

The Telegraph

Thursday, November 3, 2005

by Karen Spiller

Remember the six-foot nine-inch tall guy from Londonderry with the big silly hat and flashy clothes who strolled through supermarkets promoting his pies?

He's back.

After taking three years off following the sale of Gordon's Pies to Mrs. Smith's Bakeries, Gordon Weinberger, 40, has written and published a self-help book he's promoting with the same enthusiasm as he did his pies.

It's called "Infinite Persistence Life Book" and it's based on the entrepreneur's experiences in the pie business he built from a single recipe into a national brand, at one point turning himself into a marketing machine to save his company from near bankruptcy, and turning it into a national multimillion-dollar company.

"If I can do it - and I'm just a regular guy from New Hampshire - anyone can do it," Weinberger, 40, said during his first New Hampshire interview in three years.

His "never give up, no matter what" message is clear in the lively and entertaining 212-page book, which Weinberger guarantees will change your life, or your money back.

Weinberger not only wrote a book, but he also has a "Life Journal" and "Life Music" compact disc - other components of the Infinite Persistence Life brand, a concept he invented based on his experiences, which he says will help people learn to tap into their own realm of possibilities and reach personal and professional goals.

"Infinite Persistence Life Book" touches on how to achieve your dream, even while facing tough times and rejections, and still moving ahead.

"Behave as if you cannot fail and choose your actions as if you were unafraid of falling short," he writes. "It is the only way you will succeed."

Weinberger said his book "is taking apple pie and applying it to everybody's life. You could take a portion of something in your life that you don't want and turn it into something that you do want."

Written at an eighth-grade reading level in relatively large print, Weinberger calls the book a "life book" that can help people improve their lives relative to money, relationship and health.

"It's about my story as it relates to other people's lives."

Weinberger's story began 14 years ago, when, at age 27, he

entered and won a blue ribbon in pie-baking contest at the Londonderry town fair using his great-grandmother's secret apple pie recipe.

"I was 7 feet tall and weighed 300 pounds," said Weinberger, who now lives in southern Connecticut with his wife and three children. "When you're that big, you don't bake pies."

But it worked for him. Weinberger entered and won again the next year - using the same secret recipe, crafting a good crust and using good quality Londonderry apples

"There was nothing fancy about it," he said, "But that created a winning pie."

Having always dreamed of owning his own business, he decided in 1994 to leave his \$60,000 a year public relations job in Boston and open his own pie factory in Londonderry.

"I wanted to do something that felt good, and something that was fun," he said.

He and his wife, Cindy, would package the pies with a brochure about his story, then he'd deliver the pies out of the back of his care to Mack's Apples in Londonderry.

Weinberger promoted Gordon's Pies by giving out T-shirts and free pies. "It really left an impression on everyone," he said. "I found out firsthand that who you are and how you present yourself affects customers; perceptions of your product or service."

Right from the beginning, he set a goal - to sell his company within seven years to Mrs. Smith's Bakeries - the largest pie company in the world. His parents and in-laws were all investors, and he wanted it to pay off for everyone who helped him.

By 1996, sales of his pies totaled \$400,000. But costs of 10,000-square foot factory exceeded the income being produced by sales. He stopped at supermarkets around the country promoting his product.

But that year, he owed \$400,000 to 71 vendors. He had to shut down his self-built factory and outsource the baking to other plants.

Piebus

In the winter of 1997, instead of filing for bankruptcy, Weinberger bought a big orange school bus for \$1,000.

It was the vehicle that helped turn things around.

After hand-painting the Piebus red white and blue and adding his "Eat Mo' Pie" slogan, he started on a promotional tour that included stops at 500 supermarkets.

"I'd walk into a grocery store dressing in this crazy costume," he recalled.

"When you hit bottom. . .you can't go any lower, so there's nothing to lose. So I thought, why not put on a costume and laugh and

sing and say, 'Ooh-la-la?'"

After asking for and being granted a 15 minute meeting with Phil Francis, the then CEO of Shaw's Supermarkets, he got him to agree to buy a tractor-trailer load of pies - an order worth \$25,000.

"We were literally days away from going out of business," Weinberger said.

Eventually, getting on the Piebus and going around shaking people's hands paid off. Weinberger racked up \$1 million in sales, and the profits helped him pay off vendors.

"The business just grew from there, and it never stopped growing," Weinberger said. "Corporations would call and say, can you come give a speech?"

"We actually turned it into a marketing program."

Weinberger also achieved his goal of getting Wal-Mart to carry his pies - a feat that wouldn't have paid off had he not been "infinitely persistent," he said.

In January 2002, he sold his business to Mrs. Smith's - six years and 10 months from the day he started it.

"You have to believe that there is nothing you cannot be, nothing you cannot do and nothing you cannot have if you work hard enough and persist without fear," Weinberger writes. "Our capacity for Infinite Persistence grows from our beliefs in our own infinite potential."

After selling his company to Mrs. Smith's, Weinberger took a few years off to spend with his family. Then in March, it hit him. He decided to write a book.

"I realized I have a really incredible story to tell," he said.

Today, Weinberger is preparing for a national media tour with stops in New York, Dallas and California. He eventually plans to travel to Asia, Hong Kong, Taiwan and China to market his book.

"I want this to be a New York Times bestseller," he said. "I'm going to market the hell out of this book."

Infinite Persistence Life Book is \$29.95 in hardcover. For more information, you can visit www.infinitepersistence.com or www.gordonweinberger.com.