



PHOTOGRAPH: BASSAM SABBAGH

GLENN B. MILLER

A MAN OF BUSINESS AND PASSION

Principal and Founder of MBG Finance, Glenn B. Miller has built an impressive career as an entrepreneur. Nowadays, he also is a Mentor and Guest Lecturer at McGill University's MBA Program where he shares his business turnaround expertise with future entrepreneurs. A true art lover, he also is a patron of the arts, and owns a gallery in Montréal.

Encounter with a one of a kind businessman.

BY DIANE STEHLÉ

An accomplished businessman, Glenn B. Miller had, in the beginning, set his sights on a totally different career: playing football. Leaving the sport was a difficult decision to make, but Glenn found his niche in working during eight years for two major companies specializing in employee benefits. Thanks to his acquired expertise, he was then spotted by an American agency which entrusted him with a particular mandate: operate the first American Hospital in Moscow. Glenn thus became one of the first Canadians to work in Russia after the fall of communism.

Having heard of his talent, the Desjardins Group offered him, shortly afterwards, to become Vice President, Business Development. He was 31 at that time. He remained in this position for eight years. "This job brought me a lot, and helped me prepare for my career as an entrepreneur," commented the man whose meaningful look, charming smile, and obvious charisma rather evoke a Hollywood actor than a Businessman. Holding nothing more than a Bachelor's Degree in Education, Glenn finally hit a wall: "Without a MBA, it is very difficult to progress in this corporate environment."

Somehow, he needed new challenges. In 2002, he was approached to be the President of the Montreal Alouettes. The story attracted a lot of media attention, and made all the business people aware of his name. But Glenn had another project in mind: set up his own business. He then created Emergia Capital, an agency funding corporate reorganizations.

His business was proceeding well, and even made several acquisitions, until 2008, when the American financial crisis hit him with full force. "My bank in Chicago went bankrupt, and I lost my funding. This was one of the most important lessons I learned in my life. I realized that a business is never fully protected against a financial crisis, and one that it is closely linked to a global economy." He then came out with a new philosophy: "I decided to not do business with banks anymore." He then reorganized his MBG Finance company in 2009, which aims at helping organizations that are expanding at a very high rate or undergoing restructuring. His company is based on a private fund and offer alternative financing.



Training the Next Generation

Ironically, five years ago, Glenn Miller was chosen to become a Mentor and Guest Lecturer for the students at McGill University's MBA Program, although he does not hold a MBA himself. "This is my way of going back to school," he jokes, adding "we don't learn how to turn around a company in a university setting". He could speak volumes on the subject. The businessman is also in very high demand among business managers to whom he provides coaching services: "It often is bad decisions that lead to unfortunate financial situations. I help entrepreneurs make better decisions with their business and avoid these situations."

Beyond expertise and knowledge, this man who could be part of the television show *Dragon's Den* (which he would not mind to be a part of, he says, tongue-in-cheek) thinks that the key qualities to become an entrepreneur are passion and determination.

"I know a lot of senior executives who are not brave enough to make a move since they want to keep their fixed salary and benefits. To be an entrepreneur, you must have confidence in your capabilities and never let insecurity get in the way. Whether you own a small restaurant or a technology firm, the reality of an entrepreneur is the same: every day is a return to square one."

Glenn never lacked courage. When he quit his comfortable position at Desjardins Group, even if he already was a consultant, his father asked him, concerned: "Why are you doing this?" To which Glenn replied: "I want to be free and not depend on money." He is free to organize his days as he sees fit. "Because real luxury, he quickly adds, is to be the master of your own time."

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A Workshop-Gallery Lisabel

"I don't like the monopoly art galleries have on artists. Some of them keep 80% of sales revenue from works of art, and very few artists can make a living out of their art." Here is why, eight years ago, Glenn decided to launch his own gallery, and to capitalize on the Web to introduce his spouse, painter Lisabel. Together, they created a 4,000 square-foot gallery, in the middle of Griffintown, which offers a unique sensory experience. Thanks to his talent and vision, Glenn managed to introduce within this traditional industry a new business model no longer based on art, but on a brand, a concept attracting buyers from all over the world, and democratizing art to make it accessible to everyone.

www.lisabel.ca