

Writing Her Own Chapter

Realizing she was not suited to a minister's life was a turning point for marketing entrepreneur Sarah Autrand

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A theologian, a children's author and a marketing consultant walk into a meeting together. No, this isn't a joke. And they're not actually three different people – they're dimensions of Sarah Autrand.

For someone believing in consilience, a unity of knowledge theory popularized by Edward O. Wilson (at the highest levels of knowledge, things converge), these seemingly disparate fields are related.

As founder and CEO of Market4Demand, Autrand offers the Marketing Educational Series for Entrepreneurs (MESE), as well as marketing consultant services for high tech and biotech companies.

One of Autrand's goals is to teach entrepreneurs that there's a methodology behind marketing. "Marketing is seen in the Valley as artsy – it's not. It's a process," she said.

Autrand stresses that marketing basics must be covered before the creative process begins. "Start with the customer," Autrand said. "Forget the creativity – you have to do the hard core research." That means customer research – knowing who your customer is and what they want.

As a consultant, Autrand acts primarily as an interim marketing department. Her company helps clients develop marketing plans, budgets, infrastructure, customer evaluations and recruits marketing partners and staff members if needed.

"She has a pretty hefty bag of tricks," said Melinda Wilken. Now Vice President of Marketing for Actional, she used Autrand's consulting services at Exemplary Software. "Sarah understands what it's like to work at a start-up. A lot of projects are quick turns – you have to be able to work on quick deadlines," she said, adding that Autrand does high quality work in a "highly compressed time frame." Wilken thought Autrand's strengths were in program development, for sales development, direct mail and lead generation.

These are not areas one would generally associate with theology training, but Autrand sees a link. "In a way, theology teaches you how to think, how to analyze information," she said. "It's very similar to marketing. To get a budget approved by the board, you have to make a case and argue it – build the argument to a logical conclusion."

While attaining her master's degree at Fuller Theological Seminary, Autrand worked full time at Delrina, flying between San Francisco and Pasadena. She liked the seminary because it was based on Greek, Hebrew "and hard core philosophy."

"It was the best intellectual experience of my life," Autrand said. At the end of her seminary program, she realized she wasn't intended for the ministry. Not only was she uncomfortable signing the Articles of Faith required for ordination, but she didn't feel she had the personality to minister.

Autrand has been in sales and marketing for 19 years, working her way through high school, college and seminary. She started in retail and merchandising, and moved to high tech companies like Delrina and Digital Equipment Corporation. Autrand specializes in enterprise marketing (companies with \$50-\$250 million annual revenue) for clients such as Saqqara Systems, Cartesis, A3 Solutions and Exemplary Software.

Autrand started Market4Demand in May, 2001, having previously founded two other companies including consulting firm SellSoftware. With Market4Demand, she wanted to bring basic marketing issues to high tech and biotechnology entrepreneurs.

Konstantin Guericke, a MESE speaker and Vice President of Marketing for LinkedIn, said that the series provides the nuts and bolts of using marketing budgets effectively, as well as sales and business development topics, for entrepreneurs with technical backgrounds. "They don't need the buzz about industry," he said. Entrepreneurs need to learn "how it fits together, with practical ideas, and that's not really taught at business school or elsewhere."

Autrand said that companies and entrepreneurs are more savvy about marketing than during the dot-com era. Originally used for e-commerce, the web has taken over the function of paper marketing brochures. "The web's most valuable tool is marketing – to push out information as well as to take it in," Autrand said.

As Market4Demand grows, Autrand wants the company to be a thought leader, the top ranked niche consulting firm. Autrand has an assistant, and is interviewing candidates to become her business partner by the year end. She currently outsources market research and other functions as necessary, sticking with her business plan of \$200,000 in revenue per employee, before hiring others. Fortunately for Autrand, "I have a huge network."

Wilken agreed. "She's really connected to a network of other consultants and vendors to fill in where she's not expert," Wilken said.

Autrand's network expanded during her three years on the Silicon Valley American Marketing Association board. Her tenure as president ended in June. "It was my other full time job the past three years," she said.

In her spare time, Autrand writes children's stories, as well as fiction and nonfiction books. Fortunately she can get by on four hours sleep, since she often wakes up at 2:00

a.m. to work. She says she does some of her best work at that hour, when the phones don't ring and the only incoming e-mail is spam.

Autrand has written two novels, including one set in Silicon Valley. She's also written a nonfiction book called *The Seven Disciplines of Authentic Spirituality*, for people not active in organized religion. She's trying to get her books published, while also working on her memoir.

She certainly has plenty of material. Born in the mid-1960s to artists, Autrand moved from San Francisco to New York with her family when just a baby. Her parents separated, and with her mother ill and her father off to art school, Autrand and her older brother were signed over to a legal guardian. After living in three foster homes, including with a guardian who abused drugs and alcohol, and a religiously observant family, Autrand finished high school. "It was an interesting life for a child," she said.

And she's made an interesting life for herself as an adult.

BIO – Sarah Autrand

Title/Company: Founder & CEO - Market4Demand

Age: "under 40"

Birthplace: San Francisco

Residence: San Francisco

Education: English Literature – BA - San Francisco State University 1991

Theology – Masters degree - Fuller Theological Seminary 1996

Family: Dog, Cubby II

Favorite nonfiction author: Ken Wilbur "He's one of the foremost minds in our age."

Favorite fiction book: *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*

Favorite business book: *Good to Great* by Jim Collins. "It blew me away – I'd recommend it to anyone."

Favorite foods: Cheese "It's a problem if it's not in the house."
Coleslaw. "I eat it once a day as a meal."

Hidden talents: cooking, interior design, creative writing

Favorite travel destinations: Paris, Turkey, Greece

First job: Picadilly, a women's retail store, while in high school.

Favorite music: opera, classical, rock and roll, gospel, jazz and blues.

Favorite word: consilience.

Favorite fiction author: DH Lawrence

Favorite piece of clothing: black Wolford shirt (worn so often that her sister-in-law calls her to see if its been washed)

Favorite web sites: www.google.com and www.Wharton.upenn.edu "for research on business topics and all kinds of issues." The website was helpful for nonprofit issues while on the board for the Silicon Valley American Marketing Association.

Hours of sleep per night: 4-8 hours

Worst business experience: Engaging a law firm to craft a document from scratch, and negotiate it. “The key to being an entrepreneur is to do as much as you can and outsource the rest.”