



The motivation of Peter Legge

By Margaret Jetelina

Arosy Peter Legge rushes in late for our interview on an unusually hot spring day. He apologizes profusely. "I hate being late," he says. He had a difficult time excusing himself from his previous, long-running meeting, he explains.

"Very sorry," he says again, as he takes off his jacket and sits down. You can tell being late bothers him, but with his busy schedule — jammed tightly with many business, community and speaking engagements — there isn't much of a margin for error.

Legge says he spends about 25 per cent of his time on his business — he's president and CEO of Canada Wide Magazines & Communications Ltd., the publishing house behind *BC Business* — and another 25 per cent each on his community involvement (with organizations like the Variety Club of B.C.), his speaking engagements and his family life (he and his wife, Kay, have three adult daughters). Add seven self-help books, countless awards and honours, and his passion for golf and tennis in the mix, and his assistant, Ingrid, has a lot of things to schedule in.

"Ingrid has got me so organized; she just tells me that I'm supposed to go here and here, and I go," he says. With a warm grin, he adds, "And if I'm out of balance, Kay will tell me."

Visibly relaxing, Legge is now in his element. Speaking about his ever-growing magazine company, his tips for professional and personal development, and his own journey from a boy in Britain to successful entrepreneur in Canada — it's something the award-winning motivational speaker does on a weekly, sometimes daily, basis in his talks to corporate audiences.

While Dr. Phil tells his audiences to get real, Legge might say get on with it. Get on with what they want to do in life.

Seizing the day is hardly a revolutionary message. From Horace on down, "carpe diem" is one of those pieces of sensible advice passed on from one generation to the next — along the same lines as "eat right and exercise."

Legge will be the first to say he learned this universal principle from many great mentors, starting with his parents, who grabbed at the opportunity to leave post-war England for a new life in Vancouver when Legge was just 12 years old.

His parents also shared with a young Legge an honest set of values — "be happy, have integrity, follow through, never lie, cheat or steal, stay married for life, love your children unconditionally," which Legge talks about in his most recent book, *The Runway of Life*.

Again, simple stuff.

But perhaps it's the sheer simplicity of these values that has brought Legge so far, through difficult times. His positive outlook certainly saw him through his awkward transition to Canada, where he spent the first few years in school in New Westminster not quite fitting in.

"I had to go to the junior high prom with the music teacher because I couldn't get a date," Legge says. "But I decided that I'd go and have a good time. And I think I had the best time of everyone there."

Staying optimistic became a consistent theme for Legge. Things started to get easier for him in Grade 10 when people began to recognize his wit and humour. "The homecoming queen asked me if I would speak for her at an assembly," he says. The comedic Legge delivered what would be the first of many

unforgettable speeches in his life. "It was hilarious, and that turned my life around."

Not only did he find himself "kind of popular" in his last few years of school, but he also discovered the entertainer in him and eventually — after a few years as a newspaper reporter and then as a radio account executive (having realized there's more money in sales than writing) — he tried out a career as a stand-up comedian. Legge soon found himself booked as the emcee on a 38-day P&O cruise ship to London.

"The first night on the ship, I met my wife-to-be," he says. Unfortunately, Kay, also a Brit, was returning to England for good with plans to marry someone else. Legge convinced her otherwise, and the couple was married six months after they arrived in England. Legge worked on his comedy act and even got a television deal with the BBC in their two years abroad. But seeing other entertainers around him still struggling after years in the business, Legge knew there was something more out there for him. He and his wife eventually returned to Canada, where he went back to his radio roots as general manager of the CJC radio station.

In 1976, the entrepreneurial-minded Legge bought the dime-an-issue *TV Week*. "My vision at that time was to put groceries on the table," he says. "I can't honestly say that I looked at what would happen 30 years ahead."

It wasn't until the company's 10-year anniversary, in fact, that he started to expand — the company now publishes 33 magazines, half of which are fully owned consumer magazines like *Garden Wise* and half of which fall under the category of contract publishing, such as the BCAA's *Westworld*.

As Legge built his business, he followed another piece of



advice from his parents: "if you want to be successful, associate yourself with successful people and model their behaviour." Legge looked to the examples of several mentors, including Joe Segal, a Vancouver philanthropist and businessman (he founded the Fields store chain).

"I first met Peter when he was in advertising sales for CKNW," says Segal, who doesn't seem to mind taking time out of his own busy schedule to speak about his friend. "We developed a mutual respect for each other and, today, my admiration for Peter grows as I see him dedicate a big piece of his life to the community. He's involved in so many organizations. You may think this is easy, but you do so at some substantial expense, not in dollars and cents, but in a substantial outlay of time and effort, taking time away from your business."

It was Segal who inspired Legge to write the book *The Runway of Life*, which is based on Segal's theory that life is not

a road, but a runway (i.e., eventually you run out asphalt).

"The runway of life is a fact and most of us go through life without doing everything they can do. Peter is a living example of someone who does," says Segal.

According to Legge, he's following Segal's lead. He describes Segal and two other important mentors in his life, Raymond J. Addington and Mel Cooper, as men of integrity and good corporate citizens. "They challenged me and motivated me to be a better person," he says. Now Legge is passing on the lessons he's learned in his books and speeches.

What are some other secrets of success Legge shares with his audiences?

"The No. 1 thing is the ability to get along with other men and women," he says. "To have a powerful, impactful attitude. To be positive, no matter what. To be kind, have good morals, be a person of your word. And show up on time," he adds with a sheepish smile. ♦