

(Way) Out Of The Office

Extreme Hobbies of Valley Business People

By Stephanie Conner

They spend their days in a high-stress zone. And when they're looking to chill, these Valley business execs do anything but take it easy.

At the end of an intense week, many of us crave downtime — with a cocktail in hand or a favorite program on TV. But for four Valley professionals, downtime isn't about chilling out. It's about racing motorcycles and cars, taking chances down snowy mountains, body building and pushing their hobbies to the extreme.

Depth of Concentration

Richard Lippert was an avid motorsports fan in college. Today, at 64, he sees a deep connection between his hobby of racing and his job as managing partner at talent management firm Leathers Milligan & Associates.

"You're in a racing car [alongside] 23 other people going into turn one. You don't have a lot of time to think things through," says Lippert, who came back to the sport 11 years ago. "Decisions get easier and quicker."

The real allure, though, lies in the challenge. "It's probably the only sporting event that requires that much concentration for that length of time," he says. "No matter what else is going on in your life, you forget it."

In addition to driving, Lippert practices cardio training, core strengthening or yoga two hours a day, five to six days a week, to stay in top physical shape.

Intense Focus and Clarity

Brian Fabiano, CEO of Scottsdale advertising agency FabCom, spends his days strategizing.

"You're constantly thinking about third, fourth and fifth alternatives," the 45-year-old says. "Even when you're asleep, your mind isn't clear."

That's when Fabiano hits the slopes, but don't look

for him on the trails. For 10 years he's worked on taking his skill to the next level: extreme skiing, which involves taking the lift to the top of the mountain and hiking to the back side.

"The grades are steep, and the terrain is un-groomed and natural," Fabiano says. And the danger is real, especially in some of the most treacherous terrain, the "no-fall zones."

"You absolutely can't make a mistake. The focus that's required is intense," Fabiano says. "There is no time that you really achieve the kind of clarity that you do with extreme sports."

That clarity helps him provide better solutions to his clients. "Sometimes I save some of my biggest problems to chew on when I go on one of those trips," he says.

The Need for Speed

Allen Crick got hooked on motorcycles as a kid, watching "guys flying 30 to 40 feet in the air." As a young adult, he traveled around the country to participate in motocross competitions. Ultimately, the now-general manager of Goettl Air Conditioning chose college, business and family over the racing lifestyle, but it remains a passion.

"I'm committed to the sport," says Crick, 39. "There's a certain work ethic that has to come with these top-level riders."

He loves the adrenaline rush of being up in the air, and knows the attendant dangers. In May, while riding near the White Tanks with a group of work friends, he tumbled more than 20 feet — with his bike on top of him — and broke his collarbone.

The accident hasn't deterred him, but these days, he spends more time wakeboarding with his family. And if that wasn't enough adrenaline-raising action, he says whitewater rafting is next.

Seeking a New Challenge

In her twenties, Amy Armstrong competed in bodybuilding competitions. Then life

Leathers Milligan managing partner Richard Lippert is a big wheel in Formula 200 open-wheel racing.



Allen Crick of Goettl Air Conditioning gets lots of fresh air while wakeboarding with his son, Cooper.

happened: she started a family and a business and was twice diagnosed with breast cancer. This October, the two-time breast cancer "conqueror," as she calls herself, is doing something extreme for her 50th birthday.

On Aug. 28, Armstrong, a partner at Armstrong Troyky Public Relations & Advertising, will compete in the OCB Arizona Natural Bodybuilding Competition. Working with a training partner, Armstrong has traded her primetime television for three hours a night, six days a week, at the gym.

"It's really fun because I'm in a stressful, high-energy line of work. I'm always in my head," she says. "For three hours a night, I get to be in my body. There's something really beautiful about that."

It's a challenge with a deadline, and it's her birthday present to herself. "If you have to turn 50," she says, "you can do it kicking and screaming."

Kicking, screaming, skiing, driving...definitely not in a day's work for these Chamber members.

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