



Ryon Paton
Executive Managing Director
CB Richard Ellis

At the time of this interview, Ryon Paton was an Executive Managing Director of CB Richard Ellis' Global Research and Consulting Division. In summary, Ryon's team developed strategies and international talent networks that globalize emerging companies quickly. "In an economy with product lifecycles shortening and time to market pressure increasing clients such as Scient Corporation and M-Shift need a team like ours to get them

in their domestic and international markets fast." Ryon's achievements include partnering with Oxford Analytica, a global economic/geo-political information company and developing Global Risk Management model for CIFE Conference at Stanford University.

professional

What are top 3 principles for success in your industry?

The three things that I tend to live by in regards to what promotes success in my industry are a mix of business principles and faith principles. I think the initial one is making sure that I live enough of a structured life so there remains enough time in my schedule and margin in my schedule for spontaneity. I need to respond to the people and to the events that God's preparing for me. Spontaneity would be number one. Number two is making sure that God prepares my heart on a daily basis – to love the people that He loves. As we manage our lives too objectively, we often times leave the human element out. As a result, we don't demonstrate the love of Christ in the marketplace quite as generously as we should or could. I pray that God gives me a heart that's soft and a heart that loves people. And then thirdly, accountability. I don't think anyone is their own master or has the wisdom to lead themselves in the day-to-day directions that are required of people in my industry. I like to have a loose board of directors that I'm accountable to that are both strong on the business acumen side of the equation as well as strong on the faith and personal side to make sure that I'm in check and that I'm going down the right path ... or a wise path.

What character qualities do you look for when hiring?

When I'm hiring people, I look for consistent pattern of exceptional activity in their previous engagements. When I see a high-energy person or an intellectually capable person, that intellect and that energy need to be focused on achievements on some kind or another. Measuring their achievements against their passion and their vision for life is kind of a key component of what I look for. I need to know people have an understanding of where they're headed. If they're directionless or if they're looking to your or your organization to make up their mind for them, the career path on the education side may be too long before productivity enters into the equation. Secondly, I look for people of integrity; people who have made tough decisions and taken losses; people who have the ability to endure through times where failure is a component part of the day to day experience. If somebody hasn't gone through failure or difficult times, I'm not sure their character has been tested to the degree that would make them a good teammate or a good employee.

What makes a great leader?

In my opinion, what makes a great leader is experience. Somebody who has been through the upsides and the downsides of a variety of different market situations or business cycles in their industry and has an understanding and a staying power. Things don't always go well and a good leader doesn't always lead during good times. They have to lead during bad times. If I'm going to follow somebody, it better be somebody who understands both sides of the continuum. Secondly, I think a leader has to possess strong vision. Strong vision leads people, strong vision recruits good people, strong vision keeps employees or team members engaged over the long haul. Finally, I think that a leader has to possess the ability to operational-ize that vision by recruiting other experts to the

team who are better than he or she is at managing the group or managing the idea to market.

Who are your heroes and why?

I'm not sure that there are heroes in my life, but there have been mentors in my life. There have been people who have shown me how to live more strategically or to live in a more purposeful way throughout the time that I've been here on earth and my heroes probably come in three areas of life. My early life, obviously my dad was a hero to me, or a mentor to me, and taught me much about life ... not verbally ... but by example. Who he was in the market place, who he was at home, who he was with my mother and my brother taught me a lot about family life, taught me a lot about personal values. My dad did not share my Christian convictions, so he was modeling a life for me at the time that was outside of that value set, but had a great, positive impact on who I've become. Secondly, in the arena of faith, Os Guinness has been a hero to me or a mentor to me because he has taught me that there is an intellectual rationale for faith as well as a response of the heart and the truth does matter. The debate in the public forum is one that we need to be equipped for and he's been good at equipping me and drawing alongside of me to help me with that. Thirdly, my heroes are guys like David, who at his age and stage in the game, is making a stand for his faith, he's making a stand for how he is asking God to use him and the talents that have been incorporated in his life and I'm cheering him all the way on the side lines. Trying to help him get to where I think God wants him to be.

What are the 2-3 most valuable lessons you learned in your career?

Well, clearly the first lesson is one of faithfulness. Learning to trust that God is in every situation, God is in every relationship and that God does not always prosper us in a human way. You know, we're not always going to make the deal, we're not always going to go public in the way that our neighbors did. We may not profit from it materially the same way. Through it all, trusting God to provide for my family and me has required me to learn that faithfulness and dependence upon Him. So that's really the number one thing. I think the second thing is really understanding failure. Knowing that failure is a component part of maturing, failure is a component part of every day existence and that God has designed us to experience failure for His purposes. Whether it's for personal growth or internal growth or whether it's for positioning. Maybe our lessons in this one venue are over and failure is a way to move us into the next venue. I'd say those are the two parts of the answer that mean the most to me.

What was your worst career decision or mistake?

By saying "worst" doesn't mean unnecessary and I need to differentiate between the two. Oftentimes we go through really bad circumstances and we say, "Gee, you know, when it's over, I'll never do that again." Well, we don't have that promise. The marketplace is not amenable to that ideal. For me, it was a ten-year career in the development business ... the real estate development business ... at the right time in history. I was building high-rise office buildings in Silicon Valley during the office glut of the late '80s when the SNLs were thriving and money was plentiful and you didn't need to do a lot to justify the next development. But in the midst of that, I was also putting my trust in some people that were tied to the wrong value system. I was going along with that and I was adopting their values on a day-to-day basis with how I constructed my goals and objectives. The toughest thing that came out of it was making sure that I didn't do that again. I didn't want to tie my personal wagon to the wrong set of values or the wrong leaders who didn't have the integrity we talked about earlier. In retrospect, I was left with a semi-financial disaster that took about five years for me to recover from. I was also left with a bit of an emotional disaster because I was not prepared for failure, it was the first time in my life I experienced a major business failure and thirdly, I felt betrayed by the people I had put my personal trust in. Would I like to have never done that? Would I like to have gone a different path or taken a different track from a career perspective? You bet. But nothing has shaped my second half more than that experience from a positive perspective. In the midst of that, my wife and I were busy developing a baby factory at home and we ended up with five children and my priorities changed. I needed to be in a different place to be more accessible to her, to support her and to be around my children as they began to grow. I wouldn't have done that had things continued to clip along successful in the development business. Definitely that was a turning point or a marker in my life.

personal

What is the difference between success and significance?

If you're successful, then you have significance. So that requires you to define success appropriately from the onset of whatever the deliberation is that's going on in your mind, right? I've been around successful people who define success by position or power, or material boot, or having options in their life to go enjoy what all that success will bring them. I've concluded at 46-years old that most of the people I've met who define success in those categories are miserable people. Now, it's not that I wouldn't want a lot of those things myself, but I'm prohibited against pursuing it. I'm prohibited against investing my resources for it because I don't see the result that's very positive; I see broken marriages, I see angry people, I see purposeless people. Spending time on that word for a minute kind of leads to my ultimate definition of what success and significant is. I think for the last ten years I've been crying out for an understanding of why I'm here, why I'm wired the way I am, and what I should be doing with all of that. If you can determine purpose I think you can find success and ultimately understand significance in your life; because if you're purposeful, you're significant for some reason. It's the reason that will drive that definition and it's purpose that will give you the experience of being successful. I believe when it comes to defining purpose in your life, you're bringing out the hidden question that every man and every woman wrestles with - it's never spoken at a cocktail party, it's never spoken of in a board meeting, it's occasionally spoken of on an airplane flight if it's over an hour - there's a yearning in the hearts of people for true purpose and that's the question we have to confront and it's a question that has answers, but people aren't always willing to wrestle with the answer.

What does balance mean to you? How important is balance to success?

How do we manage priorities, how do we balance our life, how do we justify our decisions, to spend our time and energy on A versus B? Let me start kind of from the ground up in my answer. I don't believe that balance is achievable: I think that balance is a myth. I think when you're balanced you're mediocre, whether that's as a husband, as a father, or as a worker, or a server. The examples of people that I see in the marketplace that I respect are examples of people that don't live balanced lives; they live purposeful lives; they live directed lives; and they live lives that accentuate the strengths that they've been given; therefore, they have a satisfaction with their work or their labor that's uncommon. When I talk about the issues of balance with my wife and family and my accountability, members of my board of directors, they're always testing me in regards to my commitments and my talent juxtaposed to my passion. If I can keep those elements in the equation and find agreement at home and agreement in the marketplace in regards to them, then I feel I'm directed properly. If there is an imbalance in any of it, it's when your talent and your position and your passion don't line up and don't compliment each other. Show me a balanced man and I'll show you one that spends a little bit of time doing a lot of semi-good things without a lot of impact.

Have you ever had a wakeup call in your life?

I think the wake up call that I remember the most, that had the greatest impact was the wake up call of our business failing in the late '80s in regards to Real Estate development activity that I was involved with. During that time I was chasing the big carrot, as everybody else was, hoping to be financially independent by the time I was 40. In that period of time I was working 13 to 15 hour days, regularly consumed with the thoughts and concerns and conflicts of my work over the weekends. I was disassociated mentally from whatever my wife was telling me or whatever the needs of my children were during the time. All of that activity was having a negative impact on me, physiologically. My blood pressure went up, my cholesterol went up, I was basically stressed out. During that period, I would remember, as the real estate market began to crash, I would remember going to bed at night, putting everybody to bed, my wife going to sleep and I would be laying awake for hours consumed with the worry and the concern of my day- to- day activity and the worry and concern over not achieving my goals of financial independence as a result of what was happening. During those late hours my heart would be racing. In fact, there were times I thought my heart was going to jump out of my chest and it all would be over. I wasn't sure how to survive it, but I remember driving - at the time I had a brand new baby twins - my commute was about 60 minutes in each direction. As things began



to unwind, I remember pulling off on the side of the freeway and calling my wife on my cell phone and just crying like a baby, asking her for help, asking her for strength to make it through to endure. That was a wake up call to me - that I might not be living with the right purpose - that I might not be living with the right priorities in my life. As that unwound, those were the things that I focused on - seeing change in my life dramatically - because had I not, it would have consumed me. And for what? What was hanging in the balance in the way of gain, something I thought and prized so highly, but the price tag on it was very low and I didn't realize it until the last moments.

How do you define yourself?

I find it hard to define myself or put myself in a particular category because I believe I'm always learning something new about why I'm here and what I'm supposed to be doing and who it is I'm supposed to be responding to. Just as soon as I think I've defined myself, I'm redefined and that's what makes life interesting, it's what drives me because I don't know what's next. What it does do is it bifurcates the issues of independence with the issues of dependence. One way I would have defined my past was through being an independent person, being self-reliant or being self-resourceful, finding the answers to life within my own experience and within my own thinking. The older I get and the more experiences I have, the more dependent I believe I am. The answers to life are not within myself, they're not within my own thinking - and that they're outside of me - and it's what I discover outside of me that gives me purpose and defines me.

What was your best investment?

I think the best investment that I made over the course of my life would probably be two-fold and I know that this may not be popular among a lot of business thinkers, but I think there's a rationale for faith in God. I believe that there is a God who is concerned about the details of our life on a day-to-day basis. As I was going through the process of my education, I came into a relationship with God and I have come to know as the God of truth, has defined love, and defines purpose for why we're here. The best investment I ever made was in following Him and on a daily basis, allowing Him to determine my steps. Secondly, the best investment I ever made was in Jan, my wife of 25 years, the mother of my five children and the love of my life. Knowing that no matter what life cycle we're in and whatever challenge we're facing, we're growing together, we're determining life together, and we're creating wonderful memories and experiences that we look back on, that fill us with joy as we look back on those things.

spiritual

Can you follow Christ and still have a successful career, family and such?

First of all, the greatest example of one in a marketplace was Jesus. And I believe that God created a marketplace. And I believe that God's manual reveals truth to us about the decisions we make while we're in the market place as it relates to what works and doesn't work. So I'd rephrase the question: How could you not be a follower of Jesus and succeed in the marketplace? We talked today about misplaced priorities, purposelessness in our activities and accumulations; we've talked about stress from the standpoint of the negative impacts of that on an individual's life if they're not living and working for the right reasons. I think the examples of people who are not living successfully without Jesus in the marketplace leave me no role models. The ones that I do follow, the ones I'm an imitator of is I Thessalonians ... talks about the ones who are following Jesus in the market place and responding to the things that He's prepared in advance for them to do and that's what makes life exciting, what gives life success. I stick with the juxtaposed question and that is, how can you not have Jesus and succeed?