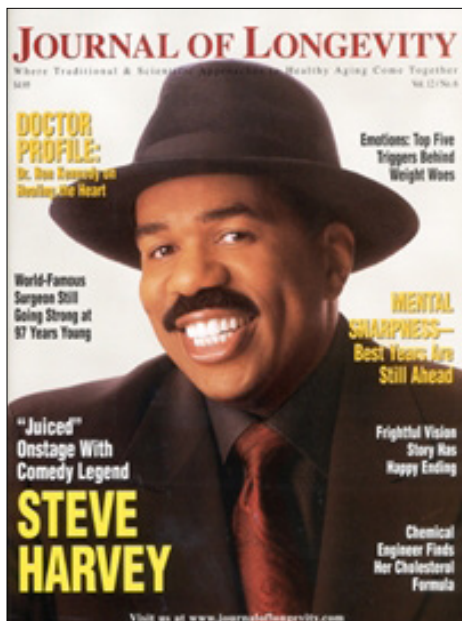


# THE ART OF BUSINESS KEEPS HIM YOUNG AND VITAL

by Dan Carrison on May 15, 2006



*“I decided that art would not only be my passion—it would become my life’s work.”*  
Stan Evenson, 54

Let us set the scene: A young man discovers that he’s just been offered a four-year athletic scholarship to attend college, and he can hardly wait to break the news to his parents. He rushes home. He knows his mom and dad will beam with pride, and perhaps also sigh in relief as the financial burden of a college education is lifted from their shoulders.

A year later, this same young man steps into the same living room. This time, his mission is to tell his parents that he has decided to decline the scholarship. He will attend art school instead. As you can imagine, the words do not tumble out as before. He is acutely aware of the confusion and discomfort he is causing in the two people he loves so much.

It was the year 1971, and something had changed inside a young Stan Evenson. Sometime between those two dramatic announcements to his parents, he had realized not that he loved art (everyone already knew that)—but that he could make a living at it.

## Epiphany

“I’ve always loved visual communications,” the successful owner of Evenson Design Group explains, “but in my late teens, growing up in Sacramento, I thought of my passion for art as a hobby—mainly because I thought it had to be a hobby in the real work-a-day world, where virtually nobody made a liv-

ing as an artist. I just assumed I’d have some kind of business profession, and that my urge to create would remain a private passion. It never occurred to me art and business could be merged into one career.”

A light bulb turned on above young Stan’s head the day he came across a catalog for the world-renowned Art Center College of Design, located at that time in Los Angeles. “I leafed through the catalog, my hands almost trembling with excitement,” he recalls. “I saw possibilities I had never seen before. I decided I would attend that college the very next term, no matter the cost. And I decided that art would not only be my passion—it would become my life’s work.”

While Stan’s mother immediately supported her son’s abrupt career choice, his father was stunned. Turn down four years of financial support for an education? Be an artist? “My father,” says Stan, “grew up during the Depression. He valued hard work because life to him was essentially a struggle. When I said I wanted to be an artist, he visualized me wearing a beret and living a bohemian lifestyle in abject poverty. He didn’t realize an artist could work with major corporations, fulfilling real needs with creative solutions.”

## Risk and Reward

Four years later, fresh out of art school, and just 23 years old, Stan landed a dream job as art director for

A&M Records, designing avant-garde album covers for the top recording artists of the 1970s. The salary was outstanding, the benefits solid, the career prospects bright, and he was working for a company that absolutely loved and appreciated him. But for a guy who just wanted to create, there were a bit too many internal management meetings requiring his attendance. Stan soon realized that he would much rather have A&M Records as a client than as his employer. Just as he had risked it all by turning down his athletic scholarship, he left the security of a regular (and impressive) paycheck and started his own design company at the young age of 24. And, sure enough, A&M Records became one of his first customers. Fortune favors the bold, indeed.

Of course, with the benefit of hindsight, all would agree that Stan Evenson, now 54, made the right decision. His award-winning firm has been in business now for 30 years.

His customers range from nearby clients in Santa Monica, California, to enterprises far away in mainland China. He has brought his zeal and his talent to bear on a great number of creative challenges from every conceivable type of industry. “Evenson Design Group,” he explains, “is a brand-identity company. We’re in the communication business, essentially. Customers come to us because they have a product or service, the benefits of which they want to communicate to the marketplace. We try to help that product or service shine as brightly as it can.”

### **Patriotic Art**

One of Evenson Design Group’s creations is recognized all over the world: the New England Patriots football team logo! Stan says, “Even very well-known organizations sometimes need help communicating their message, especially if they want to change their image. The Patriots had a new and visionary owner in 1993. He wanted to attract more talent and he decided the way to do that was to change the team’s identity.”

Accordingly, the National Football League put the Patriots logo challenge out to a number of premier design companies, Evenson Design Group among them. The creative team put their heads together in several brainstorming sessions facilitated by Stan. “The challenge,” he explains, “was to replace the old logo—a Minute Man in a Revolutionary War uniform, crouched in a football stance, wearing a quizzical expression on his face—with an image that represented the essence of Boston’s reborn football team. We eventually

streamlined some very patriotic and colorful symbols into something new and fresh.”

The dramatic new logo designed by Stan’s team was adopted by the struggling franchise—and by the people of Boston. Talented players and coaches came aboard and the rest is football history, with the Patriots becoming “America’s team” and returning to NFL dominance.

### **First Things First: “Listen”**

Not all of Stan’s customers are giant corporations. They come from entertainment, health care, finance, apparel, and just about every other sector of the marketplace. And once in a while, they come without the resources to pay for his services. Stan has done more pro bono work than any of his competitors. He’s donated his services to nonprofit groups with a variety of goals, including preventing the extinction of species, finding homes for single mothers, and offering any number of volunteer services to benefit the community.

“That’s what makes my life so interesting,” he explains. “Creative challenges are brought to us by all sorts of clients—big and not as big—but they’re all number one with us.” So when a local chiropractor came to Stan with a roasted soy-based coffee alternative to market, the man received the same VIP treatment as had the owner of a professional football team. “The first thing we do with every client,” says Stan, “is listen. After all, our customers are the experts on their products. Then we brainstorm ideas that will make the customer’s vision a reality. We give their product its identity.”

Today, those who frequent natural foods markets may recognize the packaging of Rocamojo soy “coffee,” especially the animated, bright green face that seems to represent natural vigor.

### **Supporting a Vigorous Lifestyle**

Stan himself sees the Rocamojo logo frequently as he walks up and down the aisles of his favorite health food stores. Perhaps it is his innate love of vibrant color and texture that compels him to stock his shopping cart with red, purple, yellow, green, and orange fruits and vegetables. But he can also back up his food choices with sound nutritional knowledge. He is much more aware, in midlife, of the role diet plays in supporting his energetic lifestyle. In fact, he and his wife, Tricia, follow individualized dietary programs designed by Dr. Jeanette Ryan, a doctor of natural medicine. The unprocessed, organic foods they select are delicious enough to satisfy their three children, as

well. “The inside of our refrigerator may look a little eclectic,” laughs Stan, “but the kids don’t seem to mind. In fact, our youngest, Jack, has really embraced the natural diet.”

The athletic abilities that once earned Stan a scholarship have not deserted him. At 6’ 2” and a solid 200 pounds, he stays fit by bicycling three days a week in vigorous spinning classes and lifting weights on the days in between. “I am, to this day, an exercise junkie,” he admits. “If my schedule postpones a workout, my body tells me it’s time to get to the gym, but fast.”

Stan complements his nutritional and exercise regimes with dietary supplements blended to support a man’s health. Among the nutrients and herbal extracts he takes are those that contribute to optimal prostate health, healthy blood circulation, free and easy joint function, and overall physical vigor. He finds, however, that the very tempo of his demanding schedule helps keep him feeling young and vital. “The creative challenges at work, the relationships in my family, all give me energy,” he explains, “rather than taking it away. Every day excites me.”

### **“Pop” Art**

As often as he can, Stan visits his parents, who now live in Arizona. His mother, Millie, still pursues her love of crafts at age 83. “She inspired me throughout my childhood, just by her constant creativity,” Stan remembers. “She was always making gorgeous quilts, beautiful ceramics, and hand-sewn clothes that looked as if they came off a designer’s rack.”

Gary, Stan’s 85-year-old father, realized long ago that his son made a very gutsy, and very wise, decision to go to art school. Not that he has been all that communicative about it, though; Gary is a soft-spoken man. But Stan, during his visits over the years, has found his paintings—some from as far back as the eighth grade—hung all over his father’s workshop and study. “He never told me he was doing that,” Stan says with a proud smile. “He just quietly hung up my stuff on the wall.” Sometimes a quiet acknowledgement from someone you love can mean more than all the awards garnered over a 30-year career.

There is one of Stan’s creations his dad is quite vocal about, however. Millie can hear her husband slapping his knee and chortling with pride in the living room just about every football Sunday. Although he’s now a resident of Arizona, Stan’s father is a big New England Patriots fan—ever since he saw the new logo.