



## Featured Business Spotlight

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**Mel Wildermuth**

[www.theeffectivenessgroup.com](http://www.theeffectivenessgroup.com)

Lima, OH

Member since July 2007

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### **About Mel Wildermuth and The Effectiveness Group:**

Mel Wildermuth is an executive partner and the creative director of The Effectiveness Group, LLC. He is an author, master facilitator, coach and program developer who specializes in leadership development, personality diversity and experiential training design. After obtaining his MBA from Bowling Green State University, he conducted research on the multiple perceptions of the importance of education. He later became a certified Rhythm Circle Facilitator and a master trainer of the five factor model of personality. Today, Mr. Wildermuth applies his expertise to personality-based coaching and facilitates personality diversity training programs throughout the United States, Europe and in most Latin American countries. He is a knowledgeable speaker as well as a highly creative instructional designer. He and his wife and business partner, Cristina Wildermuth, have published several articles, most recently "The Ten M's of Engagement" in the January 2008 issue of *T+D* magazine.

The Effectiveness Group, LLC is a corporate education firm offering complete business training solutions. The company relies on academic research to produce effective immersive training experiences for their clients. The Effectiveness Group, LLC licenses programs to organizations, so that they can conduct training using their materials. Mr. Wildermuth and his team customize curriculums on topics including leadership, teams, diversity, engagement, personality and customer service. While their headquarters are in Ohio, The Effectiveness Group, LLC operates throughout the Americas, offering programs in English, Spanish and Portuguese. They are the creative force behind *Conversity*®, an innovative approach to diversity relations that focuses on forging connections based on similarities.

**MISSION STATEMENT:** To be the number one choice in training and development of employees for all national and international companies that want to stress scientific information combined with engaging presentation.

**MAJOR PRODUCTS & SERVICES:** Developing corporate training programs; certifying others to run their training programs; providing training in specialty areas such as leadership development, employee engagement and conversity/diversity; presenting HRCI-certified workshops and programs on topics such as optimizing human performance, rhythm circles and ethics; and consulting with organizations regarding performance issues, which includes competency analysis, executive selection, cultural audits and personality testing.

**Interview:**

**CAMBRIDGE WHO'S WHO: When did you start your business and how is it organized?**

EFFECTIVENESS GROUP [Mel & Cristina Wildermuth]: We started the business in 2000. We became a corporation in January 2001. Diversity Effectiveness was the original name, but we changed it to the Effectiveness Group last year because we deal with more than diversity.

**About how long before your venture is profitable? Or has it already turned a profit?**

We have definitely made a profit, especially since it's been seven years. Research indicates that small businesses typically last five years. We feel fortunate to be profitable at what we do.

**How many employees do you have?**

We employ three people, and we have several partners and representatives. We operate more through partnerships rather than hiring marketing people.

**How do you primarily market your products and services?**

Cambridge Who's Who is a great opportunity to network. We research by contacting HR people. We obtain names through conferences, Cambridge Who's Who or LinkedIn. Most of it is word-of-mouth. We speak publicly a lot – you get a lot of referrals through people who listen to you speak or have participated in training. Most companies don't hire consultants out of the yellow pages. People need to be familiar with who you are.

**What obstacles or challenges have you encountered while building your business? How have you overcome them?**

I would say one of the hardest things is that in most businesses, you want to be able to demonstrate results; you want to be able to do research on the effectiveness of your methods. But the nature of training consulting is that you are usually hired to do finite things. You can never spend enough time to get tangible data. We would love to put our hands on bigger, ongoing projects.

Consulting is a very personal business. When people come to hear us, they want us to speak - not one of our partners, one of our associates or one of our employees. We think our kick is for growth, focusing on what we do well - which is theme-based, creative and strong academic research programs. We let our clients run the training programs.

**What are your short-term and long-term goals for your business?**

Our long-term goal is to focus more on research and development and to produce training materials for our clients. Our short-term goal is to get each of our packages ready. In the last seven years that we've had this company, the majority of our business has come from facilitating training instead of developing training programs. We want to be creative developers.

**What steps do you take to stay ahead of your competition?**

We combine creativity with fun and engaging activities. We integrate that with extremely serious conduct. We conduct extensive research, looking at other researchers and what they've said. Essentially, we are reinventing the game. A big area is diversity; we work on conversity. We have found through research that focusing on differences doesn't work because people like similarities, and not diversities. We help people find connections within themselves. Conversity is trademarked by The Effectiveness Group. We are attempting to publish an article on Conversity. We not only keep to the best ideas; we also reinvent those ideas. We don't measure the same way everybody else measures. We read other ideas and we focus on them differently. Each topic we work on, we come up with a different or creative twist.

**What inspired you to start your business?**

Cris started in the training business in 1988 for Xerox. She was responsible for culturally adapting training programs in Brazil. She started this company on her own. I joined her in 2004 after the partner she had previously decided to leave. I decided to join the firm to do a job I love, instead of one I hated.

**How has your life changed since starting your business?**

You redefine what a full-time job means. It is not nine to five or nine to six; it's full-time, weekends and nights. You also get a keen sense of the tide between productivity and pay. It's not so obvious to somebody who has always been employed by a big organization. Whether the organization is doing well or not, they're collecting their salary at the end of the month. When you own your own business, you learn really fast that it doesn't matter how many hours you work, you have to work in a way that is going to be productive. People who own small businesses make the best employees ever.

**What relevant education, work experience or life experience did you have prior to starting your business?**

Cris worked for a training company. Mel taught for 15 years in high school and 3 years in college - facilitation and development has always been easy for him. Teachers are another great source of employees. They can be so efficient at developing ideas.

We're pretty much equal in everything. We use the assessment tool in pretty much all of our training. We use it to inform leaders where they're most comfortable leading from. We build teams based on the different styles of personality. We work very hard to read as much as we can.

**What topic(s) do you consider yourself to be an expert on?**

Mel is knowledgeable in leadership and team development while Cris' expertise is in employee engagement and culture diversity.

**How did you establish yourself as an expert in your field before becoming a consultant and providing training services to other professionals?**

In this business, an advanced degree matters, such as a master's degree. We speak at a lot of national and international conferences and we are American Society for Training &

Development members. I [Cris] have spoken at the Society for Human Resource Management Diversity Conference. We write a lot – go to our website to find loads of articles published in academic journals. We always post them on our website and we send them to our clients and colleagues. You have to keep learning; you have to keep doing it.

### **How do you and your colleagues remain current in your profession?**

Conferences are good for networking purposes. Unless you go to academic conferences, you won't get the cutting-edge information. It's astounding how many people don't conduct research or read journals and publications. They base their expertise on their own knowledge and intuition. We attend conferences and stay current by reading magazines, articles and academic journals and browsing the Internet. In particular, we get into the academic areas on the Internet to see what is going on in other studies. Cris is working on her dissertation; I'm working on a study of personality and employee engagement.

### **What advice can you offer to aspiring entrepreneurs?**

Save up to start your business. Definitely take care of the funding before diving into entrepreneurship. It is going to take a while for your business to mature.

Really look long and hard at yourself and your own personality traits because if you start a business you need to have an entrepreneurial personality, which includes being extroverted, a risk-taker, etc. Or you can put together an entrepreneurial team. You could be the best in the world, but if you don't know how to sell yourself, you're not going to make it.

### **Additional Information about You and/or Your Business:**

It is really important for people to, within training and development, consider the role of human personality. Most people don't. There aren't any personality courses in existence. MBAs don't take personality courses; business schools don't offer them. What makes us different is our focus on personality aspects. We get people to look at their personality. We [Cris and Mel Wildermuth] authored the article "10 Ms of Engagement" with number 10 being Matching – how to match someone's personality to the position they are trying to be a part of. Our training delves into how personality matches the job, position and task they have to do.

Personality is complicated and not clear-cut. The assessment we use allows us to look at the various aspects of personality and how they blend together. If a person hates what they are doing, they will burn out in a short amount of time. We are academically grounded, entertaining and themed-based. Personality is the third rung of our competitive advantage.

The Featured Business section highlights a small business that a Cambridge Who's Who member has founded or manages. It promotes business growth by helping to generate new clients and business relationships for the featured company. To be considered for this section, your company must be listed in the Cambridge Business (CamBiz™) Directory on [www.cambridgewhoswho.com](http://www.cambridgewhoswho.com). Please note that preference is given to companies who offer an exclusive discount to Cambridge Who's Who members.

***Who's News***

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