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Adam Klein-Chief Client Offier-RoweCom

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ATG Interviews Adam Klein

Chief Client Officer, RoweCom <aklein@rowe.com>

by Katina Strauch (Editor, *Against the Grain*) <strauchk@earthlink.net>

ATG: *It is astounding news that RoweCom has bought the Dawson Information Services Group (ISG). I am sure that you are aware that many feel that Dick Rowe was responsible for the demise of Faxon, which was later sold to Dawson. Now Faxon et seq. are back with Dick Rowe! What's going on? Can you hope to get the market back?*

AK: I have heard a lot about the background of Faxon, but I obviously didn't live through it. I want to focus on now rather than then. What I can assure you of is that RoweCom is categorically and absolutely committed to serving the academic library market in the U.S. To make sure that we get the required services right, I am very much in the "asking and listening" mode. I am coming to the Charleston Conference and have visited and will visit a large number of libraries because I want to meet with librarians and hear about their needs and concerns.

RoweCom is a company that is committed to growth. It turned out that the Dawson ISG, including Faxon, was available at a price which made sense. We are clearly delighted because among so many other attributes they have a strong client base for us to work with in providing them with the services they need now and in the future. This is also a very good marriage combining Faxon's many years of experience in the industry and strong traditional focus on service with RoweCom's innovative use of technology and the Internet to enhance and streamline the more routine business processes. Both the Faxon and RoweCom staffs are quite excited about the opportunities created by the acquisition.

ATG: *How can you hope to get back your customers? It is a big production for libraries to change serial vendors and we don't like to do that. Plus the market for print journals is shrinking. Everyone loves electronic journals these days.*

AK: We have to develop new business by showing that we can provide leading levels of service and corporate stability. Competitive pricing will also be a factor. We have to earn the customers back and work to retain those that are now with us, and I am personally committed to doing this. There has been consolidation throughout the industry, and we are equipped to service the libraries in the way that they want and need to be serviced. But you know so well that there are many new pressures on libraries too—today, students and faculty increasingly want a different type of service. We are very committed to assist librarians with these changes by providing the

e-journal and online capabilities that their constituents are demanding, and we are the company in the best position to do so. We also realize that we need to take change at the academic pace and not force it down the throats of librarians.

ATG: *We've heard from a lot of customers that they weren't happy with RoweCom's services.*

AK: I am not familiar with all of the situations, but it's clear that in the early years RoweCom had more ambition than resources, and at times was unable to deliver on its promises. It was an enthusiastic early company. But things are different now. RoweCom is a company with approximately \$500 million in annual revenue. We won't make a commitment that we can't deliver on 100%.

ATG: *Tell us about yourself. You just started your job with RoweCom in September, right?*

AK: Yes. I have a lot to learn. My accent is originally South African. I came to America in 1976. I was a political exile. I had to leave since I had been an active leader in the anti-Apartheid movement. I entered Harvard Business School where I earned my MBA. After graduating I became a strategy consultant with the Boston Consulting Group and later taught in the MBA program at Harvard Business School. I then went back to earn my doctorate there. My research was in the field of change management. Until the early nineties, I was an academician and a consultant. I feel that at least I know the student and faculty side of the equation.

When Mr. Mandela was released from prison in 1992 I found that a personal trap door was opened. I decided to go back to South Africa for three years as I wanted to be there and to see that repressed society transformed to a democratic one. When I returned to the USA in 1996, I met the president of the Hasbro Company. You know, the GI Joe and "Monopoly" game people. I was brought in as Executive Vice President and President of Global Marketing. My focus was to turn some of their great products into global brands. This led me to do a lot of study of intellectual property development. We launched Hasbro Interactive, particularly on the Internet. Over the next three years, we had doubled the size of the company and increased profits by 300%. I felt it was time to move on. I am compelled by the impact of the Internet era, and I had occasion to meet Dick Rowe several times. He has a very strong vi-

sion of the value added we can bring to librarians and consumers via this medium. It is a vision that I fully embrace, albeit I know that it will take some time to fully implement.

ATG: *You aren't a librarian then and you don't have library experience?*

AK: That's right. I only know the library world as an extensive user. But I am an experienced business executive who can work with librarians to understand their needs and to ensure that is what we deliver. I also am fortunate to have many members of my staff, both from RoweCom and Faxon, who have many years of experience in the library, vendor and publishing industries and whom I will rely on to take the lead in the provision of products and services to the library community.

ATG: *How was RoweCom able to acquire all the money to acquire Dawson ISG?*

AK: The Dawson ISG has not invested in the impact of new technologies to the extent that RoweCom has. RoweCom got out in front of the Internet field, which left Dawson, and others, playing catch up which is very difficult. Dick Rowe is a visionary. He understands the trends faster than his competitors. Now he has brought in professional managers to take this business to another level.

ATG: *Tell us about the deal. What exactly did RoweCom purchase of the Dawson ISG?*

AK: We have acquired the assets and working operations of the Dawson ISG. This was approved on October 2. Dawson's strength remains in its book distribution business and they are going to continue with what they know best.

ATG: *What has happened to IQ? I thought that Dawson had kept some sort of interest in that?*

AK: Information Quest (IQ) was acquired as a part of the acquisition. We are very excited about the product. It will be a highly valuable service for libraries and their end users.

ATG: *Tell us about your Internet capabilities.*

AK: RoweCom operates in several separate worlds. We will run our business for our academic library clients separately and differently from our business for our corporate clients. Where the Faxon library business has some services that are better developed than the kLibrary services, we will use Faxon technology. Services like License Depot, Subscription Depot, for example, are more scaleable than kLibrary. Additionally, Infor-

continued on page 29

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Klein Interview from page 28

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ATG: Will you deliver access to e-journals? How will this come about?

AK: We already deliver access to the full page image of e-journals through **Information Quest** to the desktop of the researcher. And our subscription companies offer a full range of e-journal services from identification and selection to acquisition and registration. We offer some of the finest e-journal services on the market, such as **License Depot**. The development of generic license agreements will allow us as the vendor to offer you the help you need with licensing and

continued on page 31

Klein Interview
from page 29

negotiation for electronic resources. You will see that a large part of our strategic plan will deal with the rapid development of a total package for the management and delivery of e-journals. We firmly believe that this is an area in which we can be extremely useful to you and offer value-added services which will be indispensable.

I also want to add a word here about other types of online resources that we will enable you to provide to your end users. We are actively pursuing the expansion of our content offerings to include conferences, distance learning materials, courses, etc. It's a very exciting time for us and our clients.

ATG: *Let's talk about publishers. What sort of experience do you have dealing with them in this type of situation?*

AK: My own experience with publishers is limited. I know that publishers have been and continue to be under incredible pressure to change their historical model for the future. Look at the **Los Alamos model**. Publishers are scrambling. It is a time to potentially partner, a time of opportunity. Publishers are being turned upside down. We are in a perfect position as the middleman between libraries, users and content providers to mold the future of electronic publishing and build the pricing and delivery models which will make the best sense for all links in the information chain. Again, I am fortunate to have a wonderful staff in publisher relations and services with many years of experience dealing with publishers and working in the publishing industry. I certainly don't have all the answers. But I do have the attitude and temperament to deal with all this.

ATG: *Tell us about RoweCom's current client base.*

AK: As of October 2, we had about 50/50 academic and corporate institutions. It's not widely known, but **RoweCom** has had a significant client base of academic libraries even before the acquisition.

ATG: *You have just hired Charles Germain as director of your European operations. Charles used to run Faxon Europe. Tell us more.*

AK: France, the UK, and Spain, they are all part of our strategy. Charles is responsible for all of our European business. He certainly has the experience and knowledge to provide the best possible management for these important areas.

ATG: *How many people are employed at RoweCom and what's the corporate structure like? Is the U.S. your largest market?*

continued on page 68

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Howard Interview
from page 30

ATG: *Do you consider your users faculty or libraries? How much are you focusing on the individual market?*

KH: Recognizing that librarians are both subject matter specialists and information brokers they obviously feature greatly in MCB's thinking. For many years a significant part of our portfolio has been dedicated to the librarian in the

former role. We see the consortial agreements as being primarily for the research and current awareness benefits of the management academic. For this category we are developing access and delivery mechanisms to satisfy their specific needs. The ideal we are attempting to achieve is "information on demand" to the individual, whether the librarian, the researcher or the practitioner.