(Continued from previous page)
Sanford, bored to tears, went back to work—not for the money or the prestige, he later said, but for the challenge.

Johnson Controls, Inc. — Professor Warren Johnson developed the electric telethermoscope in 1880, so that janitors at Whitewater, Wisconsin's State Normal School, could regulate room temperatures without disturbing classrooms. Johnson's device used mercury to move a heat element that opened and shut a circuit. Milwaukee hotelier William Plankinton, a believer in Johnson's invention, invested $150,000 to begin production.

Kellogg Company — While doing experiments with grains for patients' diets, W.K. Kellogg and his brother, Dr. John Kellogg, were interrupted. By the time they returned to the dough, it had absorbed water. They rolled it out anyway, toasted the results, and accidentally created the first flaked cereal.

The Green Bay Packers, Inc. — Curley Lambeau and George Calhoon met in the newsroom of the *Green Bay Press-Gazette* to organize a football team. The pair later talked Lambeau's employer—Indian Packing—into buying equipment for the team. To honor the sponsor, the team became the Packers (1919).

Hasbro Inc. — In 1923, Henry and Hillel Hassenfeld formed Hassenfeld Brothers in Pawtucket, Rhode Island, to distribute fabric remnants. By 1926, the company was manufacturing fabric-covered pencil boxes and shortly thereafter were making the pencils themselves. The company branched into the toy business during the 1940s by introducing toy nurses' and doctors' kits. The company toy division was the first to use television to promote a toy product (Mr. Potato Head, in 1952).

The Home Depot, Inc. — The Home Depot was founded in 1978 when Bernard Marcus (age 48) and Arthur Blank (age 35) lost their executive jobs with Handy Dan Home Improvement Centers in a corporate buyout. They joined with Handy Dan co-worker Ronald Brill to launch a new home center for the do-it-yourself-er. In 1979, they opened three stores in the Atlanta area, soon expanding to four stores. In 1981 the company went public, raised $4 million, and spread their chain throughout the South.

Levi Strauss Associates, Inc. — Lev Strauss arrived in New York City from Bavaria in 1847 to join his two brothers' dry goods business. In 1853, he moved to San Francisco to sell dry goods (particularly tent canvas) to gold-rush miners. Shortly after Strauss arrived, a prospector told him of miners' problems in finding sufficiently sturdy pants. Strauss made a pair out of canvas for the prospector. Word of the rugged pants spread quickly.

Litton Industries, Inc. — Charles "Tex" Thornton, head of the Statistical Control Department of the Army Air Force during WWII, was responsible for predicting manufacturing needs for the war effort. He saw a growing demand for new, technologically advanced military products in the post-war years. In 1953, after working for Ford Motor Company and Howard Hughes, he organized his own company, Electro Dynamics, to reap the benefits of his new market. Thornton began by borrowing $1.5 million and buying Litton Industries, which made microwave tubes for the Navy.

Marriott International, Inc. — In 1927, John Marriott and his wife Alice opened a root beer stand in Washington, D.C. They soon added hot food and called their restaurant The Hot Shoppe. In 1929, they incorporated their business as Hot Shoppes, Inc., and began to build it into a regional chain. The company entered the airline food-service business in 1937, providing food for Eastern, American and Capital Airlines flights out of Washington, D.C. Their first hotel was opened in 1957 in Arlington, Virginia.

Mattel, Inc. — Mattel began in 1945 as a small California toy manufacturer operating out of a converted garage and producing toy furniture. By 1952 the company's toy line had expanded to include burp guns and musical toys. Sponsoring Walt Disney's television show, *Mickey Mouse Club*, in 1955—a first in toy advertising—was a shrewd marketing step for Mattel because it provided direct, year-round access to millions of young potential customers.

MCI Communications Corporation — MCI's history is tied to legal action against AT&T. In 1963, John Goeken wanted to build a microwave radio system between St. Louis and Chicago for his mobile radio company. AT&T was then acting as a monopoly, and any company wishing to compete with AT&T had to obtain FCC authorization.

Microsoft Corporation — Microsoft was founded in 1975 after 19-year-old Bill Gates dropped out of Harvard and teamed with high school friend Paul Allen to sell a version of the programming language BASIC. While at Harvard, the pair had written the language for Altair, the first commercially sold microcomputer. Microsoft continued to grow by modifying its BASIC program for other computers.

Summary of Getting Started

A thread of commonality runs through all of the start-ups listed.

• All of the persons starting the process or company had a vision to fill an actual or perceived need.

• Age is no deterrent to founding a successful enterprise—Bill Gates, founder of Microsoft, at 19, and John Johnston, founder of Northwest Mutual Life, at age 72.

• The persons involved in the project had a "fire in their bellies" to make them believe they would succeed.

• Sufficient capital was obtained from various sources to make the dream come true.

• Once the need was established, the want for the product or service was created. Features of the product or service were translated into benefits. Needs don't sell—wants do. Features don't sell—benefits do.

To get your new business off the ground, you must have the product or service, believe in it and in yourself, have sufficient capital to make the dream a reality, and establish the wants and benefits that will make the offering a success.

Many other factors need to be built into the start of a new venture. Nowhere is it written that you must make all of the mistakes yourself—learn from other people's goofs and prevent them in your operation. Besides which, no one has the *time* to repeat all of the previous errors. To make life a little easier, find someone who believes as you do—that the project will succeed. When a money-lender tells you that your idea will never work, find another source of capital.

(Bob Bloch is the author of the new book *Ready—Sell—Aim.* The title stands for "Get ready to sell. Sell the modern way. Aim for repeat business." Mr. Bloch is available for speaking, educating and consulting in the areas of marketing and sales. For more information write to Cavalier Enterprises, P.O. Box 267, Lenox Dale, MA 02142.)

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