

The ENTREPRENEURS

FROM THE EDITORS AND BUREAUX OF MONOCLE MAGAZINE

• THE BUSINESS HANDBOOK FOR PEOPLE WITH BIG IDEAS

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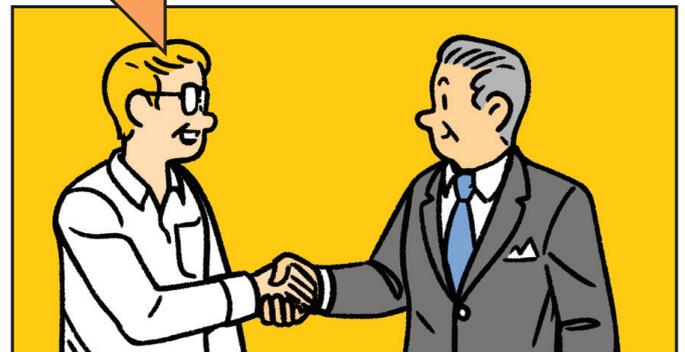
'I MUST READ ABOUT THE NEW WORK DRESS CODES'

'GREAT. BUT CAN YOU NOT HOLD MY HAND SO TIGHTLY?'

YOU CAN DO THIS

How to start, grow and hand over a company that's good for you, your community and your quality of life.

* *Inspiring stories and great tips – including spotting the proverbial gap, becoming a rural money maker, opening a cinema and finding a business course that really works*



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Ingamba

Cycling tours with the perks of the elite.

In 2010 Portuguese professional cyclist João Correia was winding down from a gruelling season. So what was the antidote to a surfeit of lactic acid and too many jolts to the collarbones? Jumping back into the saddle, of course. This time though it was for a leisurely ride around Chianti, with stops for food and wine. After an impromptu invitation via a tweet, a dozen others joined him. Correia had unearthed a market for affluent cyclists craving a high-end, high-performance experience. Ingamba now runs tours in Europe and North America from its Sausalito HQ. A seven-day, €7,000 tour includes everything from bikes to Lycra. — IC

Prove the concept.

Correia tackled logistical problems as he would when preparing for a race: by getting help from soigneurs. “I never wrote a business plan,” he says. He spent two years fine-tuning the formula to ensure that participants would have an experience similar to professionals, with top hospitality thrown in. “I wanted to share the incredible places I had visited as a professional. We ran three trips over two years before the business formally launched.”

Know who you are and what you do.

“We were the first to have the same infrastructure as a pro team for recreational cyclists: professional soigneurs and the same equipment as the pros, including \$15,000 [€13,500] Pinarello bikes,” says



Correia. Support cars stop to repair flat tyres; clients wear the same high-end kit to instil camaraderie; and every ride ends with a rub down from expert masseurs. Stages retrace major road races and pro riders sometimes join in. “Once we cycled a Giro d’Italia stage a few hours before it began.”

Hire right and make sure people buy into it.

“You can teach skills but you can’t teach character and work ethic,” says Correia. Given his links with cycling – he is also a sports agent representing 25 pro cyclists – he is able to hire a crew with experience drawn from races such as the Tour de France. Clients have their racing kit and bike washed daily, with expert mechanics on hand for repairs.

You need to be authentic.

“If you provide an authentic experience, it connects with people,” says Correia. For lodging and eating, he and his staff look for places with genuine warmth: hotels such as rural retreat São Lourenço do Barrocal in the Alentejo or a meal at Castello di Ama, a Tuscan winery with a private art collection. “We go where we have great relationships with owners – one osteria has my jersey on the wall,” he says. “We are greeted as old friends.”

Start giving back from the start.

Seeing the positive impact that his excursions have had on his clientele has encouraged Correia to help people outside his target market benefit from the joys of cycling. “We started working with World Bicycle Relief, a charity that places bikes in Africa to increase mobility for students and others,” he says. “Getting to school quicker, bringing home water by bike, helps everybody.” Ingamba donates a bike for every guest and organises fundraising rides.

What success looks like.

Ingamba is seeing double-digit growth and operates 50 week-long trips a year. Correia is particularly proud of the fact that 55 per cent of participants are return clients. His firm’s tours take cycling enthusiasts to picturesque locations such as the Dolomites, Pyrenees, Douro Valley and California coast.

In numbers

Founded: 2012

Staff: 20

Clients per year: 500