

Bob Trogele

Master of Personal and Organizational Reinvention

Robert Hargrove, January 2015

Bob Trogele is a master of personal and organizational reinvention. Bob's life exemplifies having the courage to put aside the prominence achieved in one field to create an "impossible future" in another. Professional basketball player, University Professor, President of a Fortune 500 company, and most recently an entrepreneurial investor in wildcat oil drilling, Bob has a track record of accomplishment.

"Bob is a proven winner," says Milton Steele, former President of FMC (Agriculture Division) and one of Bob's previous bosses. Bob's "likes-to-win-style" means sticking to high principles and playing to win, not just to be in the game. The key is that Bob is a *multiplier* who brings out the best in people, rather than a *diminisher* who brings out the worst.



Bob's list of accomplishments includes leading the Wichita Shockers to the NCAA Conference Championships, winning the German Professional Championships, becoming a university professor and inspiring MBA students from emerging markets with his lectures on global business strategy and common sense, and being a business executive who turned a perennially mediocre performing division of FMC into a high performer, often delivering 50% EBIT margins, the highest in the industry, and increasing profits fivefold, greatly contributing to the company's climbing stock price.

However, according to Bob, his greatest accomplishment is his daughter Julia's strong character. Julia became a college basketball star at Penn State and is now on her way to becoming a successful lawyer. "My dad was the one who put a basketball in my hands and spent hours with me in the playgrounds, practicing jump shots and doing dribbling drills."

Studying at the Feet of the Masters

Part of the reason for Bob's success is that, early in life, he figured out that if you want to excel in any field, you have to study with a master. You also need to stretch your mind and skills by competing against the very best in an area that really matters. If you consider the wonderful grandparents, coaches, and teachers that took Bob under their wings and combine that in an alchemical cauldron with his natural talent, intelligence and drive, it's obvious that he was destined to achieve some kind of greatness.

Bob's greatest teacher was his grandfather in Germany, an officer in the Eastern border guard and horticulturalist who lived through two world wars and taught Bob many lessons in basic human wisdom and practical common sense. Bob pays that forward in teaching MBA students, not just lecturing them on strategy, but practical matters, like how to make your own success when there is no elevator, just a staircase, you have to climb with passion and energy.



Howie Garfunkel, founder of Five Star Basketball Camp in NYC. Michael Jordan, Patrick Ewing, and Bob Trogele all said the Camp was a turning point for them in their lives.

Bob had several outstanding coaches who guided him throughout his athletic career. In high school, he was coached by Tom Konchalski, a basketball icon and legend, and Mike DePaoli, a protégé of the famous Jack Powers, who was an all-star player, top coach and director of the National Invitation Tournament held every fall in New York City. According to Bob, Konchalski and DePaoli are both great characters and great coaches. Another coach who took Bob under his wing was Rick Shore, who joined Bob's high school team and stuck with him in college. Shore has high praise for Bob, "Bobby Trogele was a very smart, very talented basketball player who it was my privilege to help develop. I sometimes acted as a father or uncle, at other times, like a coach and teacher."

In his sophomore year, Bob attended the elite Five Star Basketball Camp where he was influenced by the many basketball greats. Then camp coaches, Hubie Brown, Mike Fratello and Rick Patino, who would eventually rise to great prominence in the NCAA level and NBA, were all available at the camp. Great players like Patrick Ewing, Michael Jordan, and LeBron James all attributed their participation at the Camp as a turning point in their lives. Bob, as a camper and later as a counselor-coach, too was inspired by the Five Star experience which perhaps influenced the fact that he helped lead his team in his senior year of high school in an 18 and 0 season and a #1 ranking in New York State.

When Bob signed at Wichita State, he met David E. McFarland, who was to become a university chancellor and president. According to Bob, “David was my



Says former University Chancellor David MacFarland, “Bob is a special kind of person. He’s tough and competitive, yet very caring and compassionate.”

mentor in all things personal and professional.” David recognized Bob’s IQ and helped him build his EQ, something of which McFarland had plenty. “Bob was not your typical basketball player struggling to get through college. He was extremely talented in sports, but extremely smart.” McFarland stops himself in mid speech, as if trying to get down to the heart of the matter regarding Bob and then says, “Bob is a fantastic guy. He is a guy’s guy to be sure, tough, having come out of New York City, and competitive as they come. Yet, at the same time, he is very caring and compassionate.”

Bob also developed a powerful relationship with Professor Dharma deSilva at Wichita, a Fulbright Scholar who exposed him to the World Trade Council and the coming era of globalization. It was Dharma who inspired Bob to transcend the world of basketball and get a PhD as a global business executive. At the University of Göttingen in Germany, where he got his masters and PhD in business, Bob studied under the distinguished professor, Helmut Brede, graduating Magna Cum Laude. According to Professor DaSilva, “My first impression of Bob was that he was smart with great social skills. His PhD paper was excellent and highly regarded. Bob Trogele is the one person I would enjoy spending a year with marooned on a tropical island.”

In business, Bob’s bosses in the Global 1000, also strongly influenced him, including Horst Kramp, an executive board member at Schering AG in Berlin, who put him in an accelerated Executive Development program that involved rapidly rotating stretch assignments. Bob says, “I estimate the company invested over a half a million dollars on me over a two year period.” One boss who strongly influenced Bob was Milton Steele, President of the FMC AG Division and, according to Bob, a “business genius.” Bob joined FMC’s crop protection business to take over North America in part because he thought he could learn valuable lessons about leadership from Milton. “Milton taught me, amongst other things, that a strong leader has to be generating multiple strategic options and be agile in adapting to change and gathering resources,” says Bob.

If you talk to Bob about his lifetime of experiences, it suddenly dawns on you that his experiences are so robust that he has managed to pack two or three lifetimes of growth and learning into one. Says Darryl Jones, a former direct re-

port, “It’s not often you meet a single individual who possesses within them self so much basic human wisdom, charismatic leadership, skill and practical business know-how, ready-at-hand to meet the task in front of him.”

Mastering of Personal and Organization Reinvention

Rick Shore captured the essence of Bob and his ability to reinvent himself, “When you are talking about Bobby Trogele, you are talking about a very special person in many ways. He is not just a smart and very talented ball player. There are very few people on planet earth who become a big success in one career, like basketball, and then put all their success at risk to start a second career where they have to totally reinvent themselves. Bob has done this successfully not twice, but three times, and may be on his way to a fourth.”

What is reinvention? As Bob’s life demonstrates, reinvention is about declaring an “impossible future” for yourself and living into that possibility. We are talking about a whole new possibility, not just an incremental improvement on who you are or what you’ve done in the past. Being a professional basketball player has as little to do with being a college professor, as it does with being a global business executive, seeking to make the next quarter revenues and EBIT. Bob has not only reinvented himself, but also translated that to the teams and companies he has been a part of. “I helped the German pro basketball domestically and internationally grow up,” Bob says. In addition, he transformed FMC NA from a company selling generic crop protection products to a customer solution-based, technology centered organization.

In her book, *The Last Word on Power*, Tracy Goss says that the power that brought people to a prominent position of leadership in the domain they are operating in today, may eventually prevent them from now realizing their potential. To reinvent yourself, you must acquire a new kind of power, the power

Five Steps to Executive and Organization Reinvention

- 1) What is the successful position of power you have achieved in your field, the winning strategy that got you there?
- 2) What is the “impossible dream” about what you really want to do next with your life?
- 3) Are you willing to put at risk the success you have become in order to realize your impossible dream?
- 4) Start living into that possibility, taking action from it today, rather than marching forward from the present.
- 5) How do you need to reinvent yourself to realize your “impossible future”? Who do you need to be? What do you need to do?

to put at risk the success you have become, in order to create an “impossible future” you feel really passionate about.

From Germany to the USA

Bob's ability to reinvent himself probably started in the early days of his childhood. He was born Ulrich Trogele-Peters in Germany, named at the suggestion of his grandmother after Saint Ulrich, the Patron Saint of Augsburg. Saint Ulrich was a master of reinvention within the world of the church. The See of

Augsburg reached the period of its greatest splendor under Ulrich. Saint Ulrich demonstrated moral leadership authority by intervening in the high level of corruption in the church. He elevated the low moral, social, and economic conditions of the clergy. He built churches to inspire man to do God's work in honor of St. Afra and St. John and also did so himself in providing for the poor. He attracted a great following.



Saint Ulrich, Bob's namesake, was a turnaround artist in the church, just as Bob was to become in business. Saint Ulrich elevated the moral, social and economic situation of the See of Augsburg, Germany.

Bob, a Catholic with strong moral (human) values, was born in an area of Germany where his forebears had been farmers for 500 years. Bob's childhood was very much influenced by the conditions of Germany in the aftermath of World War II, with its shattered buildings and shattered economy. In addition to the fact that the country was just emerging from the martial law imposed by the Allies, there was massive unemployment, depression, price inflation, coal shortages and a terrible food crisis. Loss of farmland in the former East Prussian province taken over by the Soviets, plus the need to feed millions of refugees, contributed to a food crisis. Poor harvests also affected the food supply.

During this time of dire poverty, Bob's mother and grandmother worked on farms to maintain a subsistence living. Bob recalls, “We had meat once a week to supplement the potatoes and vegetables on the table.” Bob also worked on the farm during harvest times, walking through the woods to gather and eat mushrooms. Perhaps farm labor was the beginning of the ferocious work ethic which has helped him succeed as a basketball player and global executive.

It was during this time that Bob spent time with his grandfather, the border guard during WW I and WWII. Captured by the Russians and taken to Siberia, he had his golden inlaid teeth “gun butted.” His grandfather was a horticulturist who valued education. He taught Bob many lessons gained through his life experiences, like “Turn your wounds into wisdom.” He gave Bob a cherished

gold watch that had been in the family over a hundred years. “I hope to pass this on to my grandchildren, if I am lucky enough to have them,” says Bob today.

Bob’s mother and father separated early on which probably contributed to the family’s hardships. She, however, eventually reached her capacity for hardship and started to live into the “impossible dream” of what I call “The US of A Solution”. In 1965, when Bob was in the third grade, she and her son immigrated to American. They moved to the New York City area where Bob’s mother, who became an accountant, married his stepfather, a NYC cop with a positive, upbeat



Bob’s stepfather, a NYC cop, took him to Park 57 and put a basketball in his hands, sparking his competitive nature and passion for the game.

personality and good social skills. Bob not only had to reinvent himself as an American, starting with changing his name from Ulrich to Robert, as he was told that the other kids wouldn’t be able to pronounce his name, but he also had to learn the language, shift schools, and make new friends.

There was, according to Bob, still very much a German phobia in the New York City area resulting from the war. Yet, Bob’s affable personality and friendly attitude toward all may have helped him. As David McFarland pointed out years later, “Bob was always the kind of guy whose social skills won over most people he came into contact with. He was tough, he could take a charge on the basketball court or order a big layoff in a business, in order to keep it from going under. Yet, perhaps the hardships he had experienced in his childhood in Germany after the war gave him a soft spot for people who were going through hard times or in need.”

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Darryl Weitz, a former employee, tells a story about Bob’s secretary who had stopped showing up for work regularly, making life difficult for Bob. Bob should have fired her, but instead had a heart-to-heart talk with her, and found out she was absent because her mother was sick and husband suffered from health issues. Instead of firing her, he cut her some slack until the situation changed. Obviously this won her loyalty for life.

From Farming in Bavaria to Basketball

Bob’s stepfather, who had a lot of common sense and a good sense of humor, taught him how to defend himself. He also helped find a way to nurture the

young man's athletic talents, which was a way to fit in. Bob tells the story, "It was a fall day, kind of chilly and he takes me up to the park – NYC Park 57. He hands me a Spalding basketball and shows me how to put it in the basket. He then walks away leaving me there with the basketball and didn't come back. I soon began playing with the other kids in the neighborhood and enjoyed the friendly competition." The school system in Germany had been very strict in the Prussian sense and very difficult, and in some ways, the school system in America seemed comparatively easy, based on the liberal education policies of the day. Even advanced placement courses in high school were easy for Bob, so he revelled in the high level of competition in basketball.



Bob recalls, "I met a gentleman by the name of Tom Konchalski—one of the best HS basketball coaches in the USA and one of the best minds in the basketball business—who gave me the vision of becoming a professional basketball player."

At the Ascension Grammar School, Bob met a gentle man who strongly influenced Bob's basketball career. His name was Tom Konchalski. Says Bob, "Tom was one of the premier high school coaches in the United States and one of the smartest people in the basketball business. Tom became a 'basketball prospector' for colleges, looking for hidden gold on high school teams and he eventually bought into Five Star Recruiting Report." Says a former player, "From the moment Tom shook hands with you, he would look you square in the eyes—a cross between a devoted father who thinks you're the greatest and a strict parish priest who sees your human failings—and ask: Are you Division I material or simply junior college?"

Tom's yearly Scouting Report cast players like Bob in colorful language, as "loaded with offensive chutzpah," while another was "like a rabid dog on D." He writes that one player can "tip like Sinatra" around the basket, and another has the "metabolism of a hummingbird" on the court. Along the right margin, he squeezes in comments of 25 characters or less like, "scores like we breathe!" and "bodyguard w/ surgeon's touch."

It was Tom Konchalski's belief in Bob, a 6'4" point guard, that inspired him to set his sights, not just on college, but also on the NBA. Bob started living into the "impossible" dream of becoming a professional basketball player. Konchalski's notion was that, if you go for the pros, you will pull your whole game to a different level, not in the future, but starting today. Bob applied this invaluable lesson,

not just in sports, but later in business, offering a vision that had the power of turning low-performing companies into high performing ones.



Gene Smithson, Bob's coach at Wichita, was a strong motivator and believer in the extra effort. The bigger the game, the better Bobby played.

Bob was scouted by the top college coaches in the United States, including the controversial Bobby Knight of the Indiana Hoosiers, who won three NCAA championships, and Al McGuire who also won a national championship at Marquette. Bob got some advice from his father to play in Wichita, which was one of the top ten in the country. According to Bob, "I was recruited by Wichita State in Kansas, a top team in the NCAA. They put a lot of pressure on me to sign. I liked the town and folks, and the team played all the big schools—UCLA, Louisville, Cincinnati, Marquette, and Memphis State." Bob and his team played under the tutelage of the great Gene Smithson, a strong motivator and believer in the extra effort. Smithson was the first coach to guide the Shockers to a 20 win season.

Bob describes himself as having a style like Jason Kidd, an All Star NBA point guard and shooter who led the league five times in assists. "Like Kidd," says Rich Shore, "Bob was a big time college basketball player who excelled in big games in part because his focus was making the people on the team greater. As Bob developed as a player in college and pros, it became less about scoring ten points, ten assists, or ten passes. It became more about timing or being in the right place at the right time, and making your teammates believe in you."

David McFarland describes a good example of this. "I can remember one big game where Bob was standing at the top of the paint with his back to the basket unable to see anything. Cheese Johnson, one of Bob's teammates moved to a spot on the court where he could get a jump shot off. Bob, as if he had eyes in the back of his head, threw the ball over his shoulder to exactly the place where Cheese was standing waiting to get the pass. He scored and the crowd went so wild it almost tore the roof off the building."

I asked Rick Shore what he thought was the biggest single thing that defined Bob as a player. Shore without missing a beat responded, "Bobby Trogele was a big time basketball player who excelled in big games when the competition was at the highest level. The higher the level of competition, the better Bobby played!" Bob recalls, "We won the Missouri Valley Championship in my fresh-



According to Bob, when leading a business, he instills lessons he learned in sports: Play to win, don't just play to be in the game.

man year, were runner-ups in my sophomore year. My greatest moment, however, was as a sophomore when we played Al Maguire and Marquette in the last game. They won the national championship that year, but we beat them at home.” When the Shockers played Indiana State, Bob was voted, along with Larry Bird, MVP of the game.

Says Bob, “I think one thing you learn when you move in basketball from high school to college, the level of competition picks up, the speed of competition picks up. When you go from college to the pros, the level of competition goes through the roof. It’s a heady experience, but extremely intense and demanding. I always excelled in big games, the more intense the competition was, the more I liked it. I later took this love of competition and winning into the great game of business.

I’ve tried to instill in the business organizations I worked in that strategy and tactics are about winning, not just playing to be in the game. You have to accept the fact in business that not everyone comes from a sports background and doesn’t appreciate this. Most companies I worked for didn’t talk much about winning, competition, and being considered #1 or the championship team in their industry. They didn’t set their vision high enough to demand the best from people, but instead went for continuous improvement. The problem is that they don’t benchmark the competition, they don’t have a balanced scorecard. They don’t figure out how to win by marketing to very specific customer segments, on a country-by-country, product-by-product basis.”

From Basketball to Business

It was at Wichita State, that Bob struck up a relationship with a very worldly gentleman by the name of Dharma deSilva. He was a man who had come from a Sri Lankan family, who had a big house with many servants. Dharma enjoyed, even as a young man, playing with the family elephants and helping to tend the family vegetable garden. Dharma, a PhD in business, had a sixth sense about the coming era of globalization and wanted Sri Lanka to play a role in it. In the 1960’s, he was to found the first MBA program in Sri Lanka. A man of principle, Dharma courageously spoke up against political oppression and human rights violations, but ran into right wing political backlash. As a result, his house was burned down by government operatives, not only once, but twice and his family was threatened.

In 1976, Dharma became a visiting professor at Wichita State and ended up staying. There Dharma founded and chaired the World Trade Council and was affiliated with the AIESEC, an organization that helped students interact and



Professor Dharma deSilva encouraged Bob to reinvent himself as a Professor, getting his PhD in global business strategies.

network with CEOs, visiting ministers, and trade dignitaries. Bob met Dharma when he joined in the activities of the World Trade Council. Dharma was impressed with Bob's great intelligence and interest in global business. Says Dharma, "Bob would turn his classroom assignments in on time with a high level of quality, often coming up with original ideas." As David McFarland put it, "Bob's intelligence was impressive. The last time I checked, he was speaking 7 different languages, including Swahili."

In one conversation Dharma remembers trying to instill in Bob a desire to reinvent himself as a professor and get a PhD. "I told him that I had a dream that one day a basketball player from Wichita would go to Europe or Asia and get a PhD in global business strategies. Bob looked at me rather shyly, like a young boy on his father's lap and asked, 'Dr. DeSilva, who would that be?' and I responded, 'That boy would be you.'"

Bob and the Shockers had done extremely well in his freshman and sophomore years at Wichita and poorly in his junior and senior years. He felt the coaches were focused on coaching 'Big Men,' not point guards like himself, and that he wasn't learning very much. He was running out of time and, while he had NBA options, he began living into the "impossible future" of becoming a global business executive and reinventing himself accordingly.

It wasn't that hard of a decision, as NBA players in those days, even great players like Walt Frazier and Dave DeBusschere of the New York Knicks, seldom made more than \$100,000 a year. There was also a very high percentage of good players who were washed up and crippled from injuries by the age of 25 to 28. Bob made what was perhaps his first strategic business decision that involved figuring out *how to win, by deciding where to play*. He figured out that as a global business executive at the highest levels of the corporation he could have a much longer and more impactful career than in basketball. Bob confided, "I was to discover in business I had two strengths, leading people and making money, not just for myself, but for every business I touched."

Bob left the United States for Europe to attend the University of Göttingen for his masters. He did not even know until after he left that he had been drafted by



Bob spent more than a decade going for his masters and PhD in business, financing his education as a professional basketball player or working full time.

pressed by Bob's talent. Being a dual-national, Bob decided to join the German National Team in 1980. He would later be coached by Ralph Klein, the former head coach of Maccabi Tel Aviv, winner of 14 championships and the European title in 1977. In 1983, Klein unexpectedly announced his appointment as the coach for BSC Saturn Cologne, the West German National Team. Bob played in 126 international games for the German National Team, who came in 5th in the European Championships. Klein led Bob and the West German National Team



Professor Trogele pays it forward by teaching MBAs from emerging markets at the Berlin University School of Economics. He says there is no elevator to success, just a staircase.

the Cleveland Cavaliers of the NBA. Yet, even though Bob was pursuing a career in global business, he did not give up his basketball. "I spent ten years financing my education as a business man, which is where my passion was, by playing professional basketball." It was during this period that he married Uta, also a basketball player who is also a great teacher and mother, as well as women's activist. Her goal is to help women make better decisions in their relationships with men.

In Germany, basketball happens in the club system, where one club may have teams in different divisions, some a pro division. Bob had signed to a 3 year contract with ASC Göttingen, won several championships, when he was spotted by an executive from the German National Team, who was impressed by Bob's talent.

Being a dual-national, Bob decided to join the German National Team in 1980. He would later be coached by Ralph Klein, the former head coach of Maccabi Tel Aviv, winner of 14 championships and the European title in 1977. In 1983, Klein unexpectedly announced his appointment as the coach for BSC Saturn Cologne, the West German National Team. Bob played in 126 international games for the German National Team, who came in 5th in the European Championships. Klein led Bob and the West German National Team to an 8th place finish in the 1984 Olympic basketball tournament in Los Angeles. Bob played against such players on the American team as Michael Jordan, Joe Klein, and Chris Mullen.

Bob went on to get his Masters and in 1986, while still in school, landed a job at Schering Corporation. "Thereafter, I spent nine years researching and writing my doctoral thesis as an external candidate while working full time." At Schering Corporation, Bob was one of two select upper management trainees in a high potentials program. Bob worked directly under a board member of the company responsible for global sales and marketing and all regions, who coached him on a regular basis and who also assigned a senior corporate executive to mentor him. Bob would go on a series of stretch

“rotational assignments” that all told had a transformational impact on turning him into a global business executive. His journeys included visiting various country managers and their sales offices where he learned about how to drive strategy back from the market. He soon began to distinguish which offices worked well and which didn’t work well at all, benchmarking in his own mind the business practices that led to this. He did the same kind of rotational assignments with functional business units.

Soon Bob started taking on greater and greater leadership and P&L roles at Schering Ag Division throughout Europe (in France and Ireland). The Schering Ag Division was one of the world’s leading crop science companies in the areas



Says Bob, “A great strategy must be nested in sustainable business performance.” He championed sustainable agriculture at FMC with seed treatment, a biological form of crop protection.

of crop protection. In 1994, Schering was sold to Hoechst, the first of many major M&A deals. Bob would be directly involved in getting this over the line. As head of the Hoechst Schering business team, the merger gave Bob a chance to work very closely with the famous Boston Consulting Group on a strategy for the newly combined business. People on the Boston Consulting team were impressed with Bob’s business savvy and attitude and invited him back from normal team meetings with Hoechst staff to their private working sessions.

Bob learned a lot from working with the Boston Consulting Group, allowing him to combine his innate drive to win at the great game of business (influenced by his sports background) with a strategy of pre-eminence, which included making decisions with edge about where to play and how to win.

The basic idea he got from Boston Consulting Group was to stop thinking in terms of driving strategy from a manufacturing plant – selling what you can make – and instead drive it back from the market – making what you can sell. He learned to target specific technologies and specific products, with specific marketing campaigns aimed at specific segments that would give his company an edge over the competition.

Hoechst then merged with the French pharmaceutical and chemical company, Rhône-Poulenc, to become Aventis. In 2002, Bayer AG acquired Aventis Crop Science and combined it with their agrochemicals division (Bayer Pflanzenschutz or “Crop Protection”) to form Bayer CropScience. Bob became the North American President of Aventis, later Bayer North America, directing

strategy and operations for a new start up – a consumer home and garden division that dealt directly with consumers. He then found his path to the C-suite blocked, the walls closing in around him, given the vagaries of the political chessboard, and decided to exercise his option and leave. The HR director told Bob that he was committing career hari-kari, “You don’t just leave a company like Bayer with all the security it offers!”

Bob landed at FMC as President of the North American Crop Protection division. He took the job because he was impressed with and wanted to learn from his boss Milton Steele. At FMC, Bob began a spectacular turnaround. He took a business with off patent products, which seemed to be running out of steam, and acquired and licensed multiple technologies. During this time, he launched 30 new high-tech product innovations, often over 5 per year. He built a high-performance organization culture based on everything he had learned as a player and coach in sports. Bob expanded into Canada, with stiff opposition from above, but finally getting the buy-in he needed. This directly resulted in an increased revenue of 4x and increased profit of 6x.



As a global business leader, Bob’s whose greatest strategic advantage may be human connectivity with employees he wants to motivate and customers whose business he wants to win.

Says former boss, Milton Steele, “Bob had the highest margins in the entire industry – 45 to 50 percent. He also left a pipeline of \$250 million in new growth oriented technologies and products.”

In 2012, Bob became President of the FMC APAC Group where he has a *blueprint to a billion* strategy, oversight of R&D, ops and sales of 25 plus countries. His recent accomplishments include championing the FMC Seed Treatment business, a research based, high-tech project based on technology to protect the seed, as well as leveraging FMC’s Asia Innovation Center in Shanghai.

Bob’s goal is to win by reaching a \$billion in sales for FMC Asia with 20+ percent EBIT contribution. However Bob doesn’t just want a short-term financial bubble that ignores the impact FMC’s products have on farmers, farmland, local communities, and the environment. Bob’s next reinvention may have to do with reinventing the very nature of a crop protection company to one that stands for something called “sustainable business performance.” He would like to help inspire employees in the company to connect higher purpose to higher performance.

According to Bob, “We have a higher purpose today which is feeding the world.

Yet for employees to really buy in with their hearts and souls, we need to deliver on that purpose through sustainable business performance. It isn't just about corporate altruism, being a bleeding heart liberal or hugging the trees." Adds Milton Steele, "If companies in our industry want to sustain growth, they have to consider that one change in the USA's, Brazil's, or China's regulations favoring sustainability (and banning pesticides), could rock their balance sheet almost overnight."

In 2015, Bob became the COO and EVP of AMVAC Chemical Corporation, American Vanguard Corporation's principal operating subsidiary. It is a great match as American Vanguard was honored as one of Fortune's 100 fastest growing companies in 2013. In this position, Bob will work his magic on growing the business across multiple product lines and geographies, achieving greater profitability and establishing a pipeline of future opportunities through innovation and strategic relationships. He will oversee sales, marketing, and business growth on a global basis.

In conclusion, it is obvious that Bob can talk strategy, M&A, and detailed financial performance with the fluency of a Goldman Sachs analyst, while building an organization that is a cause, not just a business. At the same time, Bob maintains a very human face with all he comes in contact with, something which his old teachers, who are often his greatest admirers, seem to relish sharing about.



Pictured with Bob are wife Uta, daughter Julia, and friend. Says Julia, a Penn State star, "My dad was the first person to put a basketball in my hands. He practiced dribbling drills and jump shots with me on the playground for hours."

Dharma DeSilva recounted a story that was very moving, "When Bob and the Wichita basketball team won the Missouri Valley Conference Championship, he came to visit me and bestowed a gift on me. It was the winning basketball from the last game that he had asked everyone on the team to sign, so he could give it to me. I accepted it with the greatest of pleasure, and held onto it at my house."

He continued, "A few years ago, Bob and his wife Uta and daughter Julia came to visit me at my home near the Wichita State campus. His daughter was then a star player on the Penn State women's basketball team. I went to my basement and brought up the ball and placed it in Julia's hands as a memento of her father's basketball career. When Bob saw this old ball, his eyes welled up and he almost cried. 'You mean to tell me, you kept it all these years?'"