



THE ALTERNATIVE BOARD

**TAB MEMBER  
CASE STUDY:  
DAN PRATHER**



# Business Ownership Can Be a Series of Aha Moments

**DAN PRATHER IS THE PRESIDENT AND MANAGING PARTNER**

of DualDraw, a Denver-based manufacturer of dust and fume collection equipment. Dan initially had no intention of joining the business his father launched in 1995, but instead was carving out his own path with a large professional services organization. That all changed one day while on a hike with his dad.

**When Dan Prather launched his successful career as a management consultant at Deloitte, he never imagined all roads would lead him back to his father's business.**

"Management consulting exposes you to a lot of different aspects of an organization," Dan said. "But, I was traveling a bunch and wanting to do something different and be closer to my community."

Dan said that although he grew up in the back of his dad's shop, he always envisioned himself doing something different. "I just never really gave any thought to joining the business."

Then one day in 2004, while hiking the Colorado Trail, everything changed. "I sort of had an epiphany," Dan said. "My dad and I did a segment of the trail every year and just became really good friends and advisors to each other in the process. We kind of looked at each other that day and said, 'Hey why don't we try to make this work!' It was a leap of faith, but I joined DualDraw the following year."

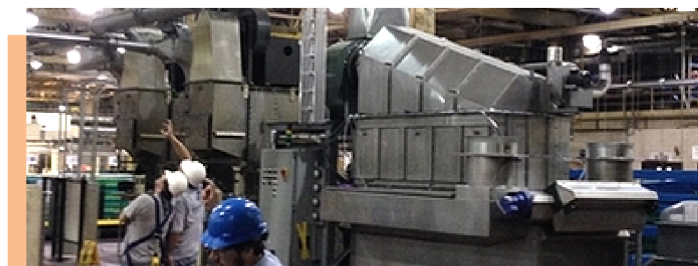
Dan said that the business was very small at the time, but he and his dad had a vision for growth. They eventually bought out their partners in 2012.

**"I had to put on my big boy pants and start leading the business instead of leaning on others to do it. It was a learning process where you get hit upside the head a few times and learn the lessons you need to learn."**

Dan said one of the things he missed most about his former corporate job were his colleagues who pushed him and each other professionally. "But now as a business owner, it was like I was on an island. I felt sort of isolated."

So Dan started looking for peer-to-peer relationships and professional groups to connect with other business owners and share insight and war stories.

**"I looked at a number of entrepreneur organizations before I landed on TAB."**



Dan said that during that initial TAB board experience, he gained all that support and comradery he had been seeking; but he eventually took a break from his board after his TAB coach passed away. "That was hard; he was great."

Then a year or two later, Dan was faced with navigating a troubling situation on his own when a large deal fell through. "We had a project that got really big really quick. The engineering specifications kept changing to the point where we couldn't deliver on it with our product anymore. We ultimately had to back out of the project."

Dan said this was a crisis point for a small company like his and he was very conscious of the fact he no longer had a group of his peers to lean on and offer him insight. "It really kind of opened my eyes to the importance of being able to navigate some of these real business challenges with people I trust. With my TAB Board, I had 10 business owners and a coach supporting me."

So not unlike that epiphany he had experienced on that trail all those years ago, Dan realized it was time to join a new TAB Board.

**"I had a strong relationship with my first TAB Board. Then when I joined again, I found my new board was also really fantastic."**

Dan said too that he values his new TAB Business Coach and Board Facilitator. "She has been amazing. She just kind of took me under her wing. She and my board have made this second time around on a TAB Board such a positive and productive experience."

So what is it about a TAB Board that keeps Dan coming back?

**"I think there's a level of trust, respect and honesty with one another. We help each other through our shared experiences and by tackling the hard questions."**