moreover, he felt that while he would always be a small player in

big companies like Gulf and Data General, he could do big things as a leader at Caldwell. Ted's father agreed to give Ted the chance, but he had to apply for a position just like anyone else.

Ted applied to come to work for his family's business, and despite a rocky start, he was soon introducing computers into the company in a way that streamlined every aspect of the business.

When Ted arrived, the company had two largely unused word processors, which were functioning more as paperweights. Under Ted's influence, the company purchased a single personal computer that was shared by 12 offices. Eventually, computers began to be used in the engineering department for computer assisted drafting, by secretaries for their word processing needs, and indeed all throughout the company.

Ted was able to prove the worth of these advancements when the sales department offered a projection to the president that if they could reduce their turnaround time on sales from 17 to 5 days, they could double their market share. Though the president was skeptical that it could be done, Ted knew that it could. Using computers to transfer a serial process into a largely parallel one that made everyone's work proceed simultaneously, he was able to reduce the company's turnaround time to 5 days in just under a year. What was then an incredible achievement is now an industry standard.

After the success of their new "5 day standard", the company began to reinvent the company's brand image, insisting on an all new logo and packaging to replace that which the company was presently using; material that had been in use, unchanged, for over 100 years. The end result is that Caldwell is now one of the most recognizable names in the industry, and Ted is now CEO of the company.

Although he never envisioned himself in this position when he first started out, he can look back and see the path that was laid out for him, making it almost inevitable that he would arrive here. However, it

wouldn’t have happened without his ability to apply an industrial revolution like computers to those areas that he felt passionate about, carving out a niche for himself that he could carry over into any industry successfully.