

## The Power of Relationships

By David Malizia



**W**hen I was asked to write this column and describe what ACG has meant to me, I was initially hesitant. Recently, I started my own firm, Westshore Capital Partners, and was crunched for time. But as I reflected on my career, I realized that ACG has been a driving force.

My relationship with ACG began in 1990, when I was recruited to join the Atlanta chapter by member Mike Conrad. As I attended meetings and learned more about the organization, I read an interesting article about John Kirtley, an ACG member who co-founded private equity firm Florida Capital Partners.

In 1992, I decided to go back to business school to earn my MBA. While attending school, I continued my ACG membership and made valuable connections that helped me in my job search. I had employment conversations and interviews with ACG members across the country.

As fate would have it, John Kirtley hired me in 1994 and my career in private equity began. Networking at ACG events has opened many doors for me. While attending the 1996 InterGrowth conference, for example, an intermediary convinced me to visit a company that we ended up acquiring two years later. While speaking at a conference in Hamilton, Canada, in 2000, Russ Robb heard my speech and slated me to speak at InterGrowth 2001, where I was paired with Jeri Harman (InterGrowth 2007 Chair) as a co-speaker.

At the 2003 Los Angeles Capital Connection, I met David Cohn, who later asked me to be a moderator on a panel at InterGrowth 2004, where I introduced Harman to a portfolio company of mine. Her firm later refinanced the company and allowed us to complete four add-on acquisitions.

However, the most compelling story of my relationship with ACG occurred this year when I decided to leave my old firm and start Westshore Capital Partners. Once again, I reached out to my ACG contacts. Two of my ACG friends, Mike Conrad and David Reed, who I had met just months earlier at the ACG Florida Capital Connection, introduced me to my current business part-



ners — Earl Powell and the team at Trivest and Andy Krusen of Dominion Capital Group, both long-time supporters of ACG.

As a 16-year ACG member and an attendee of 11 InterGrowth conferences, I'm grateful for the doors that the organization has opened in my career, and even more so for the friendships that I've developed as a result of my membership.

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