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OUTSIDE THE BOX by Jay Fitzgerald

Don't leave home without this guy

GLOBAL RESCUE FOUNDER AND CEO IS A LIFESAVER IN THE TRAVEL BUSINESS

Dan Richards seemed destined for a long and lucrative career in finance.

After all, his first decade after college was spent working within investment banking and private equity in New York, specializing in spotting investment opportunities within a number of sectors. Eventually, he discovered what he believed was an exciting field: crisis response within the travel business. Whether vacation travelers, government officials or business executives visiting far-away places, travelers often-times need help — and fast — for medical consultations or for getting evacuated from a country engulfed in turmoil.

"I couldn't get my colleagues (in finance) to agree it was a good investment," Richards recalls.

So he scraped together enough personal money and funds from friends and family to start Boston-based Global Rescue LLC in 2004. "In the post 9/11 world, we felt there was a need for this service," he says.

Judging by its success — Global Rescue now has about 200 employees, a third of them in Massachusetts — Richards was right about the demand for crisis-travel services. His company charges by the person per trip (\$119) or via annual subscriptions (\$329). The prices can escalate into the thousands and sometimes even millions of dollars, depending on the size and nature of a job.

Richards recently talked with BBJ correspondent Jay Fitzgerald.

What do you like to do to relax? You're presuming that I do relax. (Laughter.) I wish I were joking. I'm only half joking. Our business is one where there are not a lot of opportunities to relax because there are things happening around the world, constantly. We had 1,200 field operations last year alone. But I do get time to relax. I still love to ski. I also love to bike, both road and mountain biking. I love to read.

Do you have a specific hobby? What is it and why do you like it? My hobbies tend to be athletic in nature, as mentioned. But I do love to read. My profession is such that I get to have as one of my hobbies something that's part of my career. Keeping up with current events and politics is important. It really does affect my livelihood. But it's something I also find inherently interesting. I was a history major in college, don't forget.

What's the scariest or most dramatic rescue mission your company has ever performed? We've done a number of dramatic and I guess you can say scary missions. We've been involved in most of the



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major events that have occurred globally in the last decade. We were, for instance, in Haiti after the earthquake for almost a month with about 25 of our personnel on the ground there. But maybe one of the most extreme missions, if you will, was the Israeli-Hezbollah conflict of 2006. We were tasked with rescuing 23 Americans, many of them in southern Lebanon, some of them in areas of active fighting between Israel and the Hezbollah terrorist organization. That was difficult.

Are there times when people ask for help for truly minor or silly things? I'll tell you, it happens all the time. But we encourage our members to call us, even if it's something minor and they have a question. Something that can start out minor can progress into something that's not minor and become very serious if it's not attended to right away.

What's the No. 1 reason for overseas travelers asking for help?

It's for advisory services. They have something usually pertaining to their health, but not always. A surprising number of people, and maybe it's not so surprising, also have their passports destroyed or stolen or misplaced. We help them with those types of things.

Do you consider yourself a risk-taker, not just in business, but physically? I've become more risk-averse as I've gotten older. Thinking about a risk profile comes with aging. But I like to get out there. I like to get into the back countries. But I'm not an adrenaline junkie.

Is the increasingly global economy helping your company grow?

Absolutely. In a business like ours, it would have been a challenge to create this company 50 years ago, because of the challenges of communications back then. Communication is the most important thing we tell our members and corporate clients. If we don't know you have a problem, we can't help you, obviously.

What's your favorite vacation spot or dream vacation location? My wife and I love to ski in British Columbia, near Revelstoke. In terms of warmer weather and a little more culture, we just recently got back from a trip to Europe and we were in Geneva, Switzerland. Talk about a beautiful city. It has a beautiful, pristine lake and mountains and great food.

What's the toughest country you've ever been to and why? That's a really hard question. Some of the developing countries I've been to are difficult for different reasons. I recently returned from Beirut this spring, for instance. The people I met there were wonderful and the food was outstanding. But there's a very serious underlying tension and unease that affects those who travel there. I've been to a lot of places with overt tensions. In Beirut, the tension is under the surface and pervasive.

Is there a country that has a bad rap for being dangerous and yet is actually quite pleasant? Thailand has been in the news, most recently, because they've been under martial law and had curfews and has had regime change. The reality is Thailand is still an extraordinarily safe place to go and is a very easy place to do business. It's a beautiful country.

What's your favorite movie? There's a lot of those. If I had to pick a favorite, I guess I'd pick "Braveheart." First of all, I was a history major and I actually wrote my junior thesis on a medieval topic and studied in Scotland during my junior year abroad. So that part of the world has always been interesting to me. The movie has everything you want: an evil despot, a love story, and it has a tragic hero fighting against all odds.

> CLOSER LOOK

Daniel Richards

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