

# Successful Companies Often Emerge from Non-Traditional Business Ideas

Some innovators are born to be wild and turn "crazy" ideas into profitable ventures.



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EDITOR, COMMERCE

**C**OMMERCE ASKED SOME OF New Jersey's top professional services firms about their most unusual clients and we learned of an indoor, vertical vegetable farm in urban Newark; a luxury spa and resort for dogs; and stables that produced American Pharoah, the horse that won the Belmont Stakes and became the 12th Triple Crown winner in racing history. Here are the stories behind these and other offbeat businesses that followed their own paths to commercial success, thanks to the support and advice of their accountants, attorneys and bankers.



**McCarter & English, LLP**  
*By David F. Broderick, Esq.,  
Partner*

My most unusual business client is AeroFarms, which is blazing a trail in the incipient field of commercial, indoor vertical farming. Utilizing cutting-edge technology, AeroFarms grows organic leafy greens in half the time or less of traditional farming methods, without the need for pesticides or other artificial additives. AeroFarms is in the process of building the world's largest vertical indoor farm in a former steel foundry in Newark's Ironbound section. It will grow produce in urban consumers' backyards—figuratively speaking—and give many their first exposure to just-picked

greens. AeroFarms' produce will be superior in taste and nutrition to vegetables that were harvested weeks earlier and shipped cross-country, not to mention more environmentally friendly. Once completed, the Newark facility will deliver to supermarkets, restaurants and other consumers throughout New Jersey and the region. McCarter & English has advised AeroFarms on various legal issues since its formation, including intellectual property protection, real estate, venture capital financing, employment and other areas of law. We have introduced AeroFarms to key people in business and government who are interested in such beneficial green technology. It has been an extremely rewarding experience for AeroFarms and McCarter & English.



**North Jersey Federal Credit Union**  
*By Lourdes Cortez,  
President and CEO*

Recently, we had the opportunity to work with a local business, Rover Ranch and Spa located in Fairfield. Started 10 years ago, the business caters to dogs and is owned by Elizabeth Bratman and her son, Max. Services include daycare, boarding, grooming, training and exercise. One of the services that they offer, which is not provided by similar businesses in the area, is a "Rover" cam (Web cam) so

that pet owners can see how their dog is doing throughout the course of a day. What a great idea! North Jersey Federal Credit Union was able to approve a conventional business loan and a line of credit. This will enable Rover Ranch and Spa to move to a more visible location, expand its square footage and facilities, and enhance their already high standard of services. When Rover Ranch and Spa moves into their new space, they will have state-of-the-art kennels, improved flooring, a new luxury suite and new outdoor space, along with the expansion of their "Rover" cam. We are so excited to be able to help this business grow. They have a wonderful business model with good fiscal management.



**Cole Schotz P.C.**  
*By Michael D. Sirota, Esq.,  
Co-Managing Shareholder*

In 2010, Cole Schotz P.C. was retained by Zayat Stables to address the extraordinarily aggressive actions taken by its lender. At that time, Zayat Stables had quickly established itself as one of the premier thoroughbred racing horse stables in the country. Indeed, in its first four years of operations, Zayat Stables had set records in many categories of thoroughbred racing, ownership and sales. At that time, many of Zayat Stables' existing horses were entering their highest income-producing years and Zayat Stables was seek-

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ing to restructure its indebtedness to position itself to achieve continued trend-setting results. After five months in Chapter 11, Cole Schotz confirmed a plan of reorganization that allowed Zayat Stables to emerge from Chapter 11 and maintain its stature as one of the nation's most prominent thoroughbred stables in the world. Just five years later, Zayat Stables' American Pharoah won the Belmont Stakes to become the 12th Triple Crown winner in racing history. Zayat Stables is one of the most unique clients Cole Schotz has represented and it was extremely rewarding to watch Zayat Stables and the Zayat family in the winners' circle, knowing the stressful time they went through during their Chapter 11 in 2010.



**Peapack-Gladstone Bank**  
By Doug Kennedy,  
President and CEO

One of our most unusual clients is Century Bathworks, Inc., a company founded in 1946 that manufactures and sells high-quality glass shower enclosures, medicine cabinets, screen doors and mirrored closet doors. The company has gone through several expansions over the years and now operates from a state-of-the-art, 122,000-square-foot manufacturing facility. Recently, after carefully listening to the principal's objectives, we were able to structure a financing package using a tailored combination of commercial and private banking solutions that helped Century Bathworks accomplish its goals. One of our specialties is the ability to provide our clients with an unparalleled client experience—a luxury experience. In this specific situation, a team of PGB private bankers worked together to develop a creative solution that involved complex and multiple loan transactions with terms and conditions that were best for Century Bathworks, ultimately helping them continue to provide their own brand of luxury to their clients. Delivering unbiased financial solutions with our clients' best interests in mind is woven into the fabric of our core principles. Our team was able to provide cost savings and the cre-

ativeness that Century Bathworks needed in order to continue growing and thriving.



**WeiserMazars LLP**  
By Mike Coletti, CPA,  
Partner

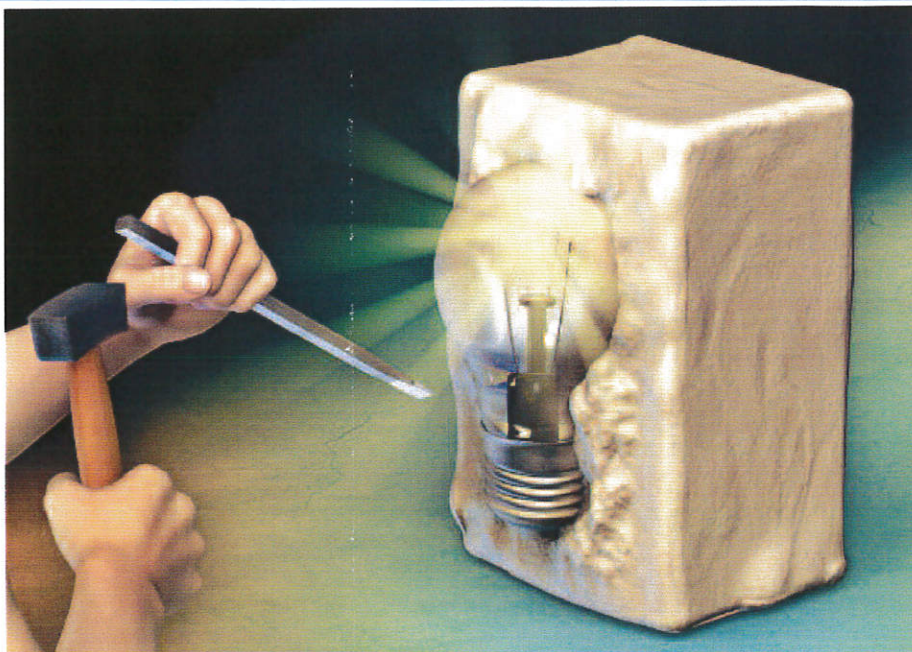
We grew with and treasure our relationship with an ethnic food manufacturer that began their business cooking in their kitchen and selling to bodegas and now has manufacturing plants located in New Jersey and across the world. While the growth of this company is not unusual, the way they have developed a strong demand and a following as well as how they have continued to expand consumers' palates is unique. For over 30 years, they have built their business on a three-fold foundation: brand recognition, retail price and, of course, quality. By having a vertical manufacturer, which has proved to be invaluable, their plants have continued to grow and feed the other group members. This growth was further supported by investment in the development of new product lines and infrastructure. We assisted by providing insight into research and development tax credits, cost segregation studies and government incentive programs such as GrowNJ and efficient tax structuring for

estate purposes. These services significantly helped the company and its management with generating free cash flow to reinvest into the various businesses.



**Unity Bank**  
By James A. Hughes,  
President and CEO

Auto Action Group, Inc. specializes in aftermarket auto upgrades, including remote starters, navigation systems, heated and leather seats, video systems and much more. Many new car dealerships partner with Auto Action to offer expanded vehicle options at time of sale. Headquartered in Kenilworth—with five locations in New Jersey, Philadelphia and New York—the company is one of the most interesting clients we have had the privilege to work with. Unity Bank has completed several commercial loans for Auto Action and they also have accounts with the bank. They have a very interesting business model, but more importantly the company is very committed to its employees, which is a philosophy we respect a great deal as a community bank. We find that our employees appreciate the little things we do for them, and I know the owner of Auto Action has had a similar experience with the company's employees. For example,



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