

SUCCESS UNDER 40

DAN POLK

*President of Silicon Plains,
CIO Northland Healthcare Alliance*

DOB: August 5, 1975

High School: Century High, Bismarck

College: Associates in programming, associates in microcomputers from NDSCS, pursuing bachelors from U-Mary in organizational leadership (currently "paused").

Family: Wife, Jen; three Sons: DJ, 11, Adam, 9, Mason, 7, all pursuing black belts in ATA Tae Kwon Do

Favorite Quote: "If you're going to do something, do it well, or not at all."
– Dan A. Polk, my Dad



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As an NDSCS college student, Dan Polk saw potential in learning "more than the average bear." One lesson: a strength overused can be a weakness. "I got into trouble for hacking," he laughed. "They came to the conclusion that it was in everybody's best interest to hire me." So, turning lemons into lemonade, he started the University's computer help desk. "It was huge for me. Building something from nothing was exactly what I wanted."

From there, the "building" seed was planted. From computer clubs and IT divisions to Mustangs and arcade games, the 36 year old has made building his life's work. At just over two years old, his most recent project, Silicon Plains, bills itself "As your Virtual IT Department" offering urgent and strategic business technology solutions.

What got you interested in starting your own business? I realized I wasn't a good employee. I am relatively impatient. I have a vision of where I think things need to go. But convincing others (above me) of that was frustrating. I saw that as a massive mountain to climb unless I was working for myself.

How did your former boss and father-in-law, Dewey Tietz, inspire you? Being around him, he talked a lot about entrepreneurship and how to build businesses from nothing. When you are around that all the time, it's addictive!

What comes after Silicon Plains? The idea has never been to build a landing pad; it's always been to build a launching pad. We're committed to becoming massively successful. We're committed to putting everyone else in this business out of business! But we also know that nothing lasts forever, so what we build needs to have value and substance so that when we decide to move on, we leave behind an entity that continues to generate positive, quality results.

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DRIVEN TO BUILD

So you rebuild Ford Mustangs and arcade games, but not to own them? It's the creation piece. I'm not in love with the finished product. The drive isn't the finished product. It's not to have what's done in the end. It's the process that gets you there.

What advice do you have for someone who wants to start their own business? If you're going to get advice, get it from someone who has been there. If they weren't the ones bleeding, if they weren't the ones sweating, if they weren't the ones crying, then don't listen to them. **EM**

A lifelong communicator and former reporter, **Michael Lindblom** is a student of dynamics of human interaction.



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