

Peter Zandan — Wacky Entrepreneur

PERSONALITIES in profile

By Emily Sopensky

► Peter Zandan, according to one of his colleagues, is a bit wacky. But it seems that he's blessed with just the right amount of "wacky" to make him a wacky-guy-cum-successful-entrepreneur.

Zandan is the founder and chairman of the board of IntelliQuest, whose mission is to "help technology companies profitably sell more products." The Austin-based company is a leading market research firm for technology. In 1995 and 1996, Inc. magazine put IntelliQuest on its list of the 500 fastest-growing private companies in the United States. Zandan led the company through the first of two public offerings in 1996 and it is now publicly traded on NASDAQ as IQST.

Raised in the United States and abroad, Zandan has a talent for becoming a representative of the times. After getting his bachelor's in history from the University of Massachusetts in 1975, Zandan drove his red-and-white customized VW van to Mexico to explore international studies. "The 70s were about being free," he asserts.

After several years there, he returned

to the United States and settled in Austin. "The 80s were about getting more serious," he notes. So he got both his Ph.D. in evaluation research (1982) and his MBA (1983) from the University of Texas.

In the 90s, of course, "it's all about technology," says Zandan. So he hatched IntelliQuest. "I enjoy learning so much. Now we're in an environment for that," he says, adding, "There's a real value in the marketplace for knowledge ... I'm intrigued with how we are changing the way we work and play."

In 1998, Zandan stepped back from day-to-day operations at IntelliQuest to spend more time with his family and pursue other interests. But that does not mean he is idle. On the contrary. Despite having an office full of toys, including his favorites, a dutiful, 40-year-old stuffed monkey named "Jocko" and a toy VW van, Zandan is in charge of several new projects. He teaches entrepreneurship to MBA students at the University of Texas. He also just started a new firm, Zilliant, which he declined to talk about. (The website is password protected.)

However, when asked about the Austin 360 Summit, Zandan is down-

right effusive about it. He and fellow Austin technology entrepreneur Steve Papermaster founded the summit "to give back to the community" by bringing together key CEOs in the industry with other leaders in the community, like the University of Texas and the state government. As the two "idea men," Zandan and Papermaster hope to address the issues that are important to the growing tech businesses in Austin. At the Austin 360 Alpha Summit in January, leaders discussed issues ranging from recruitment to city infrastructure, from the relationships between businesses and public institutions to balancing Austin's quality of life against the growth in the industry.

"Peter's just wacky," says Lee Walker, IntelliQuest board member and former president of Dell. "Only he would think that you could get Austin technology CEOs — who have worse cases of ADD than even he does — to sit for an entire day. What an absurdity! Then to do it. That's definitely wacky."

