

Nuti's a Symbol of company's rebound

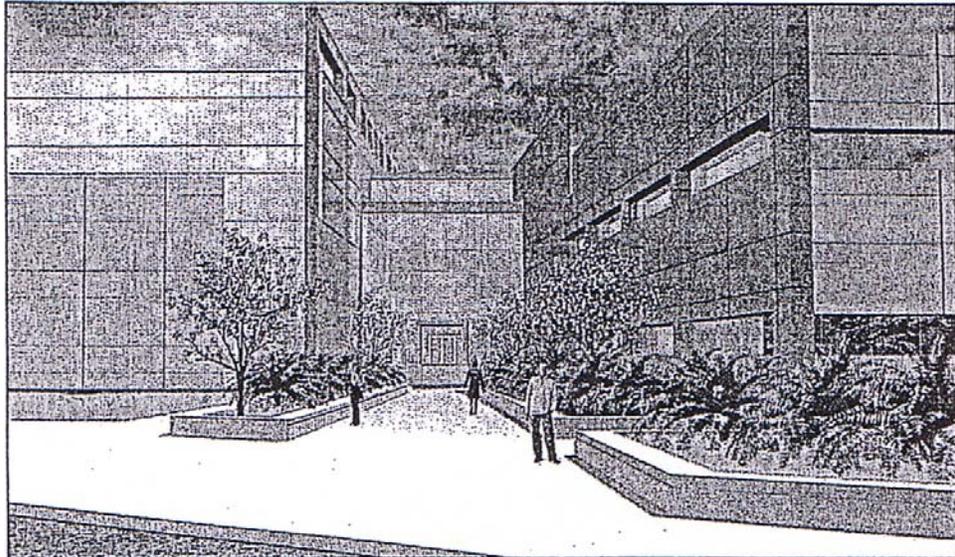


COMMENTARY
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'There was always an obstacle for us to cross.'

— Marie Zere, real estate broker for the new Touro Law School, shown in an artist's rendering, right



The last time a Symbol Technologies chief executive was in Fast Company, Tomo Razmilovic was branded as one of the magazine's cowards of the year for skipping prosecution for his alleged role in the Holtsville bar code company's accounting scandal.

So it's a considerable measure of how far the company has come in the past 18 months to note that the current Symbol chief executive, William Nuti, is on a markedly different list, singled out as one of corporate America's 50 rising stars for righting the firm's moral and financial compass. Nuti, the magazine noted, "engineered a plan to set Symbol straight and made sure that everyone knew the vision and how his strategy would realize it. Sweeping out the toxic culture helped produce immediate results."

Nuti could not say whether being selected would produce any sort of tangible benefit. "I cannot gauge whether it means anything to the stakeholders of the company," he told us, "but I do think it's a very strong message to the stakeholders of the company that the leadership team alibi company is, quote, a good one."

As for Nuti personally, the selection would seem to make him even more of a prospect for CEO vacancies at places such as Hewlett-Packard, to raise one recent hot rumor. While Nuti continued to refuse comment on whether he had been contacted, he did note that on Thursday he sent a memo to Symbol staff "that I am committed to Symbol Technologies and I intend to be here for the long term."

Three other Long Islanders entered, their names for consideration by Fast Company but were not selected: James V. Kelly, who heads a Huntington consulting firm; Donna Bliss, who started a Nesconset baby and children's clothing

company after being laid off at Computer Associates (an event that created quite a stir when she was ushered out of their building without being allowed to collect her daughter at the company day-care facility); and Brian Appel, who turns turkey offal into oil, which is a lot more profitable than turning it into gravy. Appel does walk away with a consolation prize: His West He stead-based Changing World Technologies is one of three companies in an upcoming Fast Company story on innovations in the renewableenergy industry.

As for Razmilovic, at last count he was still sipping Aquavit at his lakefront villa in Sweden, still on the U.S. Postal Inspection Service's 10 Most Wanted List and still thumbing his nose at our justice system, even as former underlings continue to belly up to the bar of justice to take their medicine in what authorities said was a \$200-million fraud. Skill

Law and disorder

There were times during the past 12 years when Marie Zere was sure her work would go for naught, that another roadblock finally insurmountable, would spell the end of the effort to find a new home for Touro Law

School.

"Every week, I didn't think it was going to go," Zere, the real estate broker on the project, told us last week, 10 days after ground was broken

for the building that will allow the law school to move from a former junior high school in Huntington to the site near the federal and Suffolk County courthouses in Central Islip.

Zere recalled how she was approached in December 1992 to find a site; how she almost immediately brought developer Ronald Parr into the project and how they went from land owned by New York Institute of Technology to a building that had been part of Central Islip Psychiatric Center, where they learned that to put up a new structure, state law required the existing one be torn down. "It made no sense," Zere said.

Then, having found a site owned by the state, Zere had to convince Touro officials they would have to pay for it. "They had to go through channels," Zere said. "Once they exhausted every avenue, they finally discovered they were just not getting this free."

Other obstacles: The law school said it had to sell its existing building before it could move—deals kept falling apart—a problem that went away when parent Touro College sold land in California; and a nasty fee dispute with the original architect, Michael Harris Spector, who was replaced by Charles Baldassano.

"There was always an obstacle for us to cross," Zere said.

Now, her work is done, and she can turn the hot seat over to Parr, who expects to

have the building up in 18 months. Said Zere, "It's a huge relief"

Sounding off

We don't know if it's a trend, but it seems to us that there's a growth industry in groups that bring executives together to talk about their problems, sort of corporate group therapy. And among those profit and nonprofit operations, the one that may have the most unusual on is the for-profit Sound Board which owes its existence to a radio show.

Mitch Schlimer, Hicksville product, C.W. Post

graduate, former tennis center operator (among other ventures), began "Let's Talk Business" after returning to Long Island to help care for his ailing father. "I had a lot of time to think," he said. "I didn't understand... why entrepreneurship drives this country, and we had no voice. I said, 'Why not me?'"

The show started on WEVD / 1050-AM, went national six months later, and in 1999, Schlimer was named one of the 100 most important talk show hosts in America. Sound Board (www.yourceopeers.com) evolved as a group that offers peer counseling and other related services and prides itself on what Schlimer calls its lifetime learning component. Now headquartered in New Jersey, Schlimer runs the Long Island operation, which has been

around for about a year.

"We're very serious about expanding Sound Board on Long Island," Schlimer said. What distinguishes sound Board from some of the other groups, he said, is, "This is our full-time job, this is all that we do."

Does he miss radio? "The way I get my fill is I still go into the studio once a month and do our 'Road to Success' series [interviews put on CDs and delivered to the members], so I'm not cold turkey. But there's nothing like that feeling of being behind a mike and at the end of an interview, you know you've nailed it"



Mitch Schlimer