

Executive Profile: Neel Hajra President and CEO of Nonprofit Enterprise at Work Inc.

Posted by [sarigg](#) September 18, 2008 04:40AM



Neel Hajra

Similar to Susan Katz, former president and CEO of NEW, Neel Hajra previously worked representing Ford as an attorney in the Global Business Operations Group in Dearborn. Soon after Katz made the move to NEW, in 2001 he joined as well to return to his home town of Ann Arbor.

"The real intent was to get back to Ann Arbor," Hajra said. "I knew (Susan) was a good boss. I like the idea of helping nonprofits and the community since I grew up in the community. ...The original plan was to come work for NEW, get a good grounding and get to know Ann Arbor a little bit better professionally and then find what it was I was looking for, and what I didn't know was this was it."

NEW is a nonprofit that assists other nonprofit organizations succeed in Southeast Michigan. There are currently more than 2,000 nonprofits organizations in Washtenaw County alone. It works to serve them in four ways: offering the NEW Center, Board Connect, Resource Connect, and npServ. NpServ is a shared I.T. service for nonprofits and was created by Hajra.

In December, NEW received a \$150,000 grant from the Lloyd and Mabel Johnson Foundation to use over a three-year span specifically for npServ. Just weeks from this announcement, NEW established another office in Detroit. The organization, which had a staff of 19 people, has hired three more people in the last two months.

As newly elected president and CEO of NEW, Hajra has goals to get the name of NEW and its services out more, add new resources, have the headquarters act as a green landmark to reflect the local organizations it harbors, maintain funding, and emphasize quality over quantity in nonprofit organizations.

BACKGROUND

- Education: B.S. in physics (1995) and J.D. (1998) from University of Michigan.
- Family: Two boys (6 and 4).
- Residence: Ann Arbor.

INSIGHTS

- Best way to keep competitive edge: Constant learning.
- Personal hero: Mahatma Gandhi.
- How do you motivate people: Lead by example; give people the resources and know-how to generate their own success.
- How do you motivate yourself? I envision success and aspire to it; just as important, I envision failure and avoid it at all costs.
- Most unique office decor: A hat made out of business cards.
- Favorite hobby: Tennis.

JUDGMENT CALLS

- Best business decision: To focus NEW more on depth of service and sustainability.
- Biggest management myth: That nonprofits should be run "Just like for-profit businesses."
- What advice would you give to yourself 10 years ago? Never take anything for granted.
- Hot stock in your portfolio: Hot? I would settle for tepid these days.
- Word that best describes you: Energetic.

CONFESSIONS

- What keeps you up at night? Planning the next day in my head.
- Pet peeve: Never knowing what kinds of plastic are recyclable.
- Guilty pleasure: Cheesecake.
- First job: Copy clerk at U-M Hospital.
- First choice for a new career: Professional golfer.

TREASURES

- Favorite cause: Equality.
- Favorite book: Midnight's Children by Salman Rushdie.
- Favorite movie: Star Wars: Empire Strikes Back.
- What's on your iPod/car radio dial? Radiohead, Estelle, M.I.A., Tchaikovsky.
- What do you do to recharge the batteries? Social networking, Web surfing.

Christina Field is a freelance writer.