



FEATURE: BUSINESS & TECHNOLOGY

The shops offer approximately 100 different flavors, which are rotated throughout the year.

SERVING UP SCOOPS OF COOL

RPCV Neal Gottlieb is building a brand, but staying true to his mission

By *Teniola Ayoola*

Eight months into his service Neal Gottlieb, a small business Volunteer in Taroudant, Morocco, was brewing up a business plan with a tannery cooperative to launch a local soap and candle-making operation.

His vision was to create jobs for disadvantaged individuals in the community. Then in 2003 the war in Iraq began; Peace Corps Volunteers were evacuated from Morocco back to the United States before the fruits of their efforts could be realized.

Two years later Gottlieb set out to finish what he did not have the opportunity to do in Taroudant. He founded Three Twins Ice Cream in a small 580-square-foot shop in San Rafael, California, eventually going from being the sole employee to owning a factory (another is on the way) and four retail shops in northern California. Three Twins Ice Cream company has



ABOVE: Founder of Three Twins Ice Cream, Neal Gottlieb outside his ice cream shop.
TOP RIGHT: Preparing a batch of Three Twins Ice Cream.



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“Life was much simpler when I had one small scoop shop, but I do enjoy the challenges that come with launching new products, communicating our story to the public, raising millions of dollars and bringing something great to the world.”

now partnered with major grocery stores nationwide, providing organic ice cream in ten classic flavors with surprising twists (approximately 100 flavors rotate in the store locations).

Never sacrificing cost for flavor, and working in support of local farms (milk and cream is sourced from within 17 miles of the factory), Gottlieb’s company continues serving up scoops of cool—and here’s the scoop on how serving in the Peace Corps helped him get there.

WorldView: What was the happiest

moment of your Peace Corps experience? The most difficult?

Gottlieb: There were many happy moments throughout my service. One of the happiest was the day after we arrived in country and were first allowed to wander outside of the compound that we were staying at. I had traveled a lot before my service but there was a certain magic to first exploring the streets, buying figs off a cart and realizing that this beautiful, chaotic land was my home for the next two years. Without a doubt, getting evacuated was really hard, as there was a

great deal of sadness in leaving behind the people whom I had just started to know and the projects that I had just started on.

WorldView: Were there any lessons from Peace Corps service that helped you establish your own small business?

Gottlieb: Learning Moroccan Arabic and then trying to help small businesses, without the benefit of funding, is a very difficult thing. I’m not sure that the hardest days of growing my business domestically, in English and with funding are nearly as difficult as those initial months onsite,

trying to get my bearings and figuring out how to be most impactful.

WorldView: What advice would you give to RPCVs looking to start a business after their service?

Gottlieb: Save those dirham. You might have the best business idea in the world, but without start-up capital, it is going to be next to impossible to start a business. Also, the importance of having a well-researched business plan with realistic financials cannot be understated. But more than anything, if you have the notion of starting a business, go for it. Just like one of the reasons that many of us joined Peace Corps was so that we wouldn't later regret not joining, no matter how things turn out with Three Twins, the journey has been the reward and I will never have regrets for not taking the leap into entrepreneurship.

WorldView: Why ice cream?

Gottlieb: Ice cream was a business that I could start small and make it organic, and that would facilitate a great deal of creativity. It is also something that I could start small but grow into a national brand without sacrificing product quality. Plus, everybody loves ice cream.

WorldView: What's been the hardest part of launching and running your business? The easiest? Most surprising?

Gottlieb: Growth is hard. Life was much simpler when I had one small scoop shop, but I do enjoy the challenges that come with launching new products, communicating our story to the public, raising millions of dollars and bringing something great to the world.

Making great ice cream that people love is actually really easy. There have been many surprises over the last 9 years. But, perhaps the most surprising thing is that it never really gets easier!

WorldView: What's your favorite flavor of Three Twins Ice Cream?

Gottlieb: They're all my beautiful, delicious

children. You really can't go wrong with any of our flavors. But, there are quite a few that I am extra proud of. We recently launched the first ever organic Chocolate Chip Cookie Dough ice cream. We touch upon the conversation surrounding immigration policy in the United States with Sergio Romo's Mexican Chocolate bearing the tagline "it only tastes illegal," which is a nod to the shirt that Sergio wore to the World Series parade in 2012 when he threw the last pitch for the San Francisco Giants. And the Lemon Cookie gets more attention of Twitter (@threetwins) and Facebook than any other flavor.

WorldView: Who's Carl?

Gottlieb: Carl is the name of one of our ice cream trucks, not to be confused with the others: Carl Jr. and King Carl III.

Coincidentally, Carl is also the name of my twin brother.

WorldView: What's next for Three Twins Ice Cream?

Gottlieb: We are going to continue to build Three Twins into the next great American ice cream brand. To facilitate this we are opening our second factory in Sheboygan, Wisconsin quite soon. We're also working on new flavors for 2015. And they are going to be fantastic. **W**

Learn more about Three Twins Ice Cream at www.threetwinsicecream.com.

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