



July 25, 2017

CHRIS ELMORE

The Mandolin-Playing Innovator Whose Nissan Altima Was Re-Poed



What possibly could evolve from five knuckleheads sitting around a table in donated space in a building on 9th & Brevard Sts. near uptown Charlotte, NC ~ having raised zero dollars for their innovative start-up idea? Fast-forward from year 2000 to today and what has evolved is a \$1.4 billion mega-software automation company employing over 900 people and, by so doing, providing food, clothing and shelter to those same 900 families.

Chris Elmore is a multi-times published author, an adjunct professor at UNCC and Queens University, a self-deprecating and quite extraordinary public speaker, a jovial story-teller, a bluegrass musician, a National Anthem singer who has performed at a Charlotte Knights game and hopes for a repeat, a husband and father of four children (boy/girl/boy/girl ... "I planned it that way") as well as the Entrepreneur In Residence at the Charlotte Chamber of Commerce. And, oh yes, one of the amazing founders of AvidXchange.

Advising us that he was in that 50% of his graduating class which made the other 50% the top half, Chris spoke candidly of his unique road to entrepreneurial fame. His first job with Jefferson-Standard Life Insurance Company out of Greensboro, NC provided him with his first six-figure annual income. Unfortunately, those first six figures were \$2,163.73. Thanks to his wife's budding career with a pizza parlor, she was actually the bread winner in those humble years. He does credit his wife with much of his success, sharing with us, "If my wife leaves me, I'm going with her."

It was then Chris got down to the business of "how he got where he's at" ~ which is all about AvidXchange, a magnificent account payable automation company. Most of us recognize it as the company which took over the NC Music Factory but there's so much more to the story.

Referencing back to those infamous "first five guys," in 2000 they came up with a plan to go to New York City and secure venture capital by wowing the powers-that-be/investors. A one-way rented car took them to Greenville where they hopped a plane to Greensboro and flew to Charlotte and from Charlotte to New Jersey ... thereby saving each of them \$150 roundtrip. They had no hotel accommodations for their three-day stay, nor did they have any money for same so they stayed with family and friends. In NYC they devised a plan to ask for \$15 million; no, let's ask for \$17 million; no, make that \$20 million ("It sounded better.") The final ask was for \$15.6 million because, "it sounded more believable." The big-city folks took one look at the AvidXchange name and logo on the presentation screen and asked, "What is that? Well, I guess all the good names have been taken." Chris and his compatriots went home with zero. The next sentence caught

us by surprise. “That was,” Chris said, “the best thing that ever happened” ... because it put Chris et al on notice to do what was needed: 1) provide a product that people want to buy; 2) provide it at a rate that’s affordable; 3) provide excellent customer service.

Chris was generous in crediting others for much of AvidXchange’s ultimate success, including Richard Roth in Atlanta, “the Enron effect” and even Lady Luck. (Definition of luck, he said, is “opportunity meets preparedness.” Translation: Go out and meet the people you want to do business with.)

In 2004 the economy exploded and in 2009 they acquired a company in New Jersey, researching how to pay utility bills electronically inclusive of rebates for the utilities via credit card. 375,000 vendors enlisted. Today that number is over 1 million every single day and Mastercard has invested heavily.

AvidXchange’s Core Values (per the website): 1) Be passionate about customer success; 2) Win as a team; 3) Innovate to change the game; 4) Invest and spend wisely; 5) Play to our strengths; 6) Have a blast!

Chris is now enjoying teaching and serving as the Entrepreneur in Residence at the Chamber because he feels great pride in Charlotte and sees the enormous potential for business and entrepreneurship here. 1) The cost of living in Charlotte vs. that in California is key. 2) Our airport is primary ~ one can fly anywhere and back in one day ~ it’s the power of a direct flight. 3) We have an extraordinary education system spanning 15 counties, all of which produces people who want and need to work. It’s a remarkable 1-2-3 punch and makes for huge successes.

Chris’ closing story referred back to AvidXchange’s early days and a horrible ice storm that caused huge power losses. One of the infamous five came up with the idea to zip to Lowe’s for a generator so they could keep working. Problem: The generator could obviously not be set-up *inside* the building. Solution: Put the generator outside, chained to an office chair with a drop cord. Certainly, no one would want to steal both generator and chair, and, miraculously, no one did. The generator got things going inside; the crew went back to work; the ice storm passed; our heroes packaged up the generator and returned it to Lowe’s for a full refund. Entrepreneurship at its finest!

We could have listened to Chris all afternoon and two hundred of us walked out chatting and smiling at the enthralling speaker/motivator we had just heard. A mandolin sonata, anyone???

Speaker Write-Up: *Marilynn Bowler*

Head Table: *Dan Rajkowski, Katie Tyler, Phil Volponi, David Zimmerman*; Invocation: *Chris Kemper*; Visitors & Guests: *Meg McElwain*; Photos: *Bert Voswinkel*; Piano: *Em Syrewicze*

CLUB NEWS

Parker Cains introduced his wife, **Devon Cains**, as the club’s newest Rotarian. Devon is an account manager with Juniper Networks, an American multinational corporation headquartered in Sunnyvale, California that develops and markets networking products. Add Devon’s email to your Roster – dcains@juniper.net. Welcome!

The club extends prayers and condolences to our Rotary family. Claire and **Brent Trexler** lost Claire’s mother, Ann Harris Welchman on July 15. **Wes Jones’** father, George Wayne Jones, passed away July 18. Jenna and **Ben Pendry** lost their grandfather, Ben Harrison on July 19.

Reminder that the 14th Annual Rotary Scholarship Golf Classic will be held October 17 at Ballantyne Golf Club.

There are always errors/omissions when the new roster is put together. Please make these updates and let me know of any other changes: **Gene Bratek**, Resource Group 175, LLC, gbratek@me.com; **Boyd Coggins**, boyd.coggins@capitalbank-us.com; **Lee Tabor** home, leertabor@gmail.com; **Kip Kiser**, kip@kipcorporation.com or Moniquea@kipcorporation.com.

Thanks to **Pat Millen** for donating a monitor for use with the AV equipment.

Chase Saunders has 11 volunteers lined up to help register kids for the AYSO soccer program that will be kicking off at Starmount Elementary. There is always room for more! The date is August 30 & 31; 2-3 hour shifts; bilingual would be very helpful. A lot of time, resources and money have been put into this project and it is taking shape. Your support is critical to the success of this program. Chase (chase@chasesaunders.com) or Carolyn (c.carlburg@gmail.com). **UPDATE:** District Grant for \$14,500 has been awarded to the overall soccer project for 2017-2018. Congrats!

100 SERVICE PROJECTS (90 completed; 212 participants; 2563 volunteer hours)

10 more service projects to complete. 2 new ones are below and there is an update from Mark Norman on locating a vehicle. **Tim Newman's** group of 11 volunteers during the PGA will be completed in August, bringing us to just 9 more projects to complete our goal.

- **NEW:** The Salvation Army has partnered with Denali Moose Track Ice Cream and Mayfield Creamery and will be serving FREE ice cream on **Wednesday, July 26**, 11am to 3pm on the corner of Trade & Tryon. Let me know if you participate in this effort, which brings a \$1 contribution to The Salvation Army for each scoop of ice cream. How easy is this!

- **NEW:** Gift Cards to assist fire victims. 131 people lost everything in the Farm Pond fire that wiped out an entire apartment complex. Your donation will be turned into \$100 gift cards and we will work to place the cards with a family through the help of the Red Cross. Cash/Checks (payable to Parker Cains); \$770 was donated on Tuesday. Contact: Parker Cains: pcains@katalystng.com.

- **24 Hour of Booty Events – July 28 & 29.** Click [THIS LINK](#) for volunteer information. Contact: **Rhonda York:** ryork@teamwidesolutions.com .

- **Vehicle Needed:** Motivated by the recent race relations dialogue involving numerous Charlotte Rotarians, Mark Norman has partnered with a recent BofA retiree to adopt a family and help them break the cycle of poverty. This includes relocation, change of schools, child care and more. The 5 person family is in need of a donated reliable vehicle. If you are aware of a reliable vehicle that could be made available to this family, please contact **Mark Norman:** mark.norman@jwu.edu. **UPDATE –** currently considering a rebuild of a transmission for a 1999 Lexus SUV; cost around \$2500+; about \$700 has been raised to date.

- **Platelet Donation:** Register at the American Red Cross or Community Blood Center of the Carolinas to donate platelets. **UPDATE - 73** donations (not 80) to date. Donations have fallen off in the last 3 months and not meeting the goal of 100 donations will jeopardize this effort. Contact: **John zumBrunnen:** jzumbrunnen@zumbrunnen.com.

MEMBERSHIP

07/01/2017 309

07/25/2017 309

Net Increase:

New Members: Chris Jackson, Johnny Laub, Howard Hoyle, Jr., Devon Cains

Resignations: Harry Daugherty (deceased), Claire Fallon, Angela Mauldin, Kay Peninger

Approve for Membership (comments to Rotary office by 8/1/17)

David Seroy

Old North Capital Fund (Real Estate, Investment Fund)

Sponsor: Bill Gill

Visitors & Guests	13
Club Members	144
Total	157 (53.3%)

Guests: Solange Tricanowicz, Worth Williamson, Margaret Marshall, David Seroy, Lynn Lee, Saran Almond, Steffi Travis, Howard Hoyle, III, Louis Bledsoe, Traci Lytle, Beverly Stevenson, Doug Dunaway

UPCOMING BIRTHDAYS (07/27/17 – 08/02/17)

07/27 Sadler Barnhardt

07/28 John Rodgers

07/29 Nikki Keith, Bill Barnhardt, Roger Sarow

07/30 Hank Donaghy, Steve Byrum, Nancy McNelis

07/31 Karen Calder

08/02 Vernon Anderson, Sandra James, Courtney Ramey, Steve Eanes

UPCOMING ANNIVERSARIES (07/27/17 – 08/02/17)

07/28 Rosanne & Umberto Torresan

07/29 Whitney & Travis Vance

07/31 Vicki & Chad Lloyd

UPCOMING PROGRAMS

08/01 Dr. Grant Thompson, Wingate University

08/08 Kelly Brooks, ShareCLT

08/15 Frank Emory, N.C. Economic Development Partnership

08/22 Ron Law, Theatre Charlotte

08/29 Reverend Claude Alexander

Photos from our luncheons and other events can be found on **Flickr** [Click here](#)





Rotary
Club of
Charlotte



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