



## Getting a head start to stand apart from the competition

### CRT chairman wants to heighten group's visibility

By **ANN CHIN**, The Daily Transcript

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The entrepreneurial bug has bitten Hus Tigli.

As chairman of the Chairmen's RoundTable (CRT), Tigli advises local entrepreneurs and seeks out other CEOs to offer mentorship. He was elected to the two-year term position a year ago and has been a member of the nonprofit mentoring organization since 2001.

"A friend told me about the group and I thought it was fantastic for the CEOs to get to know each other," Tigli said. Forty-five current and former CEOs volunteer their time to mentor businesses in San Diego County. More than 200 companies have utilized this free service since the organization was founded in 1997. The CRT mentors entrepreneurs who have grown their business to a point of needing more organizational structure, according to Tigli.



Hus Tigli is chairman of the Chairmen's RoundTable. Photo: J. Kat Woronowicz

"I have a warm heart for entrepreneurs," he said.

He added that helping their companies succeed is satisfying since startups "have all the odds stacked up against" them.

Such probabilities are familiar to Tigli, whose first San Diego-based startup, OMM Inc., was a "victim of the telecom bust."

Prior to OMM, Tigli was with a large company for most of his career. He spent 18 years at **Raychem Corp.**, an electronics and telecom component company. As senior vice president and group executive of Raychem's Telecommunications, Energy and Industrial Group, Tigli has been touted for leading business growth with \$900 million in revenue and 3,500 employees at five sites.

After shutting down OMM in 2001, Tigli took his corporation experience and founded the Pasadena-based fabless semiconductor company, **Forza Silicon**, where he currently remains chairman. Soon after, **Trex Enterprises Corp.** tapped Tigli in 2002 to run two of its incubators in San Diego: **CrossFiber Inc.**, an optical network provider and **Silicon Kinetics Inc.**, a biotechnology tools company.

And so Tigli was bitten. His entrepreneurial interest has since been used to help other businesses through transitional periods.

Since joining CRT, Tigli has mentored about 12 companies with revenue of \$10 million to \$12 million. There are typically one or two mentoring assignments a year per mentor, each one lasting three to five months and ranging from five to 10 meetings.

Additionally, companies must meet two main criteria to be mentored, which includes a coachable CEO and the company should be experiencing issues with strategic choices.

"Our role is not to hold their hands forever," Tigli said. "Our role is to help them identify the critical business issues." While there is an attempt to match the background of a CEO to a company, Tigli has found most companies have similar problems, such as coming to transitional points, recruiting people and setting up a formal marketing program. In Tigli's first year as chairman of the CRT, he said his biggest accomplishment has been kicking off the organization's feedback process as a part of its continuous improvement.

According to a client survey, Tigli said 100 percent of the companies would recommend Chairmen's RoundTable mentoring to other companies. In terms of the value they got out of mentoring, on a scale of one to 10, 100 percent of the responses were in the eight to 10 range.

The CRT also surveys mentors and tracks the progress of their client's companies.

A common mistake entrepreneurs make is not distinguishing themselves from the competition, according to Tigli. Looking at his industry, he said: "I think the big challenge for technology companies is making sure from day one that you have a major advantage over potential competitors."

Tigli added, technologies either need to be "better, faster and cheaper or it needs to offer some benefit no other product offers."

It takes on the average seven years to bring a brand-new technology to market, he said. Tigli's companies are on track to introducing their products.

CrossFiber and Silicon Kinetics are getting to the stage of introducing products in 2008. CrossFiber will introduce a dramatically cheaper and future-proof switching of fiber-optic networks, and Silicon Kinetics will bring instruments used in drug development to the market.

As for the future of the Chairmen's RoundTable, Tigli wants to further promote its service.

"I still feel that the Chairmen's RoundTable is a well-kept secret," Tigli said. "I'd like to increase the visibility of CRT in the community."

He added: "We just provide tremendous value for free and we want to make sure that there's recognition in the community for it."