

UCG's Newest Sales Executive Took an Unconventional Path to Success

By Paul Gillin



Career-changing encounters can happen in the strangest places. For **Matt Paterini**, it was in a barber chair.

Matt had just moved to Cleveland after graduating IBM Global Sales School at the top of his class a few weeks earlier. While getting a haircut, he struck up a conversation with the barber and mentioned that he worked for IBM. It turned out the man wielding the scissors was the brother-in-law of UCG Technologies founder and CEO Jim Kandrak. So began an ongoing conversation that, a year later, brought Matt to UCG as Regional Director of one of the company's most promising growth businesses.

Matt and Jim hit it off from the start. "Selecting an opportunity based on the boss is very important," Matt says. "I can learn a ton from Jim about selling and about running a business."

Says Jim Kandrak, simply, "He reminds me of myself 32 years ago, except he's smarter."

Although only 27 years old, Matt brings impressive credentials to his new role leading sales efforts for UCG's IBM i cloud backup & disaster recovery business in the Northwest United States and Canada. When you're brimming with talent, success tends to follow you around.

And Matt has talent in abundance. He picked up a golf club for the first time at age 8 and within a few years was winning tournaments in his hometown of Saline, Michigan. His handicap: zero.

Upon graduating from the University of Michigan with a Bachelor's degree in biology in 2012, he entered the college's challenging Doctor of Pharmacy program and became the Chief Pharmacy Intern at the university's health system.

At IBM, he was one of just 300 salespeople selected for the company's fiercely competitive Summit Program out of more than 15,000 applicants.



Change of plans

And yes, you read that right. Matt's original plan was to become a pharmacist. He admits to never having set a definitive career goal. Rather, he has pursued opportunities that seem interesting, promising and fit both personal and professional goals. That approach has served him pretty well so far.

Pharmacy is a much more diverse profession than most people know (learn more at [The Nontraditional Pharmacist](#), an informational website that Matt and two friends started during his final year in graduate school). While earning his Pharm.D. degree at Michigan, he prepared for a career in clinical pharmacology, but found himself continually drawn to the business side of the profession. "I got a lot of feedback in pharmacy school that I should pursue a career in sales," he says. "That led me to look into the business side of things."

Business turned out to be another natural talent. Matt credits his father, a successful Georgia-Pacific sales manager, for nurturing his business savvy as well as helping him with his golf swing. Upon joining IBM, Matt learned about a fledgling program that was applying the company's Watson cognitive technology to healthcare. "It sounded awesome," he remembers.

The Summit Program filled in some critical gaps in his otherwise natural sales ability. He learned how to speak the language of top executives and how to build a business case around IBM's solutions. He improved his communications skills and learned how to sell technology. Upon graduation, he moved to Cleveland for IBM to take on a position as a hybrid cloud business solutions specialist.

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IBM was a perfect place for Matt to hone his enterprise sales skills, but it didn't satisfy his entrepreneurial urge. That's why the meeting with Jim Kandrac was a timely coincidence. "I want to know everything about running a successful business," Matt says. Jim saw the potential and after almost a full year of discussions, decided to bring Matt on board in a unique position which will entail not only sales, but also management, marketing and strategic planning. "I can train anyone to sell, but to grasp a business and grow it intelligently requires something special," Jim says. "That's what Matt can do."

Taking UCG to the next level

After 30 years in business, UCG Technologies is still exploring new areas of growth. Having excelled with clients in 31 states, the company is seeking new opportunities in Canada. UCG has identified 3,000 organizations that run on the IBM i platform (Power Systems) as good candidates for UCG's IBM i cloud backup and disaster recovery services. UCG is investing in its own vaults at a co-located facility in Mississauga, Ontario and will soon be able to scale to more than 100K CPW (Commercial Processing Workloads) on the IBM i running on Power8 servers.

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Matt will manage sales, marketing and website development for the new territories. It's a big job for one so young, but he's unfazed by the challenge. He's been in sales meetings with IT managers twice his age before. "If you're up-front and honest, and if you're genuinely trying to help people solve their problems, you will earn their respect," he says.

And Matt Paterini isn't exactly your run-of-the-mill Millennial. He prefers in-person meetings to texting, takes notes with pen and paper, and admits to struggling with Microsoft Excel. But he speaks the language of his generation, something that attracted Jim Kandrac for his efforts to inject "young blood" into the organization.

Matt's fresh perspective will also help as UCG navigates a rapidly changing landscape. "Technology is a moving target. We have to be adaptive, strategic and continuously focus on solving our clients' business issues and pains," he says. "I'd like people one day to say that I was able to grow the business and also help set the path for the next 20 years."

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