



## Getting a Jumpstart

By Adam Marcus, *The Work Circuit*

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If your Honda stalls on highway 280, AAA can start it up again. And if your fridge goes on the fritz, the Maytag Man's nearby. But where can you turn when your start-up technology firm is having growing (or not-growing) pains?

Try Alan Feinberg. As founder and president of Jumpstart Associates, a San Jose CA consulting firm that comes to the aid of fledgling startup companies, the Boston transplant is a one-man insider's guide to the universe of engineering entrepreneurship, a veritable Virgil of the startup world.

"Some of the best engineers I've ever known have been the ones that have focused on their technology to the exclusion of everything else," Feinberg says. "For example, when you're creating a unique new software product that's likely to sell in the hundred-thousand-dollar-per-copy range, the talent - the sheer brilliance that goes into that - is absolutely non-trivial."

"My clients are not recently-minted MBA's with some smart idea," he adds. "They're creating entirely new paradigms, and the design and debugging of the complex technology that goes along with it is something that's all consuming."

Feinberg, who holds Bachelor of Science degree in Electrical Engineering (BSEE) says he decided to hone his business skills after a short stint working as an application engineer. "I became intrigued by the customer's adoption of technology, rather than the pure technology itself, so I transferred to sales in order to learn the business side." Later, while working for Bedford-Massachusetts-based Computervision Corp., (a startup that eventually merged with Prime Computer) Feinberg returned to school, getting a Master's in Business Administration (MBA) with a concentration in marketing at Boston's Northeastern University.

Next stop was a sales management position at AIDA Corp., a software startup that was acquired by Teradyne in the late 1980s. In 1988, Feinberg became one of the first two-dozen employees at Synopsys, Inc., an Electronic Design Automation (EDA) software firm that went public in February of 1992 and is now an industry leader with over 3,000 employees. For Synopsys he launched the company's first field office and built a sales and support team which grew to over \$21,000,000 in annual sales. Feinberg then went to work briefly for Meta-Software Inc. as the Vice President of Worldwide Sales until the Campbell, Calif.-based startup was acquired by Avant! Corp. His next stop was at ACEO, a less-successful Silicon Valley startup. Feinberg describes his experience as ACEO's VP of Sales and Marketing as "humbling". "I learned firsthand what it's like to compete with the 800 pound gorilla."

But there was an upside to the bruising: people wanted to know how it happened. "Everyone would ask me, 'What went wrong?' They also wanted to know what went right at the four startups that preceded ACEO. When entrepreneurs and VCs kept asking me all those questions it became clear that I had a wealth of knowledge about the success and failure of startups that they could tap." Feinberg continued.

Word got out. "I can't tell you how many people wanted to buy me lunch or a morning coffee and find out what I knew. How do you develop a value proposition, find that first paying customer, expand into Europe and Asia, get outside funding [and so on]. These were all entrepreneurs who just wanted a little practical advice from someone who had been down the same road many times before. I was overwhelmed!"

Feinberg struck out on his own in 1997 without the safety net of a single client. But the idea for his sales and marketing consultancy was a good one, it seems, because Jumpstart has now amassed nearly 30 clients, taking them - two or three at a time - for intensive hands-on coaching sessions that typically last five or six months. "Instead of buying me a breakfast, now those same people become clients."

One person who has paid Feinberg for his services is Anna Petrovskaya, a Stanford University computer science Ph.D. student who left school to start her own software company, Eonite. Petrovskaya and another engineer have developed code that helps IT managers streamline their operations, allowing them to automatically provision new employees with all the digital trappings of the corporate life.

“When we contacted Alan we were in our ‘new business adventure’ stage,” Petrovskaya says. Eonite was incorporated, it had a few employees, but its sales and marketing strategy didn’t exist. “We had a meeting, [Feinberg] liked the concept, he liked the product. Pretty much in a month or so we had our first customer.”

That customer, the name of Petrovskaya wouldn’t divulge, was the ever-prized “early adopter” company, the one who has nearly as much stake in your business’ success as you do. With Feinberg’s help, Eonite has now added several other customers, along with other full-time employees and advisors. Its revenues have risen by “a factor of five or six,” she adds. Petrovskaya says her goal is to make Eonite the leader in IT automation, a market she estimates at roughly \$5 billion in the United States alone. Should that happen, Feinberg, who now sits on the company’s Board of Directors, would be exceedingly pleased, and not just in the way a mother bird admires her hatchlings’ first flight: he’s got equity.

Feinberg considers his most successful account thus far to be Atrenta, a San Jose software concern founded by an AT&T Bell Labs and Cadence Design Systems alumnus, Dr. Ajoy Bose. The two met several years ago when Bose was building up the company that earlier this year became Atrenta.

“In the very early days of that we had no marketing and sales,” says Bose, whose product is a software tool that helps hardware design engineers to conform to chip specs. Feinberg “could articulate the message in a way that I was comfortable with.”

Over the years, Feinberg has cobbled together everything from business plans to sales pitches for the software company, which has grown to have more than 30 customers and recently won a major victory: eight million dollars in venture capital. “Now I have a pretty sizable marketing and sales team but I continue to use Alan as a close advisor,” he says.

Although other consultants and some larger firms offer a similar service, Bose maintains that Feinberg’s services are unique. “He has been around for many years, he understands selling, marketing, business, the dynamics of it. For example, I would have no hesitation in taking him to a [venture capital meeting] if I needed to.”

Feinberg, of course, agrees that he’s a niche player. “There are a lot of individual consultants and consulting firms out there who help with sales, marketing and business development. But I don’t know of anyone who does exactly what I do - who focuses exclusively on startups” he says. “There are unique requirements that startups have that make the generic approaches used by large corporations irrelevant.

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**EDITORIAL NOTE: Jumpstart Associates changed its name to TEKSTART on January 1, 2001.**