

A portrait of Richard Franzi, a middle-aged man with dark hair and glasses, wearing a dark pinstriped suit, a white shirt, and a blue patterned tie. He is sitting with his hands clasped in front of him. The background is a warm, blurred indoor setting with wooden paneling and light coming through windows.

# *Peer Power*

*Richard Franzi's dynamic peer group for CEOs is transforming the lives of hundreds of business executives in an explosive, confidential and trusting environment.*

*By Rick Weinberg*

**WHEN RICHARD FRANZI WAS PROMOTED FROM VICE PRESIDENT OF SALES AND MARKETING TO PRESIDENT OF DELPHI CONNECTION SYSTEMS IN 2005**, he was ecstatic, to say the least -- but he wasn't quite sure he was prepared for the daunting task.

"Up to that point, all my experience was as a VP was in sales and marketing," he says.

"I didn't exactly know what I needed to learn and experience, but I knew I needed something to do the best job possible."

So he researched various educational programs.

"I was looking for something that would give me a well-rounded experience and insulate me from my inexperience as President of a \$70 million manufacturing company," he says.

His search led to him to a CEO peer group -- a mastermind discussion group for business executives.

"I didn't even know something like that existed at the time," he says.

He wound up attending a retreat in Santa Barbara, California -- and that was the day that changed his life forever.

"I was sitting there listening to the facilitator of the group and all of a sudden I realized 'I wanted to be that guy,' Franzl recalls. "I wanted to be the one standing in front of the audience, helping people like he's helping me."

Talk about an epiphany moment. During the first break, Franzl immediately called his wife Debra.

"Honey," he said, "I found exactly what I want to do. I want to quit my job at Delphi and create

my own peer groups. What I've just experienced is *transformational*."

He was 49 years old at the time. He had two children in college. And his wife was completely behind him.

His financial adviser was not.

"Richard, this is not exactly the best time to quit a lucrative and steady job as President," Franzl was told.

It didn't matter to Franzl. This is what he wanted. This is what he lived for. This is what he felt he was born to do.

The next day, he informed his bosses that he was leaving.

Today, seven years later, Franzl has emerged as one of the most dynamic, successful and influential peer group leaders with his firm, Critical Mass for Business. He not only conducts a powerful peer group organization for CEOs and Presidents of companies desperate for answers and advice that they cannot find anywhere else, especially within their own company, but Franzl has also written two captivating books and is the host of an online radio program.

**SO WHAT EXACTLY HAPPENED** that day in Santa Barbara? What took place in that meeting that resulted in Franzl altering his life?

Franzl is sitting in the lobby of a high-rise office building in Costa Mesa, California. He ponders the question and smiles.

"It wasn't exactly what the facilitator did -- it was more about what the group did," he says. "What made me so passionate about it is I realized the power of peer group learning. I felt this unbelievable and profound connection to this group of people."

He pauses and stares outside the mammoth

***"I believe if you have the right people in the room something magical happens in a chemical way. There is a critical mass of energy that is released that the members in the group cannot find anywhere else." — Richard Franzl, Founder and CEO, Critical Mass For Business***

glass windows overseeing picturesque palm trees and blue skies. He turns back to his interviewer and says, "I just felt so comfortable and confident during that meeting. I felt reborn. The affect it had on me was so profound and enlightening. And it was the group that the facilitator put together that made it such a remarkable, life-changing experience.

"All I could think about was, 'This is me. This is what I was born to do. I want to help other people like he's helping me.'"

The game was on. Franzi trademarked and copyrighted CEO Peer Groups™ ("I couldn't believe it was available," he says) and for the last seven years, he has transmuted the lives and careers of hundreds of CEOs, Presidents and C-level executives.

Franzi's organization is a business partner with Renaissance Executive Forums, an international organization serving over 1,300 CEOs and business owners worldwide.

To experience this transformational and illuminating phenomena, let's travel inside Franzi's CEO peer group and uncover exactly what transpires in the confines of this captivating exchange of ideas between 10 top executives and business owners.

"What happens inside this peer group is truly magical," says Dan Coffman, owner of UPS Protection.

Franzi's groups consist of 10 members only. All sign a confidentiality agreement so everything that is said in the group stays in the group.

"The foundation of group is confidentiality,"

Franzi says. "The power of the group is in the trust."

That trust enables the business executives to be honest to the core -- and real.

"That's because they feel free and unencumbered," Franzi says. "It is a safe environment to ask questions and share information. The way we can touch someone's life to the extent we do, it's a power I call molecular. We rewire your DNA as a leader to refocus and rebalance your life and make you a better boss.

"It's truly extraordinary what happens when members can talk freely and openly about topics they would otherwise be reluctant to speak of."

This is what is priceless about Franzi's peer group: Members develop an internal and exclusive board of advisors from other people in the group that truly understand their business and who have no financial stake in it. They have nothing to gain by not being open and truthful. The members are there to support and help one another, to help one other maneuver through critical decisions and issues that they cannot discuss with the other high-ranking executives in their company.

"CEOs need to sit with other CEOs and Presidents and other business owners of a similar size who understand your business and can give you advice," Franzi says. "Where are you going to go for that advice? There are 10 people in my groups with years of experience who don't have anything to gain from saying yes or no. That's

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hard to find as business owner.”

The life of a CEO can be very lonely. They live on an isolated island – and that isolation breeds stress. They can’t confide in people below them because it can be construed as a sign of weakness and insecurity. Even incompetence.

“The most basic benefit of CEO peer groups is you can get real feedback,” Franzi says. “It sounds simple, but it’s amazing to me that you cannot get real feedback from your people. It’s hard for CEOs to get real feedback. When you’re in a peer group, you’re going to get real answers from people who don’t work for you and have no stake in your business.”

**T**ALK TO ANYONE WHO HAS participated in Franzi’s peer groups and they rave about the influence of the group and how it helped them weave through and overcome many difficulties and complex, sensitive problems in their business and put them on a path of greater success and stability.

“Ric’s peer group concept gave me a unique opportunity to gain insight and advice from peer business owners in a trusting and confidential setting,” Coffman says. “Ric has an amazing way of bringing together executives who genuinely care about each other and freely share their ideas.”

Shirley Balarezo, the President of Tone Software, has been attending Franzi’s peer group for

five years.

“Ric’s influence in helping me grow my software firm has been very significant,” she says. “The meetings expose me to great ideas and the other members of the group help to hold me accountable to the strategic actions I have committed to doing.”

From the moment Mari Kurtz walked into the room to attend her first session with Franzi’s peer group, “I knew it was something special,” she says.

Kurtz, President and Owner of Cal Pac Sheet Metal & O.C. Metals, does not have a formal board of directors so the peer group “acts as my advisory board,” she says. “I run two companies and to have the experiences of the other members available to help me grow both firms has been extremely valuable. The construction industry is challenging and I am glad not to have to go it alone anymore now because of Ric and his groups. It’s been an invaluable experience.”

Franzi smiles as he thinks about all the CEOs he is helping.

“I believe if you have the right people in the room something magical happens in a chemical way,” he says. “There is a critical mass of energy that is released that the members in the group cannot find anywhere else.”

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