

Daniel H. Nelson Jr. (Nelie)

President & CEO, Nelson Schmidt Inc.

(Member since 2004)



Nelson Schmidt Inc. is a full-service marketing communications agency with decades of delivering measurable results that earned the firm a Top B2B Agency from *Chief Marketer* magazine in 2018.

Utilizing an integrated marketing service model, Nelson Schmidt operates with its fingers firmly on the pulse of a broad range of markets and channels – both local and worldwide – the firm is proud of its tailored solutions based on experience and focused measurable results.

Dan Nelson, Sr. purchased the Ken Schmidt Agency in 1988 with Dan, Jr. (Nelie) joining the firm in 1995 and purchasing the agency from his father in 2012. With offices in Madison and Milwaukee and a staff of nearly 50, the firm has thrived under Nelie's leadership, nearly tripling in size since he joined.

As a youngster, Nelie didn't imagine he would become a world class "Mad Man" rather he had plans of becoming a physician. He earned his undergraduate degrees in biology and psychology and then a master's in biology from Stanford University in California. *(Until he broke his leg skiing, Nelie was on Stanford's track team as a pole vaulter, a skill he learned at Whitefish Bay High School.)* After taking the MCAT but before entering medical school, Nelie shadowed a family friend who had a thriving orthopedic practice. That summer experience brought Nelie to the realization that the business of medicine wasn't for him. Not sure exactly what he wanted to do, he had a passion for photography so he took a year to travel around the world. He headed west and just kept going, traveling through Fiji, New Zealand, Australia, SE Asia, Nepal, where he climbed to the Mount Everest Base Camp, eastern Africa, with the year culminating with two weeks spent in Greece.

He returned to Stanford to complete his graduate studies and then started his career by opening a commercial photography studio in San Francisco where he worked for brands including Levi Strauss, Dockers, Apple, the San Francisco Symphony and the Ansel Adams Center for Photography. His 1995 return to Milwaukee landed him at Nelson Schmidt and he's never looked back. He's been able to parlay his intellect and keen marketing sense into success.

Creativity and curiosity are in Nelie's DNA. His mother, Lynn Nelson, is a widely acclaimed food stylist and cookbook author. (Now retired and living in Florida, Lynn edited and styled *Gatherings*, published in 1987 by the Junior League of Milwaukee. This writer has a copy and still uses many of the fabulous recipes it contains.) Dan, Sr. is a member of the international gastronomic society La Chaine des Rotisseurs.

Nelie is no slouch in the kitchen himself and has an appreciation for locally-sourced ingredients. He owns 600 EAST Café, located in the same building as the agency on Wisconsin and Jackson, which

specializes in delicious locally-sourced menu items. 600 EAST Café is open M-F for breakfast and lunch, and also offers catering. In addition to its food offerings and coffee, 600 EAST is also a legal dispensary for Cannabidiol, also known as CBD. (Cannabidiol is a phytocannabinoid, one of some 113 identified molecules in cannabis plants. In 2018, clinical research included preliminary studies of its effectiveness for treatment of anxiety, cognition, movement disorders and pain.)

Nelie takes his interest in food and the benefits of cannabis beyond the norm. He and his wife, Aimee, live on a hobby farm in Grafton. At aNd Farms (aNd = Aimee and Dan Nelson) the couple raises chickens, honey bees, vegetables and are licensed growers and processors of CBD. They also tap maple syrup from their grove of sugar maples. Nelie enjoyed single life into his late 40s, and actually met his future wife almost 20 years ago. She was married at the time, but serendipity brought her back to Milwaukee in 2010. They reconnected soon thereafter and eventually married in 2014. After just four months of marriage, Aimee was in a very serious car accident and broke five vertebrae in her neck. Hospitalized for nearly a month it was a full year of rehabilitation before Aimee regained her full health. Nelie was at her side throughout the entire ordeal. Nelie's stepson, Kale, serves in the United States Navy.



Nelie and his wife Aimee

In addition to their home farm in Grafton, Aimee and Nelie also own another farm and log cabin in Birchwood, WI. Nelie helped build this cabin in the early 80's, including cutting down the trees and helping hew the logs with a close family friend from whom he purchased it in 2008.



Nelie on his boat, Hey Jude

As a boy, Nelie played the violin. His interest in music brought him to help create and lead the Rotary Club of Milwaukee's LIVE @ the Lakefront concert series in the Rotary Amphitheater at Discovery World. This eight-week summer musical festival features only original artists across a variety of genres. Nelie personally screens the performers, negotiates the contracts and promotes this extremely popular RCM community program. Nelie chairs the RCM Maritime Committee, producers of the concert series, which has as its mission to improve the public's access to all our maritime resources.

A busy and very engaged Rotary Person of Action, Nelie is a member of several business marketing organizations, the Milwaukee Yacht Club, the Milwaukee Athletic Club, Ozaukee Country Club and is a volunteer rescue diver for the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary.

In addition to the Maritime Committee, Nelie serves on the MKE Urban Stables board of directors and is integrally involved in the Gold Star Family Memorial effort currently being spearheaded by several Rotary members.

Nelie sums up his view of the Rotary Club of Milwaukee this way, *“How I describe Rotary is what a member takes from membership are the learnings from the lunch programs that are always interesting and presented from speakers with deep knowledge of the subject. But how a Rotarian gives back is through committee volunteerism. The clout Rotary gives members makes it possible for us to come together to make a difference that we couldn’t on our own, whether that’s locally or globally.”*



Editor’s Note: *We feature the popular Rotary People of Action series bi-monthly. The October 4th edition will profile RCM Executive Director Mary McCormick. Rotary People of Action is written by RCM Board Member (and its Sargent at Arms) Barbara Velez.*